

# MEMORY OF THE POLITICAL CONSTRUCTION OF EUROPE IN FAR RIGHT POSITIONS

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The political, social and economic context in which European citizens find themselves favours a feeling of mistrust towards the European Union (hereafter: EU), more or less developed depending on the country they live in. Several political barometers illustrate this claim. The Eurobarometer on public opinion regarding the European Union (autumn 2014), shows overall that 39% of the citizens have a positive image of the EU (compared to 37% having a neutral image and 22% having a negative image). As far as the feeling of trust is concerned, 37% of European citizens tend to trust the EU (compared to 50% who tend to not trust the EU). (1) At the national level, the results are generally similar. Thus, 37% of French citizens trust the EU very much or tend to trust it (compared to 63% having little or no trust at all in it), only 27% of them tend to trust or trust their members of the European Parliament very much. (2) At the Belgian level, 44% of the citizens declare having little trust in the European Parliament. (3) This number is higher in the Netherlands, where 47% of the Dutch citizens claim they do not trust the European Parliament. (4) Finally, 37% of British citizens tend to trust the EU. (5)

The feeling of trust and the image that European citizens have of the EU are shaped by several factors, among them the representations

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(1) EC, "Public opinion in the European Union. First results", *Standard Eurobarometer 82*, December 2014, pp. 6-8.

(2) CEVIPOF, *Baromètre de la confiance politique. Vague 6*, 13 January 2015, pp. 19-21.

(3) EC, "L'opinion publique dans l'Union européenne. Rapport national. Belgique", *Eurobaromètre Standard 82*, Autumn 2014, p. 7.

(4) EC, "De publieke opinie in de Europese Unie. Nationaal rapport. Nederland", *Eurobarometer Standaard 82*, Autumn 2014, p. 1.

(5) EC, "Public opinion in the European Union. National Report. United Kingdom", *Standard Eurobarometer 82*, Autumn 2014, p. 2.

and the perceptions that these citizens have of the European political authorities. (6) These representations and perceptions are constructed through the ages, in particular based on heritage and under the influence of collective memories which are also collective representations aimed at interpreting and reconstructing the past. (7)

Numerous actors participate in the transfer of collective memories. Among these actors, one finds the political parties in particular. Previous research has already studied the positioning of national political parties regarding European integration, based on the theory of social cleavages, (8) on the ideological profile of political parties (9) or on national-level partisan strategies. (10) Even though other studies have analysed the foundations of the Euroscepticism of far right parties, (11) no research has focused on the positions of far right parties regarding the memory of the political construction of Europe.

From the outset, it should be noted that the far right can be defined with respect to the three pillars which constitute its ideological universe: inegalitarianism, nationalism and radicalism. The first pillar is the acknowledgement of the inequality between people and between cultures. (12) Inegalitarianism refers to racism, which is an ideology asserting the inequality of human races and cultures, itself based on a crude biological determinism. (13) The second ideological pillar of the far right is nationalism, conceived “as a project, as the ultimate political organization to be put into place on the basis of the founding axiom relating to inequality”. (14) The third ideological pillar of the far right is radicalism, which refers to the modes of action permitting to achieve the objective fixed by the far right. It is an “absolute’ type of action, a

(6) G. GRANDJEAN, “Confiance politique et institutions internationales. Les perceptions de l’efficacité, de la légitimité et de la démocratie par des jeunes”, *Rev. Fac. dr. ULg*, 2014, No. 3, pp. 495-506.

(7) L. VAN YPERSELE (dir.), “Les mémoires collectives”, in *Questions d’histoire contemporaine. Conflits, mémoires et identités*, Paris, PUF, 2006, p. 195.

(8) G. MARKS and C.J. WILSON, “The Past in the Present: A cleavage Theory of Party Response to European Integration”, *Br. J. Pol. Sc.*, vol. 30, No. 3, 2000, pp. 433-459.

(9) G. MARKS, L. HOOGHE, M. NELSON and E. EDWARDS, “Party Competition and European Integration in the East and West. Different Structure, Same Causality”, *Comp. Pol. Stud.*, vol. 39, No. 2, 2006, pp. 155-175.

(10) E. REUNGOAT, “Mobilizing Europe in national competition: The case of the French Front National”, *Int’l Pol. Sc. Rev.*, vol. 36, No. 3, 2015, pp. 296-310.

(11) S. VASILOPOULOU, “European Integration and the Radical Right: Three Patterns of Opposition”, *Gouvernement and Opposition*, vol. 46, No. 2, 2011, pp. 223-244.

(12) J. JAMIN, *L’imaginaire du complot. Discours d’extrême droite en France et aux États-Unis*, Amsterdam, AUP, 2009, pp. 124-135.

(13) P.-A. TAGUIEFF, “Le racisme”, *Cahier du CEVIPOF*, No. 20, 1998, p. 8.

(14) J. JAMIN, *L’imaginaire du complot. Discours d’extrême droite en France et aux États-Unis, op. cit.*, p. 135 (our transl.).

‘total’ way of acting to give shape to the nationalistic project in support of the acknowledgement of inequality”. (15)

Based on these developments, our research question is asked in the following manner: how do the far right parties consider the memory of the political construction of Europe? In order to answer this question, we propose comparing, in a transversal perspective, the programmes of five parties that are traditionally considered as far right in scientific literature: (16) the Vlaams Belang (hereafter VB, Belgium), the Front National (hereafter FN, France), the Partij voor de Vrijheid (hereafter PVV, Netherlands), the British National Party (hereafter BNP, United Kingdom) and the Union démocratique du centre (hereafter UDC, Switzerland). We have chosen the far right parties of these five countries because of a relatively long shared history of these countries in terms of European integration. In fact, Belgium, France and the Netherlands have been members of this regional organisation since the beginning of its creation (Treaty of Paris establishing the European Coal and Steel Community – ECSC –, 18 April 1951). The United Kingdom signed the accession treaty to the European Economic Community on 22 January 1972. (17) Finally, Switzerland, while not a member of the European Union, maintains close relations with it, as witnessed by the first bilateral free-trade agreements signed in 1972. (18) These different countries have known multiple stages of the construction of Europe. These countries have also been chosen since they have a differentiated relationship with respect to European integration. Belgium and the Netherlands are in favour of a supranational integration. Given the different presidential profiles under the Fifth Republic, France has favoured and sometimes held back supranational integration. The United Kingdom, in turn, is in favour of intergovernmental integration. (19) The case of Switzerland, finally, allows testing a country outside of the European Union. We suppose therefore that the relatively long shared history and different

(15) J. JAMIN, *L’imaginaire du complot. Discours d’extrême droite en France et aux États-Unis*, op. cit., p. 142 (our transl.).

(16) See e.g. J.-Y. CAMUS and N. LEBOURG, *Les droites extrêmes en Europe*, Paris, Seuil, 2015; and J. WOLFFREYS, “The European extreme right in comparative perspective”, in *Varieties of right-wing. Extremism in Europe* (A. MAMMONE, E. GODIN and B. JENKINS eds), London, Routledge, 2013, pp. 19-37.

(17) The United Kingdom had been faced with two vetoes by general de Gaulle, on 14 January 1963 and 27 November 1967. G. BOSSUAT, *Histoire de l’Union européenne. Fondations, élargissements, avenir*, coll. Belin sup. Histoire, Paris, Belin, 2009, pp. 247-248.

(18) Agreement between the European Economic Community and the Swiss Confederation, signed in Brussels on 22 July 1972, *OJEC*, L.300 of 31 December 1972, pp. 189-280.

(19) N. BRACK, J.-M. DE WAELE and J.-B. PILET (dir.), *Les démocraties européennes. Institutions, élections et partis politiques*, 3rd ed., coll. U, Paris, Armand Colin, 2015.

visions of European integration may shape the positions of the far right parties, which have been developing gradually in these countries and which we will be studying in this article. For these two reasons we have excluded from our analysis far right parties of the Central and Eastern European countries which have become members of the European Union as of 1 May 2004.

For the five parties that we have studied, we propose analysing the political programmes published for the purpose of the European elections of May 2014. Even though the UDC is not concerned by these elections, it has nevertheless published a programme with a view to future elections, in order to oppose any integration into the EU as well as negotiations of a bilateral agreement between Switzerland and the EU. (20)

The question asked in this paper calls for three preliminary remarks. First, it should be noted that all political parties consider the memory of the political construction of Europe in their own way. (21) It is therefore necessary to look in detail at the reasons explaining our focus on 'far right' parties. Based on the three pillars which form the ideological universe of these parties, we can assert that nationalism and issues of identity are at the heart of their discourse. In this respect, memory is an important vector of the construction of identity. Therefore, the analysis of the positions of far right parties with regard to the memory of the construction of Europe offers a unique opportunity to understand the way in which this memory is used to fuel this nationalism and these issues of identity. Secondly, we should explain the reasons which lead us to concentrate solely on the construction of Europe. It has already been shown that the European issues had taken a more important place in the discourse of the far right parties since the Maastricht Treaty. (22) These parties have become clearly anti-European by opposing the

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(20) Four bilateral agreements have been reached between Switzerland and the European Union: the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) of 1972, the Insurance Agreement of 1989, the Bilateral Agreements I of 1999 and the Bilateral Agreements II of 2004. The areas of current negotiations are the following: electricity, institutional questions, participation in the EU programme Creative Europe, emissions trading, automatic exchange of information, agriculture, food safety, product and public health safety. See Département fédéral des Affaires étrangères, "Les Accords bilatéraux Suisse-Union européenne", Bern, 2014.

(21) See e.g. G. MARKS, C.J. WILSON and L. RAY, "National Political Parties and European Integration", *Am. J. Pol. Sc.*, vol. 46, No. 3, 2002, pp. 585-594; C. RODRIGUEZ-AGUILERA DE PRAT, *Political parties and European integration*, Brussels, P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2009 ; M. HELBLING, D. HOEGLINGER and B. WÜEST, "How political parties frame European integration" », *Eur. J. Pol. Res.*, No. 49, 2010, pp. 496-521; and O. SABRI KIRATLI, "Political discourses on Europe and European integration in national election manifestos and party programmes", *Cambridge Rev. Int'l Aff.*, 2015, pp. 1-24.

(22) J. JAMIN, "Two different realities. Notes on populism and the extreme right", in *Varieties of right-wing. Extremism in Europe*, op. cit., p. 48.

“European bureaucracy and its impositions”. (23) Thus, the question at the heart of this paper clarifies this anti-Europeanism. Thirdly, it should be pointed out that the political construction of Europe refers to multiple realities, as witnessed by the set of theories on European integration. (24) It may refer to institutions, to public policies, to non-institutional actors, among others. The proposed comparative perspective thus allows the identification of categories of programmes which permit capturing the specificity of the positions of the far right parties on this topic.

Such a comparison makes it necessary to specify, as a first step, the concept of the memory of political construction of Europe. Secondly, the methodology that was used in this study is presented in more detail in order to justify certain choices. Thirdly, the positions of the far right parties are categorized in order to respond to the research question.

## I. – THE MEMORY OF THE POLITICAL CONSTRUCTION OF EUROPE

Focusing on the ‘memory’ and not on the ‘history’ of the European political construction is not trivial. ‘History’ refers to knowledge which takes the form of historic productions concerning different events. It is the knowledge of the past. (25) History is therefore a scientific production, elaborated as a result of a method which is itself scientific. (26) Contrary to history, ‘memory’ is a reconstruction of the past based on the present, even the future. It is therefore fragmented, manifesting this constant interaction between ‘erasing’ on the one side, ‘conservation’ on the other. (27) This memory has to “permit a comprehension of the self and the world, ensure the common values which impose behaviour patterns and guarantee self-esteem”. (28)

The memory participates in the construction of identity in different ways. First of all, it contributes to the definition of a group. Secondly, it participates in the definition of the values of a group. Thirdly, it can be

(23) A. MAMONNE, E. GODIN and B. JENKINS, “Introduction”, in *Varieties of right-wing. Extremism in Europe*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

(24) N. NUGENT, *The Government and Politics of the European Union*, 6th ed., coll. The European Union Series, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006; and S. SAURUGGER, *Théories et concepts de l'intégration européenne*, coll. Gouvernances, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2009.

(25) P. RAXHON, “Essai de bilan historiographique de la mémoire”, *Cahiers du Centre de recherches en histoire du droit et des Institutions*, n° 30, 2009, p. 14.

(26) S. ERNST, “Commémorations négatives, enseignements scolaires et éducation civique”, in *La concurrence mémorielle* (G. GRANDJEAN and J. JAMIN dir.), coll. Recherches, Paris, Armand Colin, 2011, pp. 77-78.

(27) T. TODOROV, *Les abus de la mémoire*, Paris, Arléa, 2004, p. 14.

(28) L. VAN YPERSELE, “Les mémoires collectives”, *op. cit.*, p. 195 (our transl.).

used to legitimize a group's actions past, present and future. Fourthly, it allows mobilizing the members of a social group to carry out a collective project – most often a political one – in the name of their shared identity. (29) In other words, the collective memory allows the individuals to define themselves individually but also as a group.

When the far right parties – and let us remember that the same applies to the traditional parties – use elements of the political construction of Europe in their positions, this is in no way 'history' but 'memory'. The two distinctive criteria of memory seem in fact present when the far right parties use events relating to the political construction of Europe. Indeed, on the one hand these parties are not exhaustive in the past events which they use. They operate a sorting which refers to the operations of memory selection (30) and which does not respond to the criteria of scientificity of history. On the other hand, the mobilization of some of these events makes it possible to define different values of the political parties we studied, to legitimize certain actions and to mobilize citizens – whether they are voters or activists, for example. These parties, like other political parties, thus reclaim the memory of the political construction of Europe. However, we need to study if these reappropriations show any specificities.

The cross-sectional analysis of the programmatic positions of the far right parties regarding the memory of the political construction of Europe thus allows us to determine the past events that have been used by these parties, to compare the positions of the five parties chosen for this study, and to try to present one or several of their common foundations. In the end, this approach allows us to better understand the anti-Europeanism of these parties.

## II. – THE ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRAMMES

The programmes published by the far right parties in 2014, in particular with a view to the European elections of May 2014, are at the heart of the analysis. Three major reasons explain this choice. First, in a comparative approach, the research method depends on the

(29) O. KLEIN, L. LICATA, N. VAN DER LINDEN, A. MERCY and O. LUMINET, "Le Collabo et l'Assisté : stéréotypes et mémoires collectives liés au conflit", in *Belgique-België : un État, deux mémoires collectives ?* (O. LUMINET dir.), Wavre, Mardaga, 2012, pp. 35-36.

(30) J.-P. RIOUX, "Devoir de mémoire, devoir d'intelligence", *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, No. 73, 2002, p. 163.

research question. (31) In the context of this article, the latter examines the specificities of the programmatic positions of the far right parties regarding the political construction of Europe. The political programmes published right before a forthcoming election provide the basis of a clear comparison since they are published during the same time period in the perspective of electoral competition. The period preceding the European elections of 2014 has been chosen since the anti-Europeanism of the far right parties manifests itself all the more acutely since the European Union is going through several crises: the crisis or public debt, the economic crisis and the migrant crisis. (32)

Secondly, the cross-sectional perspective makes it necessary to rely on a comparable basis. As Giovanni Sartori underlines, not everything can be compared. A well-determined criterion needs to be used for comparison. Two or more entities are only comparable if they are similar. If the entities “differ on all levels, their comparison does not make any sense”. (33) The official, published documents of a party, involving the entire party, with a view to future elections, are similar in this respect and therefore allow for a comparison. Individual position statements, comments published on the respective Web pages of each party and newsletters must therefore be excluded from the analysis. Indeed, these sources – which are not available for all five studied parties – are not necessary comparable: their status, the quality of the authors, the publicity may strongly differ, among others.

Thirdly, as Kevin Adamson and Robert Johns specify, the political programmes constitute useful sources: “It sets down publicly the minimum orthodoxy for members and activists, and the leadership uses such material to enforce ideological coherence and unity. Although voters do not generally read party manifestos, such documents determine the approved message disseminated by party activists (whether through direct campaigning or through the mass media) and are thus relevant to the shaping of public opinion”. (34)

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(31) D. CARAMANI (dir.), “Introduction to comparative politics”, in *Comparative politics*, 3rd ed., Oxford, OUP, 2014, p. 10.

(32) In this respect, Jim Wolfreys has shown that periods of crisis are particularly exploited by far right parties in order to better position themselves in the electoral process. J. WOLFREYS, “The European extreme right in comparative perspective”, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-34.

(33) G. SARTORI, “Bien comparer, mal comparer”, *Rev. intern. pol. comp.*, vol. 1, No. 1, 1994, p. 22 (our transl.).

(34) K. ADAMSON and R. JOHNS, “The Vlaams Blok, its electorate, and the ideological articulation of ‘Europe’”, *J. Pol. Ideol.*, vol. 13, No. 2, 2008, p. 136.

- The following programmes constitute the corpus of our analysis:
- Vlaams Belang, “Uw stok achter de deur”, Verkiezingsprogramma, 17 April 2014;
  - Vlaams Belang, “De Vlaams Belang-visie op een vrij en verantwoordelijk Europa”, Europa-Manifesta, 26 March 2014;
  - Front National, “Notre projet”, *Programme politique du Front National*, 12 December 2013;
  - Partij voor de Vrijheid, “Hún Brussel, óns Nederland”, *Verkiezingsprogramma 2012-2017*, 6 July 2012;
  - Union démocratique du centre, “UDC – le parti de la Suisse”, *Programme du parti 2015-2019*, 16 April 2015;
  - Union démocratique du centre, “Lexique de l’adhésion insidieuse à l’UE ou comment le Conseil fédéral tente de dissimuler par des mots trompeurs ses intentions concernant l’UE”, *Non à l’adhésion insidieuse à l’UE*, 2 July 2014;
  - British National Party, “Securing our British future”, *Parliamentary Elections Manifesto 2015*, 5 May 2015.

Content analysis has been chosen in the framework of this comparative research. This qualitative method of analysis, which grants an important place to the contribution of words and their usage, gives the researcher fundamental role. Indeed, the latter “decides on the intrinsic value, the relevance and the originality of the material”. (35) Nonetheless, the analysis needs to obey to sufficiently clear and precise rules. (36) Hence, the categories of analysis have been put into place progressively after 1) having divided the programmes into processing units, 2) having coded and linked one or several words to the analysed extracts, and 3) having classified the coded extracts. (37)

The categories proposed in the context of this paper are derived from an inductive method based on the contributions of *Grounded Theory*. The latter is a method of grounding the analysis whose starting point is formed by data: “The central principle of data analysis is the constant referral to the comparison between the products of the analysis and the empirical data. Not only does the analysis use as its starting point the first episodes of data collection, but it continues in a process of validation which consists in constantly returning either to the data already collected, or to new data. Thus, instead of ‘forcing’ theories ‘on’ the

(35) P. BURNHAM, K. GILLAND, W. GRANT and Z. LAYTON-HENRY, *Research Methods in Politics*, coll. Political Analysis, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 236.

(36) See M. GRAWITZ, *Méthodes des sciences sociales*, 11th ed., coll. Précis, Paris, Dalloz, 2001, p. 606.

(37) See also L. BARDIN, *L’analyse de contenu*, Paris, PUF, 2007.



empirical data in order to interpret them, the researchers open themselves to the emergency of elements of theorization or concepts which are suggested by the field data, throughout the analytic process" (38).

In order not to 'force' the theory 'on' the empirical data, this analytic method favours a temporary suspension of the existing theoretical frameworks, so as to let the harvested data emerge and to avoid imposing a theoretical frame on empirical data. This suspension is a "posture of openness" which allows "generating theories based on empirical data". (39)

In the context of this analysis, three categories with well-defined characteristics have been created (*see below*). First, these categories aim at being comprehensive insofar as the entire content of the programmes has been classified as a whole. Second, they are exclusive inasmuch as one single element does not belong in several categories. Third, they are objective so that other coders can classify the extracts in the same categories. Fourth, they are relevant with reference to the aim of this paper. (40)

### III. – THE CATEGORIES OF PROGRAMMES

The comparative analysis of the programmes of the five far right parties allows distinguishing three categories of positions which are systematically illustrated.

The first category refers to the programmatic positions of the far right parties regarding the origins and foundations of the political construction of Europe.

The second category refers to the positions in terms of the institutional developments since the founding of the EU (formerly European Steel and Coal Community, European Economic Community, and European Atomic Energy Community), as seen by the far right parties. This category refers to the authorities or institutions holding power on the level of the European Union.

The third category refers to the positions regarding the operating rules put into place progressively since the beginning of the political construction of Europe. This category refers to the legal system framing the exercise of power on the level of the European Union.

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(38) F. GUILLEMETTE, "L'approche de la *Grounded Theory* ; pour innover ?", *Recherches Qualitatives*, vol. 26, No. 1, 2006, p. 33.

(39) *Ibid.*, p. 34.

(40) The characteristics stated by Madeleine Grawitz have thus been respected. M. GRAWITZ, *Méthodes des sciences sociales, op. cit.*, p. 617.

A. – *The positions on the origins and foundations of the political construction of Europe*

It emerges as interesting to focus on the way in which the far right parties conceive the origins and foundations of the political construction of Europe. Indeed, inasmuch as the memory mobilizations are the reconstructions of the past corresponding to the imperatives of the present, the far right parties can present a reconstructed reading of the past diverging from the historic reality. In this respect, it is interesting to note that the “understanding of the EU passes [...] through that of the transition that it represents as a break or in continuity with the historic trajectories of the national States”. (41)

The Flemish party VB considers that European cooperation is important and that it contributes to peace, freedom, democracy and prosperity. (42) Moreover, several fundamental values and achievements characterize European diversity: sovereignty, subsidiarity and the rule of law. (43) However, the party states that the EU has evolved into the form of a ‘super-State’, in particular since the Maastricht Treaty. (44) Furthermore, in its manifesto for Europe, the VB insists on the necessity of not confounding Europe with the EU. Europe is above all a continent characterized by a unique culture, a continent which is the “cradle of democracy and classical freedoms *par excellence*”. (45) According to the VB, the classical tradition is a synthesis of the Judeo-Christian heritage and humanism. (46) This distinction is not new and allows the VB to insist on a Europe of Nation-States, while at the same time attracting a category of voters, as Kevin Adamson and Robert Johns have shown: “[...] the party has drawn a sharp distinction between the ‘official EU’ and the ‘real EU’, and in so doing has created ‘subject positions’ for voters who are ‘Euro sceptic’ and ‘anti-immigrant’ but who have a positive sense of their European identity”. (47)

One of the oldest far right parties, the FN, presents the EU as an agreement “originally between countries of neighbouring civilizations,

(41) F. FORET, *De l'État à l'Union européenne*, coll. UBlire, Brussels, Éd. ULB, 2015, p. 71 (our transl.).

(42) Vlaams Belang, “Uw stok achter de deur”, *Verkiezingsprogramma*, 17 April 2014, p. 9.

(43) *Ibid.*

(44) *Ibid.*

(45) Vlaams Belang, “De Vlaams Belang-visie op een vrij en verantwoordelijk Europa”, *Europa-Manifesta*, 26 mars 2014, p. 1 (our transl.).

(46) *Ibid.*

(47) K. ADAMSON and R. JOHNS, “The Vlaams Blok, its electorate, and the ideological articulation of ‘Europe’”, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

with similar levels of economic and social development, founded on the principle of community preference [...]”. (48) Since its creation, it has become bureaucratic, according to the party, and has been captured by the ultra-liberal doctrine. (49) Its foundations, still according to the FN, are of a nature to successively damage the national interest and sovereignty of France and dissolve the nations into federalism. (50) The FN equally decries the implementation of a “super-State, with its Constitution, its undefined borders, of which one would like Turkey to become a member [...], and its enthusiasm for new competences”. (51) According to the FN, the progressive implementation of the European Union has “distracted France of its great global politics in order to reduce it to a sole European horizon”. France’s sovereignty would therefore be “sacrificed” to try to merge the country “into a European empire deprived of identity”. (52) The metaphor of a European empire is not absent from scientific literature on European integration. Jan Zielonka proposes an approach which aims at understanding the enlarged Europe as a “neo-medieval European empire” whose borders would be fuzzy, its power and authority not concentrated, its identities heterogeneous and attempting to interfere with the neighbouring countries. (53)

The Dutch party PVV places the EU in the history of the Netherlands, by specifying that the Dutch are a people of internationally-oriented merchants. (54) Doing so, it underlines the ‘excellent idea’ that the European Economic Community represented, but equally decries the creation of a super-State: “The European Economic Community (EEC) was [...] an excellent idea. Countries with similar cultures which collaborate economically are excellent. But this project was broken up by members who were in favour of a Great Europe and who have brought about a super-State”. (55)

The Swiss UDC focuses less on the origins and foundations of the political construction of Europe than on the reasons for the Swiss refusal to become a member of the EU. Thus, it is the rejection of the “arrogant elite of politics, economy, society and the media” which

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(48) Front National, “Notre projet”, Programme politique du Front National, 12 December 2013, p. 47 (our transl.).

(49) *Ibid.*, p. 54.

(50) *Ibid.*, p. 47.

(51) *Ibid.*, p. 47 (our transl.).

(52) *Ibid.*, p. 50 (our transl.).

(53) J. ZIELONKA, *Europe as Empire. The nature of the Enlarged European Union*, Oxford, OUP, 2006.

(54) Partij voor de Vrijheid, “Hún Brussel, óns Nederland”, *Verkiezingsprogramma 2012-2017*, 6 July 2012, p. 11.

(55) *Ibid.* (our transl.).

oppose the Swiss practices of direct democracy and its people's right to participate. (56) As a consequence, the UDC opposes any attachment to the EU while conserving the bilateral agreements that link Switzerland to the EU: "Switzerland certainly needs good economic relations and a friendly relationship with the EU, but it is absolutely not necessary to reach an agreement of institutional attachment to this effect which would subject our country to Brussels. Yes to the bilateral relations and agreements which protect the interests of both sides, but no to a policy of integration whose ultimate goal is membership of the EU or systematic and insidious alignment of Switzerland to the EU. The self-determination and independence of Switzerland as well as its democratic rights should, on the contrary, be strengthened". (57)

The programme of the BNP mentions that the EU has become a "federal super-State – the most arrogant, costly and impractical empire of European history". (58) Furthermore, this party estimates that the British referendum of 1975 was supposed to concern Great Britain's membership in a free-trade zone, which was not, in fact, the case. (59) As a reminder, the referendum that took place on 5 June 1975 was concerned with the United Kingdom staying or not within the European Communities. At the end of this referendum, 64.5% of British voters had taken part and the yes vote won overwhelmingly with 67.2%. (60) It is difficult to know why this party mentions this historical episode in the programme. It may however be recalled that a major difference exists between a free-trade zone and a common market as it is envisioned in the framework of the political construction of Europe. Thus, in a free-trade zone, the countries in question accept the free circulation of goods produced in their territory. Therefore, they remove customs duties and the quantitative restrictions inside the zone, but each country retains control of its customs policies towards third countries. In the framework of the common market, the customs policy is adopted by the European institutions, while the Member States lose control over it. As Gérard Bossuat underlines, the free-trade zone is an end in itself,

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(56) Union démocratique du centre, "UDC – le parti de la Suisse", *Programme du parti 2015-2019*, 16 April 2015, p. 14 (our transl.).

(57) *Ibid.* (our transl.).

(58) British National Party, "Out of the UE", *European Elections Manifesto 2014*, 8 May 2014, p. 2.

(59) *Ibid.*

(60) J.-P. BOIVIN, "L'Angleterre et l'Europe : le 5 juin 1975 ou la journée des dupes", *Rev. fr. sc. po.*, vol. 26, No. 2, 1976, pp. 197-228.

while the common market opened the path towards a political unit. (61) Perhaps it is the latter which the BNP decries.

In general terms, the different far right parties decry, in their reinterpretation of the political construction of Europe, the supranational excesses of this regional organization. The loss of sovereignty in particular is an issue for them. The progressive political construction of Europe does not correspond to the nationalism defended by these parties which consider “the Nation-State as the only level of political decision which possesses democratic legitimacy and represents the people”. (62) This claim is reminiscent of the results of earlier research which showed that far right parties use the considerations which refer to national identity and which defend national sovereignty in order to oppose European integration. (63) The accusations of supranational excesses are, however, not all identical. They correspond quite clearly to the differentiated relationships regarding the degree of European integration maintained by each State. In the three countries which are historically in favour of supranational integration (Belgium, France, and the Netherlands), the creation of a super-State which replaces the Member States is decried by the far right. In the country which is in favour of intergovernmental integration (the United Kingdom), the implementation of a ‘federal’ super-State competing with the Member States is criticized by the BNP. Finally, in a country which is not a member of the EU but entertains close relations with it, the refusal of integration prevails.

### B. – *The positions on the institutional developments of the political construction of Europe*

In the history of the political construction of Europe, a whole series of authors consider that the institutions play a fundamental role. *Institutions matter*. (64) In this perspective, they form “an independent or intervening variable, in order to study the preferences of the social actors and to explain the results of their interactions”. (65)

(61) G. BOSSUAT, *Histoire de l'Union européenne. Fondations, élargissements, avenir*, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

(62) J.-Y. CAMUS, “La recomposition des droites nationalistes et radicales en Europe”, *Le Débat*, vol. 2, No. 184, 2015, pp. 96 ; reproduced in this book.

(63) C.E. DE VRIES and E.E. EDWARDS, “Taking Europe to its Extremes. Extremist Parties and Public Euroscepticism”, *Party Politics*, vol. 15, No. 1, 2009, pp. 5-28.

(64) J.G. MARCH and J.P. OLSEN, “The New Institutionalism : Organizational Factors in Political Life”, *Am. Pol. Sc. Rev.*, vol. 78, No. 3, 1984, pp. 734-749, and *id.*, *Rediscovering Institutions*, New York, Free Press, 1989.

(65) S. SAURUGGER, *Théories et concepts de l'intégration européenne*, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

The five far right parties have, in one way or another, insisted on the institutional developments in their programmes, while reinterpreting and thus moving more or less away from historical reality.

The programme of the VB specifies that the EU has become, over time, a supranational institution which has more and more power and which presents more and more totalitarian characteristics.<sup>(66)</sup> In doing so, the party criticizes the eurocratic system which has established itself: “The taxpayers’ money is not always spent in such an efficient way. This often stems from a lack of efficiency, sometimes from fraud, but mostly from the temptation of conserving the increasing power of the bureaucracy: the eurocracy”.<sup>(67)</sup>

In order to illustrate its statement, the VB uses the example of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership whose negotiation is “neither transparent nor democratic” and which implies, as a consequence, the adjournment of the negotiations.<sup>(68)</sup>

The French FN focuses on the democratic deficit which characterizes the construction of Europe. By presenting the roles of the European Commission (particularly its monopoly on legislative initiative), “unelected and technocratic organ”, of the European Parliament (which is endowed with “weak powers”) or of the European Central Bank (which does “not have the right to lend to the Member States but to other banks at a ridiculous interest rate”), the FN claims a democratic deficit since the birth of the EU.<sup>(69)</sup> Furthermore, the FN uses the Luxembourg Compromise when it considers France’s reduction in debt plan: “European negotiations that legally rely on the “Luxembourg Compromise”, which anticipates that the States can waive European rules if they consider that their “vital interest” is at stake, will be followed by our monetary policy and exchange rate being taken over, just like 95% of nations worldwide”.<sup>(70)</sup>

It should be remembered that the Luxembourg Compromise results from the empty-chair policy which saw, for six months in 1965, France withdraw from the European institutions following the Charles de Gaulle’s disagreement with the strengthening of the powers of these institutions. In order to end the empty-chair policy, the Member States finally adopted the Luxembourg Compromise (30 June 1966) which allows for respecting the mutual interests of the States in majority

(66) Vlaams Belang, “Uw stok achter de deur”, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

(67) *Ibid.*, p. 10 (our transl.).

(68) *Ibid.*

(69) Front National, “Notre projet”, *op. cit.*, pp. 47 and 101 (our transl.).

(70) *Ibid.*, p. 93 (our transl.).

decisions. Moreover, the compromise provides for a specific possibility for France. In the case of very important interests, the discussion needs to continue until a unanimous agreement has been reached. (71) Consequently, it can be stated that the FN uses an event taken from the political construction of Europe that benefited France, by turning away from the present-day institutional configuration which has changed substantially since the successive enlargements and the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty.

The Dutch PVV considers the European institutions to be in an ‘ivory tower’. More precisely, this party considers that for a long time, the Dutch have not been masters of their destiny and that the power is exercised by the ‘European nationalists’ who keep partying and profiting from ‘endless lunches’. (72) Taking the example of political immigration, the PVV considers that the European Commissioner at the time when the political programme was drafted, Cecilia Malmström, is a “non-elected multicultural Eurocrat” and that the Dutch parliament has lost its power to make decisions. (73) The example of the Dutch polders has been chosen by the PVV to explain the functioning of the ‘European bureaucracy’: “For centuries, the Dutch have fought against the sea. So they have converted a swampy delta for a prosperous nation. Now, the Brussels bureaucrats tell us that we need to flood our polders. Pardon? Which Dutch person is prepared to do so now? No one, of course. But the will of Brussels, with the obedient Kunduz coalition (74) in the background, rubs their recalcitrant masters the wrong way [...]”. (75)

The programme of the UDC decries the ‘Brussels bureaucracy’, its distance from the citizens and its democratic deficits. (76) However, it is especially the Court of Justice of the European Union (hereafter CJEU) which the party’s attention is focused on. The development of jurisprudence is at the heart of the party programme. In order to give scientific weight to its claims, the writings of lawyer Daniel Thürer are used. The UDC thus considers the CJEU as the Supreme Court of

(71) C. DEGRYSE, *Dictionnaire de l’Union européenne*, 4th ed., coll. Dictionnaires juridiques, Brussels, Larcier, 2010, p. 215.

(72) Partij voor de Vrijheid, “Hún Brussel, óns Nederland”, *op. cit.*, p. 11 (our transl.).

(73) *Ibid.*

(74) The *Kunduz coalition*, the so-called ‘five-party agreement’, is the coalition of five parties which was put into place temporarily following a political crisis, from 26 April 2012 to 5 November 2012, notably in order to present a budget to the EU. S. OTJES and G. VOERMAN, “The Netherlands”, *Eur. J. Pol. Res. Data Yearb.*, No. 52, 2013, pp. 164-165; and *ibid.*, No. 53, 2014, p. 229.

(75) Partij voor de Vrijheid, “Hún Brussel, óns Nederland”, *op. cit.*, p. 11 (our transl.).

(76) Union démocratique du centre, “UDC – le parti de la Suisse”, *Programme du parti 2015-2019*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

the EU, which has “very quickly proceeded to a dynamic development of its jurisprudence, with the aim of developing and homogenizing community law, so much so that one often speaks of a ‘government of judges’”. (77) As a result, the far right party considers that “the CJEU has [...] become this organ which accelerates the uniformization of law in the EU (homogeneity of law). The ultimate goal is to eliminate the national differences, to centralize the decision-making power at the [European] organs in Brussels, and to consequently weaken the national States of the EU”. (78)

The British BNP is less loquacious in terms of the institutional developments. At most, one can point out the desire of the party to put an end to the development of the democratic deficit caused by ‘Brussels’, which is at the basis of more than half of the British norms. (79)

Generally speaking, the different far right parties have a common denominator. By insisting either on eurocracy, or on the democratic deficit which characterizes the European institutions, they underline the elitist abuses which stem from the European institutional developments. Thus, they have a populist attitude which, let us remember that, insists on the opposition between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’. (80) More precisely, the elites, “comprised of bureaucrats, bankers, speculators and professional politicians, are suspected of not acting in the name and interest of the people, but more for their own immediate and private profit”. (81)

*C. – The positions on operating rules, as derived  
from the political construction of Europe*

Exercising their powers, the European institutions are framed by a series of operating rules. In the course of the stages of the political construction of Europe, a large number of rules have been put into place. These different rules can be expressed through different public policies managed at present by the European institutions. In the framework of this section, the different readings proposed in the

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(77) Union démocratique du centre, “Lexique de l’adhésion insidieuse à l’UE ou comment le Conseil fédéral tente de dissimuler par des mots trompeurs ses intentions concernant l’UE”, *Non à l’adhésion insidieuse à l’UE*, 2 July 2014, pp. 27-28 (our transl.).

(78) *Ibid.*, p. 29 (our transl.).

(79) British National Party, “Securing our British future”, *Parliamentary Elections Manifesto 2015*, 5 May 2015, p. 4.

(80) M. CANOVAN, *Populism*, London, Junction Books, 1981, p. 4.

(81) J. JAMIN, *L’imaginaire du complot. Discours d’extrême droite en France et aux États-Unis*, *op. cit.*, p. 92 (our transl.).



programmes of the five far right parties with respect to the operating rules of the EU have to be determined. It is important to specify that in a memory perspective, the focus should not be on the programmatic positions regarding present-day rules, but on the positions on the rules' evolutions. For example, if four great freedoms of circulation are at the basis of the single market (of good, persons, services and capital), these freedoms have been put into place progressively. So this section aims at differentiating the way in which the far right parties consider this evolution and thus put the present-day rules in perspective with reference to the past.

The Flemish VB decries the increase of powers exercised by the European institutions and considers that "in the European super-State, Flanders is only a province with barely the jurisdiction over its own politics". (82) This party emphasizes the rupture marked by the Maastricht Treaty. (83) It is from this moment, according to the party, that the EU has become a "totalitarian super-State". (84) In addition, the VB turns back to the enlargement policy because "in less than 20 years, since the Maastricht Treaty, the number of Member States has more than doubled: from 12 to 28. Several of these countries were absolutely not ready to join the European Union, such as Bulgaria and Romania, with all the consequences this implies. Countries like Greece, Spain and Portugal have never been able to introduce the Euro". (85) The Maastricht Treaty is, again, a breaking point. The party considers that there is a difference between the different European States: between the countries that have been members since 1992 and "which were not ready" and the others, and between the countries which have become members of the Eurozone but which have not been able to put into place the common currency and the others.

The programme of the FN equally uses the Maastricht Treaty by considering that it has introduced the dogma of the free and undistorted competition, and that it has turned the EU into the "Trojan horse

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(82) Vlaams Belang, "Uw stok achter de deur", *op. cit.*, p. 9 (our transl.).

(83) It has to be remembered that the Maastricht Treaty, signed on 7 February 1992, has created a three-pillar structure. In the first pillar, considered the EC pillar, a series of powers were regulated by the European institutions with a qualified majority. In the second and third pillars – common foreign and security policy on the one hand, justice and home affairs on the other hand – the rule of unanimity was applied. The Maastricht Treaty has also strengthened the powers of the EC, created a European citizenship and outlined criteria for joining the single currency. G. BOSSUAT, *Histoire de l'Union européenne. Fondations, élargissements, avenir*, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-285.

(84) Vlaams Belang, "Uw stok achter de deur", *op. cit.*, p. 9.

(85) *Ibid.*, p. 10 (our transl.).

of ultraliberal globalization”. (86) The far right party considers that the European rules thus prohibit any form of economic patriotism, and cites two examples: “In 2009, the financial aid of 6 billion euros given by the State to Renault and PSA (87) could not be tied to the companies maintaining their business activities in France, due to the recriminations of the European Commission. This encourages relocations and the destruction of jobs in France. In 2011, the same Brussels Commission judged that the project of recapitalization of the company Seafrance by its shareholder SNCF was contrary to European rules: hundreds of jobs are menaced because of this”. (88)

In addition, the FN tackles two European policies that directly concerned France: the coal and steel policy and the common agricultural policy. According to the party, “the ECSC [European Coal and Steel Community] has killed the European steel industry. The Common Agricultural Policy (hereafter CAP) has marginalized the European agriculture”. (89) More precisely, the FN estimates that the management of this policy, combined with the membership of new States and the global ultraliberal doctrine has made France lose control of the CAP and has put farmers into fierce competition. In this perspective, the party comes back to France’s contribution to the European budget and considers that the amount has to be reduced and, consequently, the European treaties have to be renegotiated. (90) Moreover, the far right party specifies that the European Treaties no longer allow France to borrow directly from the Banque de France at a very low interest rate, as it is done in the United States or the United Kingdom. (91) Finally, the FN comes back to the introduction of the euro and notes the “total failure” of the common currency, which is the “symbol of a federalist European policy of absurd brinkmanship of financial elites”. (92) Moreover, the party considers that the euro, doomed from its launch, is an economic aberration, and uses the writings of economist Milton Friedman to point out the problems of a single monetary policy. (93)

The programme of the PVV decries first and foremost the policy of solidarity between the Member States, specifying that the “essence

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(86) Front National, “Notre projet”, *op. cit.*, p. 5 (our transl.).

(87) PSA is a French automobile manufacturer who produces the Peugeot and Citroën brand vehicles.

(88) Front National, “Notre projet”, *op. cit.*, p. 5 (our transl.).

(89) *Ibid.*, p. 47 (our transl.).

(90) *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

(91) *Ibid.*, p. 58.

(92) *Ibid.*, p. 68 (our transl.).

(93) *Ibid.*

of the European dream is that the money [of the Dutch] flows South and East”, and differentiating between the Member States: “The Dutch are supposed to associate Europe with all kinds of excellent and rosy things: international collaboration, solidarity and peace. In Romania, they think only: how much money can we still get out of those stupid Dutch people”. (94)

Generally speaking, the PVV denounces the way in which the European rules gradually make supranational integration possible. It is a critique of the spill-over mechanism decried by numerous authors. (95) Several examples have been chosen: 1) the progressive integration of Turkey, which will no longer prevent the “influx of Turks” at the European level; 2) the progressive implementation of rules relating to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, which are “a catastrophe for Schiphol Airport and KLM” and 3) the progressive implementation of the Galileo navigation system, which “will probably cost billions”. By denouncing this progressive integration, the PVV states that, “step by step, it will no longer be possible to go back”. (96)

The Swiss party UDC criticizes the way in which the bilateral agreements were negotiated. Thus, the party focuses on what it calls the ‘guillotine clause’, which serves as an instrument of blackmail at the hands of the EU: “All bilateral agreements of the first round, entered into force in 2001, are linked among each other by the so-called guillotine clause. All seven of those agreements contain in fact the following clause: if Switzerland terminates one of the seven agreements, the other six agreements are equally revoked in the six months following the expiration of the terminated treaty”. (97)

Furthermore, the UDC focuses on European law, intended to become homogeneous, menacing Swiss federalism, direct democracy, the sovereignty of the cantons and the autonomy of the municipalities.

If this harmonisation of law were to be imposed, it would be the definitive death of Swiss federalism. Just like direct democracy, cantonal sovereignty and communal autonomy would be sacrificed on the altar of centralism as imposed by Brussels. Switzerland would have

(94) Partij voor de Vrijheid, “Hún Brussel, óns Nederland”, *op. cit.*, p. 13 (our transl.).

(95) E.B. HAAS, *The Uniting of Europe. Political, Social, and Economic Forces. 1950-1957*, Stanford, SUP, 1968; L. LINDBERG, *The political Dynamics of European Economic Integration*, Stanford, SUP, 1963; and S. SAURUGGER, *Théories et concepts de l'intégration européenne*, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-92.

(96) Partij voor de Vrijheid, “Hún Brussel, óns Nederland”, *op. cit.*, p. 12 (our transl.).

(97) Union démocratique du centre, “Lexique de l'adhésion insidieuse à l'UE ou comment le Conseil fédéral tente de dissimuler par des mots trompeurs ses intentions concernant l'UE”, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-23 (our transl.).

to give up its sovereignty and its autonomous foreign policy (policy of neutrality). (98)

The British BNP decries the negative consequences of the development three common policies have undergone: the CAP, the fisheries policy (99) and the common trade policy. The first two have also caused a “disaster for the countryside and the seas”, in particular by not allowing to maintain traditional farming methods and by imposing fishing quotas. (100) The latter “forcibly opened” Great Britain to privatization and causes the paralysis of “medium-sized companies which have to submit to the large companies”. (101)

Generally speaking, one common feature characterizes the programmes of the five far right parties regarding the operating rules arising from the political construction of Europe. It is the focus on a form of inegalitarianism as defined by Jérôme Jamin: “In the discourse of the far right, it is the cultural or national inequality which will not only determine the means of access to equality and redistribution, but which will above all mark first and foremost ‘the subjects between which the goods and charges have to be distributed’. Individuals who, for reasons of nationality, ‘race’ or culture, will or will not be able to have access to the redistribution of riches”. (102)

Consequently, this inegalitarianism favours the principle of national preference (preference for oneself or one’s country), characterized by the rejection of other groups, and which presents access to the fundamental rights and the redistribution of riches according to national criteria as legitimate; (103) while the far right parties have the priority “of protecting the nation against foreign influences”. (104)

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(98) Union démocratique du centre, “Lexique de l’adhésion insidieuse à l’UE ou comment le Conseil fédéral tente de dissimuler par des mots trompeurs ses intentions concernant l’UE”, *op. cit.*, p. 35 (our transl.).

(99) As a reminder, the CAP and the fisheries are the two shared competences at the European level. This means that both the EU and the Member States can legislate and adopt legally binding acts in these areas. The Member States exercise their competence if the Union has not exercised its own. The common trade policy is an exclusive competence. This means that only the Union can legislate and adopt legally binding acts. *See* art. 2, 3 and 4 of consolidated versions of the TEU and the TFEU, signed at Lisbon on 13 December 2007, *OJEU*, C-326 of 26 October 2012, pp. 1-390.

(100) British National Party, “Out of the UE”, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.

(101) *Ibid.*, p. 3 (our transl.).

(102) J. JAMIN, *L’imaginaire du complot*, *op. cit.*, p. 133 (our transl.).

(103) *Ibid.*, p. 135.

(104) D. HALIKIPOULOU, K. NANOU and S. VASILOPOULOU, “The paradox of nationalism: The common denominator of radical right and radical left Euroscepticism”, *Eur. J. Pol. Res.*, No. 51, 2012, p. 510.

## IV. – CONCLUSION

The way in which citizens imagine the political construction of Europe is closely linked to the positions that the political actors, among them the political parties, hold with regard to the EU. In the framework of this article, the focus was laid on the programmatic positions of the far right parties, with a research question phrased in the following manner: how do the far right parties consider the memory of the political construction of Europe, in view of their anti-Europeanism?

In order to answer this question and to follow the transversal perspective of this book, it has been proposed to compare the programmes of the five far right parties (VB, FN, PVV, UDC and BNP). Based on these programmes, three comprehensive, exclusive, objective and relevant categories of analysis have been created, resulting from a content analysis. They refer to the reinterpretations of these parties with regard to 1) the origins and foundations of the EU, 2) the development of its institutions and 3) its operating rules.

The table below summarizes, for each category of analysis, the programmatic positions of the five parties. For each category, it is possible to focus on the characteristics of the parties.

	<b>Origins and foundations</b>	<b>Institutions</b>	<b>Operating rules</b>
<b>VB</b>	Europe ≠ EU (super-State)	Eurocracy	Rupture by Maastricht Treaty
<b>FN</b>	Super-State, even European empire	Democratic deficit Promotion of Luxembourg compromise	Global ultraliberal doctrine
<b>PVV</b>	EEC ≠ EU (super-State)	Ivory tower	Critique of the policy of redistribution
<b>UDC</b>	Refusal of membership	Brussels bureaucracy Government of judges	Guillotine clause
<b>BNP</b>	EU = super-State	Democratic deficit	Common policies criticized
<i>Denunciations</i>	<b>Supranational tendencies of the EU</b>	<b>Elitist tendencies of the EU</b>	<b>Impossibility of national preferences</b>
<i>Aspirations</i>	<b>Nationalist aspirations</b>	<b>Populist aspirations</b>	<b>Inegalitarian aspirations</b>

Firstly the five far right parties denounce, in their rereading of the origins and foundations of the EU, the supranational tendencies. At the heart of this criticism is the loss of national sovereignty. Thus, these parties promote, as a reaction to the political construction of Europe, nationalist aspirations – turning the nation into the primary and fundamental value. The refugee crisis which marked the EU, particularly in 2015, has been an opportunity to see these nationalist aspirations in action. In this way, Marine Le Pen (FN) has denounced the stance of the French president François Hollande, in a speech in front of the European Parliament on 7 October 2015, in front of the German chancellor and the French president. She criticized the “shameful spectacle of a France in tow of Germany on the refugee question”, all the while thanking “Mrs. Merkel to have come with [her] vice-chancellor, administrator of the province of France”. From then on, she was able to insist on the importance of French sovereignty.

Secondly, the five far right parties denounce eurocracy and the democratic deficit, which were gradually implemented in institutional terms. In this manner, they underline the elitist tendencies of the EU. Thus, the programmes of these parties state populist aspirations – opposing the people to the elite. The departure of Herman Van Rompuy as President of the European Council was an opportunity to see these populist aspirations manifest themselves. In this way, the Vlaams Belang has denounced the “jackpot for Van Rompuy” in an official press release of 3 December 2014, following the revelation by the press of the severance pay for the former President. The party criticized the comfortable ‘win for life-ticket’ Herman Van Rompuy is guaranteed while “millions of Europeans suffer from the increase in unemployment and poverty because of the euro crisis”. The party draws a clear opposition between the people and the elite.

Third, in their rereading of the development of the operational rules of the EU, the five far right parties denounce the impossibility of realizing the principle of national preference. In this way, inegalitarian aspirations are promoted. They are characterized by the rejection of European policies in favour of national policies, thus permitting the protection of the nation against foreign influences. The Greek debt crisis which has swept through Europe throughout the year 2015 has certainly helped these inegalitarian aspirations to manifest themselves. Thus, Geert Wilders (PVV) declared on 5 July 2015, referring to the financial agreement between the EU and Greece: “Greece is the best-known of the European junkies”, and called for a referendum on Greece in the Netherlands as well as calling into question the aid for Greece.

Finally, this paper shows that the far right parties are capable of fabricating a universe around the political construction of Europe. In their reappropriations of the past, they offer a vision that does not take into account the construction of Europe, which has gradually seen three important interests interweave: the interests of the States, the interests of the European institutions, and the interests of the citizens. By presenting nationalist, populist and inegalitarian aspirations, the far right parties reveal their capacity to fabricate a universe which insists only on the gradual loss of national control, as much with reference to the initial foundations of the European project, as to the development of institutions and the gradual communitarianisation of the operating rules. Thus, they reduce the European issues to the sole question of the sovereignty of the States.

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