Populizem kot diskurz v mednarodnih odnosih: dvorazsežnostna študija primera Nizozemske stranke svobode in evropskih institucij 2008–2020

Populism as a discourse in international relations: the two dimensional case study of the Dutch Freedom Party and European Institutions 2008–2020

Magistrsko delo

Ljubljana, 2021
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For the past one and half year I can genuinely say it was the best decision possible to choose a master program at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia. Initially, there were problems with my application, since I had a different background related to my master program. At first, I experienced these problems with a serious lack in general knowledge in comparison with my colleagues. However, in the end, due to my colleagues assisting me, professors that were extremely helpful and my motivation I managed to successfully pass all my courses. Therefore, this thesis, I can consider as my ‘master piece’, at least that is how I feel about it. With all the ‘blood, sweat and tears’ I put in this work I can probably say this is my final work I wrote in an educational context. After eight years of higher education in the Netherlands and the one-year master program I consider my education to be completed. And what a way to complete it in Ljubljana!

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Chris Verstappen
Populism as a discourse in international relations: the two dimensional case study of the Dutch Freedom Party and European Institutions 2008–2020

In the contemporary global world populism is increasingly becoming part of the international political scene. Especially, the populist radical right (PRR) and their Eurosceptic discourse in the European Union (EU) have made significant gains over the years. But how is regional integration adapting towards the rising form of right-wing populism and their foreign policies? And vice-versa what systemic characteristics are used by the PPR to alter the regional integration process? A two dimensional case study, where I use both in-depth content analysis as well as critical discourse analysis, is employed to analyse actions taken by two sides during the three major European crises situations(euro crisis – migration crisis – Covid-19 crisis). The Dutch PRR party Partij voor de Vrijheid (Party for Freedom) is used to analyse the inside-out perspective and responses from European institutions are taken from an outside-in perspective. The thesis demonstrates that systemic characteristics on the one hand, like the cultural divide and the transnational cleavage of the EU are conveniently manipulated by the PRR to construct its message around the representational claim of the ‘people’. On the other hand, the European institutions also use the identity game to weaken the PRR’s popularity. Both parties are thus influenced by each other, with European institutions and member states trying to side-line the PRR in times of crises, and the PRR radicalising its stance on the EU as a result of this diversion. Furthermore, the PRR utilises its own universalist discursive approach as a counter-discourse, to justify itself as the democratising factor against the established elite in the international community. Therefore, this study confirms that populism can be perceived as being a distinct discourse in international relations.

Keywords: populist radical right, European institutions, crisis management, populist discourse

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Ključne besede: populistična radikalna desnica, evropske institucije, obvladovanje kriz, populističen diskurz
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List of used abbreviations and symbols

CDA Christen-Democratisch Appèl Christian Democrats
ECB European Central Bank
EP European Parliament
EU European Union
IR International Relations
PRR Populist radical right
PVV Partij Voor de Vrijheid Party for Freedom
UK United Kingdom
US United States
VVD Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy
1 Introduction

Scholars in the field of International Relations (IR) have usually neglected the influence of populist parties on a country’s foreign policy (Verbeek & Zaslove, 2015, p. 526). This is mainly because they neglected the domestic consequences of the extension of the foreign policy domain, despite the rising influence of Europeanisation and globalisation (Verbeek & Zaslove, 2015, p. 526). Mudde (2013, p. 14) somehow shared the view that populist radical right (PRR) parties have governmental impotence, using the metaphor of dogs that bark loudly, but hardly ever bite. However, he has also provided the insight of remaining vigilant towards these parties, naming three reasons they could become more influential. Firstly, tabloidization, with mass media, may lead to political radical right parties sharing similar attitudes, resulting in the dominate political discourse. Secondly, the aftermath of the economic crisis in 2012 has led PRR parties to introduce varying degrees of disintegration. Lastly, they have learned from their mistakes in the past (Mudde, 2013, p. 14).

Therefore, national economies are becoming more intertwined and interdependent at both the international level as well as regional level. This is leading to rising strains of economic integration, which is evident at the global and European levels (Buti & Pichelmann, 2017, p. 1). Consequently, populism has grown in popularity as a result of the shifting of authority towards international institutions (Chryssogelos, 2018, p. 28). This rise has led to executive and legislative powers being taken over by populist parties, and thus this expansion becomes increasingly more important in international politics (Destradi & Plagemann, 2019, p. 711). Moreover, “the worry most explicitly associated with the global rise of populism is that it will produce a weakening of the established international order with its international institutions and global governance” (Destradi & Plagemann, 2019, p. 720). This means that they could contribute to an ever deeper crisis that could lead to a negative spiral of populism. Thus, the world’s economic-political order seems to be at a tipping point, with not much certainty for the future (Rodrik, 2018, p. 13).

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1 On June 1, 2017, United States (US) president Donald Trump announced that the US will withdraw from the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change mitigation. Reasons for the withdrawal were that the Paris accord will undermine the US economy and puts the US at a permanent disadvantage (Chakraborty, 2017). Brexit: the withdrawal of United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU). This was the result after a referendum being held in June 2016 in which 52% voted to leave and 48% voted to remain in the EU. Initially, the withdrawal was delayed several times, but after a general election on 12 December 2019, resulting in a vast majority for the Conservative party, the Parliament could ratify a withdrawal agreement. The transition period of the UK formally leaving the EU started on 31 January 2020 (Edgington, 2020).
Populism can be described as a political strategy, an ideology or a discourse, but not a fully formed political ideology like liberalism or socialism. In the literature, there is a general agreement on its main elements. Mudde (2004, p. 543) describes it as “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people”. This can be regarded as an ideational perspective, where populism is defined as a ‘thin-centred ideology’ (Mudde, 2004, p. 544). However, in order for populism to survive, it needs to adhere to a ‘thick’ ideology, which can be anywhere in the left-right political spectrum (Mudde, 2016, pp. 25–26). For example, in Europe populism is often attached to nationalism whereby is referred to anti-migration and xenophobia, or in other words ‘right-wing populism’. On the other hand, in Latin America, for instance, ‘left-wing populism’ is on the rise with leftist populists accusing ‘the elite’ of economic malpractice (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 2).

Another important distinction which needs to be taken into consideration is the demand and supply side of the rise in populism (Rodrik, 2018, p. 3). If the demand side can be recognised by socio-economic ambivalence and cultural backlash as drivers of populism, then the supply side is driven by the potential development of public support as a result of populist narratives (Rodrik, 2018, p. 23; Lovec & Bojinovic-Fenko, 2019, p. 1156). Moreover, the emergence of populist movements is intricately linked to major shifts in the international order and globalisation (Colgan & Keohane, 2017). On the demand side, two crucial elements can be identified as a driver in the literature: cultural backlash and economic anxiety (Betz, 1994; Mudde, 1999; Rodrik 2011; Norris & Inglehart, 2016). This altered the political space on the supply side with pressures for redistribution and nationalism-conservatism as well as rivalry between various levels of authority (Lovec & Bojinovic Fenko, 2019, p. 1156).

This cultural backlash and economic anxiety has fueled the supply side right-wing populist voice in European member states and the populist construction of ‘Eurosceptic’ discourses with referring that the European Union (EU) is missing democratic accountability (Dechezelles & Neumayer, 2010, p. 234). Euroscepticism refers to the opposition towards European integration. In this regard, Euroscepticism is linked to populism in two ways: via the popular sovereignty concept and directly via the EU as a pluralist project (Lovec & Bojinovic Fenko, 2019, p. 1154). Traditionally, sovereignty in IR implies that each state is independent, with no

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2 In the literature, this is described as ‘right-wing populism’ and ‘left-wing populism’ (Mudde, 2004; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017; Rodrik, 2018).
authority above it and responsible for making and enforcing of laws. Furthermore, each state is recognised as equal to all other sovereign states (Lake, 2003, p. 306). Waltz (1979, p. 94) shares this view by stating that “so long as the major states are the major actors, the structure of international politics is defined in terms of them.” However, it can be noted that international organisations and transnational actors have altered this traditional concept (Lovec & Bojinovic Fenko, 2019, p. 1154). Especially the EU, because it is far more hierarchical than most other international organisations, which raises the questions of institutional effectiveness (Lake, 2003, p. 316). Therefore, Colgan and Keohane (2017, p. 1) assume that “faith in strong leaders and a dislike of limits on sovereignty and of powerful institutions” places populism in an IR context.

As populism was considered as a ‘perversion of democracy’, nowadays it can be seen that the international liberal order is losing its democratic legitimacy, which results in a fragmented democracy (Schmidt V., 2004, pp. 2–3). This leads to elites becoming more suspicious of democracy, and angry publics more hostile to liberalism (Krastev, 2007, p. 104). Moreover, the lack of sufficient management during the euro crisis and especially the migration crisis formed the perfect alibi for populist Eurosceptic parties to successfully continue their pursue for Euroscepticism – which implied a redefinition of national sovereignty and identity (Rupnik, 2007, p. 22; Pirro & Van Kessel, 2017, pp. 416–417; Bojinovic Fenko, Pozgan & Lovec, 2019, p. 52). Schmidt (2004, p. 2) on the other hand, coins the term of ‘regional union of nation-states’ in which “the creative tension between the EU and its member states insures both ever increasing regional integration and ever continuing national differentiation”. This national differentiation issue is shared by Mouffe (2012, p. 629), who notes that it is pointless to think that people renounce their national identity in favour of a post-national European one. Moreover, Schimmelfenning (2019, p. 4), explains the concept of ‘constitutional differentiation’, which addresses the concern of member states to its national sovereignty and identity which can possibly be endangered in the progressive deepening of European integration.

All this seems to suggest that right-wing populism, as the ultimate bearers of national interests against supranational elites, will affect regional integration. But how exactly can regional integration be affected by this? How is regional integration altering the rising form of right-wing populism and their foreign policies? Thus, building on the notion that international politics has increasingly become a concern of domestic politics because of globalisation and Europeanisation, it can be argued that political parties deserve more attention in explaining
foreign policy (Verbeek & Zaslove, 2015, p. 526). In fact, “interaction between systemic and domestic levels brings forward the question of foreign policy by populists” (Lovec & Bojinovic Fenko, 2019, p. 1154). Therefore, the aim of this thesis is, on the one hand, to build on the existing literature about how regional integration is affected by right-wing populist parties via their foreign policies. And on the other hand, how transnational institutions, with the EU as the case in point, respond to such a looming threat. This leads to the following research question: *What systemic characteristics are driving the rise of populists, and if so, how are populists changing these characteristics?* In order to address the gap in the literature within this topic I will take an inside-out as well as an outside-in approach. Meaning, I will focus on a PRR party foreign policy motives within a European member state and consequently take into consideration how European institutions responded towards this threat. This opportunity also provides me with the opportunity to analyse whether the two involved actors are intertwined when implementing certain policies.

Therefore, I will make use of a case study, as this deductive way of research gives me the opportunity to either confirm or reject certain theoretical assumptions I make in the upcoming two chapters. In this approach my results can be used for theory testing, but also possibly put forward as new theory developments (Moses & Knutsen, 2007, p. 140). The focus of this study will take into consideration the three crises (euro crisis – migration crisis – Covid-19 crisis), as the first two crises already led to public concerns within the EU (European Commission, 2015). Furthermore, the European crises gave PRR parties the motivation to place more emphasis on the Eurosceptic discourse (Pirro & Kessel, 2017, p. 406). Thus the time frame of my comparative case study will start in the build up towards the euro crisis, which started with the outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2008, and finishes with the outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis in 2020. Therefore, in addition to introduction (chapter 1), methodology (chapter 4) and conclusion (chapter 6) the thesis is composed of three chapters.

The following second chapter will focus on the conceptualisation of populism, and the PRR in particular, showing how populism can be placed in an international context and analyse why populism is such an inescapable component of IR and foreign policies nowadays. And more general, why and how do changes on the international level support populism in national politics? Furthermore, it takes into consideration how populism responds towards regional integration, and European integration in particular. All these facets will help me to discover key populist characteristics and explanatory mechanisms in an international context, which
consequently can be tested in my empirical chapter. This chapter builds on the already existing scholarly literature.

In the third chapter, I will interpret the changing phenomenon of the continuing process of European integration, as populism today is a response towards transformation to an internationalised state. In this way I will be able to put forward the outside-in perspective of how European institutions and European integration respond towards the looming threat of populism. I will focus on the key institutions such as the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament (EP). Moreover, I will also gain insight how the three main European integration theories explain and change within this contemporary world. As new phases of state legitimacy has led to a shift in relations between states, in the form of the ‘horizontal cosmopolitan relationship’ with similar populist parties from other states (Chryssogelos, 2018, p. 23). This is shared by Grabbe & Groot (2014, p. 33) as the 2014 elections documented a record number of right-wing populist parties into the EP and they had a strong incentive to be more united and active than in previous terms (Grabbe & Groot, 2014, p. 33). I will analyse both secondary data in the form of scholarly literature as well as primary data with making use of documents from various European institutions and European think tanks. This will help in identifying the changing motion of European integration.

The empirical chapter will serve as a two dimensional case study (outside-in and inside-out). Firstly, the chapter will analyse how a PRR party’s foreign policy is influenced by European institutions during a crisis situation. Secondly, the chapter will study the approach of how European institutions are affected by, and influence the PRR. Building on the belief that international politics to a greater extent has become a matter of domestic politics, because of globalisation and Europeanisation, it can therefore be claimed that political parties deserve more attention in explaining foreign policy. Moreover, international politics also carry vital issues of PRR parties (Verbeek & Zasovle, 2015, p. 526). Not only do I aim at mapping party positions, but also to display substantive arguments and how this developed over time, I will examine a single case study of The Dutch Freedom Party (PVV = Partij voor de Vrijheid). The party served as an opposition player, but also provided parliamentary support for governing a minority coalition in the Netherlands between 2010–2012. Taking into consideration the three major European crises (euro crisis – migration crisis – Covid-19 crisis) I will be able to sufficiently compare and contrast the involved actors. Besides introductory expert survey data, primary data is used in the form of political narratives to put forward an extensive content analysis as well as discourse analysis. These political narratives can be found in speeches, or
party manifestos, as these strategic documents are recognised as the most reliable source of ideological stances (Pirro & Kessel, 2017, pp. 408–409).
2 Literature review: populism in the international context

The second chapter will act as conceptual framework for the following chapters. Literature on populism – with a clear focus on the radical right – in combination with foreign policy development and IR will be discussed. Nowadays, there is an acknowledgement that populism is not only part of domestic politics, but that it has a notable influence on world politics as well (Chryssogelos, 2017, p. 1). As the complex nature of today’s foreign policy challenges and the growing popularity of populism both in opposition as well as in governments poses several impacts across a range of problems, such as migration, foreign aid, trade, relations between international partners and of course European integration (Balfour, et al., 2016, p. 3). Therefore, important questions that are presented are the following: what is the populist stance on foreign policy matters? How does populism influence the debate on international issues? Could populism’s influence become pervasive? Firstly though, it is vital to further explore who are these populists, how have they become so successful and how do they impact IR. Because one thing seems to be undeniable: populism is here to stay, whether it has its ups and downs or not.

The rise of populism and in particular radical right parties became successful in Western Europe around the mid-1980s, and by the mid-1990s there was enough consensus on some key issues for the PRR to be considered a party family (Mudde, 2013). Within PRR, nativism and authoritarianism are the core ideologies. In addition to that, they cater support for a market economy with a strong protection of welfare, and there is an opposition towards economic globalisation and the power of multinational corporations (Derks, 2006, p. 186). As already explained in the introduction, populism is defined as a ‘thin-centred’ ideology, with the society being separated into ‘the pure people vs. the ‘corrupt people’ (Mudde, 2004, p. 544). It is a thin-centred ideology because it is observed that its worldview is incomplete as it does not have a coherent perspective towards the political and social world (Stanley, 2008, pp. 106–107). Therefore, populism needs to be attached to other ideologies such as liberal, radical right and socialist.

However, a thin-centred ideology suggests there is more than just the centre, but in populism the core is all there is. It is thus not regarded as a centre for something more inclusive (Freeden, 2017, p. 3). Furthermore, Chryssogelos (2018, p. 27) suggests that a populist discourse follows the logic of equivalence: “unaddressed demands become linked in a chain that acts as a dividing line between people and power”. In this way it differs to the logic of difference: “official power segmenting the chain of social demands and treating each in separation”. This discursive view is vital in order to conceptualise populism in IR, opposed to the ‘thin-centred ideology’. Thus,
the discursive approach sees populism as a self-standing occurrence with its own definite logic of political contestation. The main point here is that foreign policy positions of populist parties is not just an interplay between ‘thick- and thin ideologies’, but it is also one of the core characteristics of the logic of populism (Chryssogelos, 2017, p. 5). This can be seen as a favourable approach for studying populism in its international dimensions, because of its flexible analytical framework (Chryssogelos, 2018, p. 27).

2.1 The rise of populism

Before diving into the underdeveloped research of foreign policy in combination with populism, it is also critical to explore some reasons for the rise of populism and how it became successful. In the literature various reasons are put forward. One explanation is through the ‘establishment of a second spirit of capitalism’. This phenomenon helped lift consumption to a single indicator of participation in political and social processes. Consequently, consumerism became available for a large part of the Western population, which resulted in inequality and deregulations of labour relations. In turn, this led to ‘de-democratisation of modern democracy’ and the rise of the PRR (Stavrakakis, 2014, p. 507). Another reason for the rising popularity is through crises as researched by Moffitt (2015). He Suggests that crises are not just external to populism, but also an internal feature. Populist actors attempt to ‘spectacularise’ a crisis to divide the people, meaning to pit ‘the good people’ against the ‘bad elite’ (Moffitt, 2015, pp. 210–211). This argumentation is in line with Minkenberg (2002, p. 339) who states that “populist parties thrive in times of accelerated social and cultural change”. Relating this to PRR parties, who were able to increase the opposition against Europe, due to the financial- and economic crises. In financially troubled countries, populist parties could express their discontent with the European Commission, as well as the richer members states such as Germany. In less hard-hit countries, PRR parties were against the bailing out of Greece and a shift of sovereignty to the European level because of the crisis (Pirro & Kessel, 2017, p. 407).

Mouffe (2005, pp. 55–56), on the other hand, investigated the challenge towards right-wing populism and suggested that due to a lack of distinctive forms of identification with traditional parties, PRR is able to flourish. The PRR powerful plead of their discourse helps in collectively forming an identification around ‘the people’. “We should realise that, to a great extent, the success of right-wing populist parties comes from the fact that they provide people with some form of hope, with the belief that things could be different” (Mouffe, 2005, p. 56). This view is partly shared by Balfour et al. (2016, pp. 24–25), where root causes of populism are devoted to the growing traction between the demands of representation and the demands of government.
This means political parties have to choose between being ‘responsive’ to their voters and ‘responsible’ towards international- and domestic stakeholders (Mair, 2011). Within the European party system, the two-way tension is causing a growing divide. On the one hand, political parties claim to represent, but do not deliver. On the other hand, those parties that deliver, but no longer seem to represent. The former has a strong populist motion and is characterised as the new opposition. However, when they do govern, they often lose their sight of representation and its role as ‘the voice of the people’, due to compromises with coalition partners (Mair, 2011, p. 14). The tension has become even more critical in the globalised and interconnected world, because internationalisation of policy parameters diminished politicians’ capacity to cater citizens’ demands. As an outcome, democracy keeps disappointing and this became a niche for populist parties (Balfour, et al., 2016, pp. 24–25).

Next to that, the emergence of state transformation towards an internationalised state can be noted as a vital trigger towards the rise of populism, which also made populism a discourse of IR (Chryssogelos, 2018). How a statehood functions is dependant for a great deal on how elites mediate and adapt to domestic and international conditions. Mainly due to major transformations of the international economy including state-induced internationalisation of capital markets, the growth of foreign direct investment and growth of international trade has led states to blend their economies into the internationalised world market. This to ensure to also benefit on a domestic level (Huber, et al., 2015, p. 4). Therefore, “the passage from the classical nation-state to the internationalised state today is an example of such a transformation that reflects a conscious strategy of adaptation and balancing between domestic and external change” (Chryssogelos, 2018, p. 25). Because of this internationalisation character, economic and social policy challenges also gained a transnational approach (Chryssogelos, 2018, p. 25). This approach led to the strengthening of international and transnational institutions. Within these institutions, politicians from several different states employ collective control over societal, economic and security aspects of globalisation. For instance, migration from state to supranational and transgovernmental seemed like the best way possible to manage international processes (Huber, et al., 2015, p. 17). Eventually, the state internationalisation creates two dislocations on a national level where a populist discourse comes in. Firstly, globalisation and its accompanying free trade, global capital flows and international competition lead to socio-economic costs and material dislocations. As a result, the PRR develops a ‘globalisation losers’ discourse where low-skilled workers opt for the extreme right to voice their discontent (Bornschier & Kriesi, 2018).
Secondly, there is a preference for decentralised modes of governance over hierarchical government and along the notion where a transnational society may question the legitimacy of a nation state in relation to responsibility to protect (Zürn & Deitelhoff, 2015, p. 208). All these universal claims empower particularism on a class, ethnic, and cultural line (Chryssogelos, 2018, p. 27).

Thus, the spread of progressive values has strengthened the cultural backlash approach of the populist discourse. This reflects a nostalgic reaction, because people feel threatened of this development (Norris & Inglehart, 2016, p. 29). In turn, populism has their own claim of universalism where the moral appeal of ‘the people’ for recognition and representation plays a major role and ensured a significant rise in populism (Norris & Inglehart, 2016, p. 30; Chryssogelos, 2018, p. 27). This is specially true in its relation to immigration, which is another crucial element for the rise of PRR. It symbolises the dissolving of borders and increases the tension on national economies and cultures (Oskarson & Demker, 2013, p. 175). Žižek (2006, p. 555) therefore formulates that the PRR sees immigrants as the enemy of ‘the people’, and its eradication would restore balance and justice. In this way, the PRR refuses to deal with the complexity of the contemporary political life (Žižek, 2006, p. 555). “Rather than acknowledging that many complex and intertwined factors cause systemic failures, the aim of the populist performance is to point the finger squarely at the enemy of ‘the people’” (Moffitt, 2015, p. 206).

2.2 Populism and foreign policy

The reasons proposed above for the rise of populism, and in particular PRR, have to do, for a great deal, with foreign policy conditions. Nowadays, scholars in the field of IR dedicate more attention to the importance of foreign policy for PRR, but the phenomenon is still under researched. This is genuinely surprising as the rise of PRR has partly emerged because of internationalisation and globalisation (Balfour, et al., 2016, p. 16; Plagemann & Destradi, 2019, p. 284). Verbeek and Zaslove (2015, p. 526) identify two reasons for this. Firstly, the systemic theories of IR tend to focus on states as unitary actors and therefore do not take the role of political parties into consideration. Secondly, despite the expansion of foreign policy through Europanisation and globalisation, there is a habit of neglecting its domestic consequences (Verbeek & Zaslove, 2015, p. 526).

Foreign policy in general refers to actions taken by an actor directed towards the actor’s external world. Therefore, foreign policy in this case can be regarded as a property of a sovereign state, mainly because the PRR demonstrate themselves within the sovereign state (Neack, 2008, p.
Traditionally, physical security and defence were the main factors of foreign policy. However, nowadays the notion of foreign policy reflects a connection between the domestic and international spheres, meaning that security has become less exclusive and made room for humanitarian intervention (Kaarbo, Lantis, & Beasley, 2013, pp. 2–4). Within the IR discipline this connection is currently researched by the neo-classical realists. The term is first coined by Rose (1998), he argues that a state’s behaviour of foreign policies is first and foremost influenced by its position within the international system and the distribution of power within this system. However, these systemic pressures need to be translated through variables visible at the state level (Rose, 1998, p. 146). Thus, in classical realism it is assumed that leaders define their national interests based on systemic constraints such as the international distribution of power or other states’ motivations. Neo-classical realism however, recognises that national interests exist within a set of domestic political relationships, this automatically constrains the ability to execute foreign policy. “As systemic forces shape domestic processes within states, which in turn constrain states’ ability to respond to systemic imperatives” (Taliaferro & Wishart, 2013, p. 50).

It is in this way also vital to take into consideration the connection between the state and the society. As the structure and strength of this relationship affects a state’s behaviour towards foreign policies (Rose, 1998, p. 147). Thus, by looking at both systemic as well as domestic constrains, neo-classical realism provides contextualised explanations (Taliaferro & Wishart, 2013, pp. 48–49). Globalisation in the contemporary world is one of those important foreign policy domains, and brought finance, trade, global warming, humanitarian crises and migration to the foreground of foreign policy issues, which led to the domesticisation of foreign policy (Verbeek & Zaslove, 2017, p. 3). Furthermore, regionalisation, mainly within the EU, expanded the number of actors involved in foreign policy, this led to adjustments of foreign policies by its member states, in order to cooperate with other member states (Bickerton, 2012, p. 4). This raises another assumption within the neo-classical realism thought. Especially, in bureaucratic and democratic nations where various internal power struggles such as the presence of different political parties can hinder efforts to implement desirable foreign policy outcomes (Taliaferro & Wishart, 2013, p. 58).

Balfour et al. (2016, p. 16), agree with the connection, suggesting that domestic developments shape a country’s foreign policy, but at the same time foreign policy influences domestic politics. This makes it vulnerable to inside-out and outside-in patterns – ‘a perpetual loop of interaction’ (Hill, 2013, p. 94). This loop even contributes to a gap within the dynamics of
decision making on issues that are vital on internal- as well as on external level, which poses a challenge to democracy in terms of effectiveness and legitimacy (Balfour, et al., 2016, p. 52). In other words, when policy making decisions are made on a transnational level, instead of on a national level, they raise the question of democratic legitimacy in world politics (Chryssogelos, 2018, p. 27). With utilising the broken link between elites and ‘the people’ the PRR is invading this gap, which mainstream political parties have left behind. The question of democratic legitimacy is especially visible in Europe, where European integration transformed the nation state into the ‘member state’. This is a term coined by Bickerton (2012, p. 14), that with the emergence of the ‘member state’ the horizontal ties of identity and loyalty between national executives in the EU strengthened. However, the same horizontal ties are thin and fragile in comparison with vertical link characterised by the nation state (Bickerton, Introduction, 2012, p. 14). Therefore, the PRR challenging the authority of the ‘member state’, is a reaction to minimalizing national democracy in order for regional integration to flourish (Mair, 2011, pp. 14–15).

Nevertheless, De Cleen and Stavrakakis (2017, p. 305) suggest that these normative and structural gaps between state and society are not the sole indicators for the emergence and content of populism in foreign policy. In their view, it is also shown how political actors are involved in the discursive construction of the categories they represent. As meaning is central to human societies and specifically to politics, all meaning relies on a socially constructed discourse elements and identity of the ‘people’ (De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017, p. 305). Mouffe (2005, p. 69) partly agrees with the discursive element, although the reference to ‘the people’ is not the problematic element within PRR. She suggests that the problem lies in the way how this ‘people’ is constructed. The discourse is right-wing because of a strong xenophobic voice, which makes all immigrants a threat to the identity of the people. At the same time, multiculturalism is depicted as something that is being imposed by the elites against the popular will (Mouffe, 2005, p. 69).

It thus can be considered that PRR connects on external referents at two intersections: state and society, and domestic and international, especially in the internationalised state. But the discursive approach also leads to a more comparative research of populism in an internationalised context. The dislocations as a result of globalisation in countries or regions lead to frustrations, which get constructed around the representational claim of the ‘people’ (Chryssogelos, 2018, p. 28). So, “populist agendas under globalisation should be compared less in terms of policy content than of the form with which demands are put forward” (Chryssogelos,
Plageman & Destradi (2019, p. 299) acknowledge this statement, suggesting that populism only has a limited direct impact on the ‘substance’ of foreign policy, but it has wide implications on the processes of foreign policy making and on its communicative approach.

Another important element to be taken into consideration in regards to foreign policy is whether a PRR party can only thrive when part of the opposition, or also has its potential when part of government? In fact, the relevance of party politics for foreign policy is increasing proportionately (Chryssogelos, 2017, p. 7). Mouffe (2005, p. 70) reviewed the Austrian FPÖ (Freedom Party of Austria) and is clear in her approach advocating that PRR only seems able to strive when part of opposition. Consequently, when part of government, the appeal of the PRR diminishes. Chryssogelos (2017, p. 8) on the other hand, raises the opinion that when PRR is part of a coalition government they tend to endorse extreme foreign policy positions. Furthermore, junior coalition partners can try to influence a coalition government’s foreign policy with taking up key cabinet posts or even attempt to exploit a threat to bring down the government (Verbeek & Zaslove, 2015, p. 530; Chryssogelos, 2017, p. 8). This happened in Italy in 2009, when LN (Italian Northern League) a PRR party, was junior partner of the coalition. With being responsible for the Interior cabinet, a controversial security law was passed, which criminalised illegal immigration and enhanced local security through the creation of civilian patrols (Verbeek & Zaslove, 2015, p. 539).

It can also be noted that the PRR does not always have a straightforward position regarding foreign policy matters when part of a coalition government. Firstly, it takes into consideration their countries’ party competition and repositions itself accordingly (Chryssogelos, 2017, p. 10). Moreover, PRR can also be attributed to populism’s thin ideology, meaning that certain key foreign policies close to the ideology of the PRR are marked as vital when part of a coalition government (Verbeek & Zaslove, 2015, p. 542). Therefore, PRR parties have a few core issues which they abide, however their unpredictability on a wide range of international issues “cloaks foreign policy-making in increasing uncertainty” (Balfour, et al., 2016, p. 49). Lastly, the presence of PRR parties in coalition government leads to another factor. As mainstream leaders have a tendency of utilising the PRR discourse in order to strengthen their rhetoric, this benefits the populists and also moves traditional parties further to the right. For example, when political leaders are influenced by PRR domestically, due to discontent with multiculturalism or

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3 When immigrants reached overcrowded Italian islands, the government even increased their efforts to control the coastlines and borders. Furthermore, the security law also led to the government’s deployment of the army against immigrants and a ‘crackdown’ on Roma. These actions were even challenging international and European law (Verbeek & Zaslove, 2015, p. 539)
globalisation, actions taken on an international level could be affected by these domestic constraints, instead of focussing on what is really at stake (Balfour, et al., 2016, pp. 18–20; Pirro & Kessel, 2017, p. 408).

2.3 Populism and European integration

This line of argumentation can also be applied to the direction of European integration. It is researched that political parties which are part of a coalition tend to construct more ‘pro-EU consensus’ (Taggart & Szczersiak, 2013). When PRR is therefore part of the government, they reduce their Euroscepticism, which results in a radicalisation of Euroscepticism when a PRR party becomes part of the opposition (Pirro & Kessel, 2017, p. 408). However, this is not the case when there is a populist government. The governments of Law and Justice (PiS) in Poland, and the one of Viktor Orban in Hungary strongly challenge European integration based on nationalist populism. Their discourse revolves around the revival of popular sovereignty, meaning that power from EU should return to the nation-state (Chryssogelos, 2018, p. 31). Vice-versa, the opposition in both Poland and Hungary see the EU membership as a last assurance for the survival of liberal democracy in their countries (Chryssogelos, 2018, p. 32).

Thus, European integration is a major topic for the PRR. The EU can be seen as an example of deeply institutionalised regional organisation. Their reform and expansion over the years meant that the nation-state became increasingly influenced by decisions made by the EU (Verbeek & Zaslove, 2015, p. 529). It is important to note, however, that the EU did not evolve into a federal state: European integration locates itself at a junction between internal and external policy. So on the one hand, it created transnationalisation of politics through the free movement of people, goods, capital and services. On the other hand, these developments also guided towards disaffection, contestation and disruption, which are essentially topics what the PRR trades on (Balfour, et al., 2016, p. 17). The PRR therefore sees the EU as a project that endangers the sovereignty of native people on a national level and the ‘cultural homogenity of nations’ through the free movement of people (Pirro & Kessel, 2017, p. 407). This EU-pessimism can be situated into two different categories: hard vs soft Euroscepticism, a typology developed by Szczersiak & Taggart (2008). This frequently used distinction sees ‘hard’ Euroscepticism as a fundamental opposition towards the EU and European integration, and it even goes as far as withdrawing from EU membership. ‘Soft’ Euroscepticism on the other hand, refers not to a strong opposition towards the EU, but several policy areas of a party are not in line with the idea of European integration (Szczersiak & Taggart, 2008, pp. 247–248).
Another crucial debate that has to be taken into account is whether Euroscepticism is part of strategy (Taggart, 1998) or ideology (Hooghe, Marks, & Wilson, 2004) when a political party positions itself towards European integration (Mudde, 2011). In the case of PRR, it can be considered that they take both a strategical as well as an ideological stance towards Euroscepticism. Strategically, PRR can constantly change their stance on foreign policy in order to increase electoral results. For example, it can move from a ‘hard’- to ‘soft’ Eurosceptic stance, or vice-versa (De Vries & Edwards, 2009, p. 21). Ideologically, the PRR rejection of the European integration project is based on its stance of national sovereignty and its opposition against a dissolution of strong national identities (De Vries & Edwards, 2009, p. 21). Therefore, Gomez & Llamazares (2013, p. 810) analysed that the PRR family uses its European integration stance in order to structure a relationship with their voters. Furthermore, they even managed to link their Eurosceptic mind-set with other core ideologies such as anti-immigration and the importance of crises around globalisation and European integration. This, in particular has led to a transformation of interparty competition in Europe, which benefits the PRR (Gómez-Reino & Llamazares, 2013, pp. 810–811).

However, it should be observed that although the PRR family sees crises as an important part of their discourse, Pirro & Kessel (2017, p. 406) researched five PRR parties in five different countries, and suggested that the crises mentioned in the footnote did not lead to a prevalent impact on the discourse of PRR parties, nor a change towards ‘hard’ Euroscepticism. This was mainly due to the fact of various strategies implemented by their leaders. Hence they concluded that the PRR’s perception is still “united in its opposition to Europe” (Pirro & Kessel, 2017, p. 406). When comparing the crises issues with the post-functionalism theory of European integration, it led from a ‘permissive consensus’ towards a ‘constraining dissensus’ of the mass public opinion supporting the European integration project (Hooghe & Marks, 2008). This reasoning could explain the paralysing of EU institutions and its member states during the 2015 migration crisis. Resulting in a mobilisation of right-wing populists by activating citizens holding exclusive nationalist identities. However, it cannot clarify that the Eurozone crisis led to a deepening of European integration, despite the public opinion and the rise of the PRR Eurosceptic parties (Börzel & Risse, 2018, pp. 84–85). These views will be further elaborated in the next chapter, where European integration theories and positions of EU authorities on the PRR topic will be examined.

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4 Important crises that definitely have to be taken into consideration are the financial- and Eurozone crisis running from 2008 till the Greek Euro crisis of 2015 and the 2015 migration influx crisis (Pirro & Kessel, 2017, p. 406).
3 Theoretical extension: European integration and the crises for the European Union

The upcoming chapter will serve as a theoretical extension on the literature review. As could be seen in the literature review, the PRR has been on the rise due to changes in the global order and therefore also affecting regional organisations with its strong stance against European integration. It is interesting to gain insight as to how this phenomenon is affecting European integration and how does the EU respond to this threat. This chapter will thus have its focus on the European integration project, its accompanying theories and the response of the EU authorities towards this rising issue. This will eventually lead to a two-way approach, firstly focussed on the PRR perspective and secondly, the retaliation of EU institutions. Therefore, the combination of chapters 2 and 3 will form a base towards the fifth chapter, in which a case study will test and add extra information to the existing literature.

3.1 European integration theories

In the early literature, two main European integration theories are put forward: neofunctionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism (Hooghe & Marks, 2008; Diez & Wiener, 2009; Hooghe & Marks, 2019). Neofunctionalism was first formulated in the late 1950s by Haas (1958, p. 16), and he defines it as “the process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties and political activities toward a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states”. Therefore, neofunctionalists perceive international relations as an interchange of societal actors, rather than explaining it as only a game between states (Hooghe & Marks, 2019, p. 1114). Intergovernmentalists, – first put forward by Moravcsik (1993) – base their theory on an earlier approach of ‘intergovernmental institutionalism’ focussing on interstate bargaining and institutional compliance. Three core elements are put forward as being essential for intergovernmentalism: “a liberal theory of national preference formation, an intergovernmentalist analysis of interstate negotiation, and the assumption of rational state behavior” (Moravcsik, 1993, p. 480). Thus, the central claim of both theories is that economic interdependence and costs and benefits are the sole drivers of European integration. Moreover, the politicisation of domestic politics serves as a driver for delegating authority to the supranational level (Börzel & Risse, 2018, p. 86).

However, it is of vital importance to look beyond these economic analysis in order to fully understand European integration (Hooghe & Marks, 2008, p. 5). Postfunctionalism, the third European integration theory considered in the literature, and first introduced by Hooghe &
Marks (2008), “conceives European integration as a conflictual process arising from incompatible belief systems. It is a form of jurisdictional restructuring that, like the development of the national state, has produced a profound cultural divide. Hence the range of possible outcomes under postfunctionalism encompasses not only the status quo or its punctuated reform, but also disintegration” (Hooghe & Marks, 2019, p. 1117). Therefore, European integration according to postfunctionalism activates various collective identities, whether someone holds a pure exclusive identity or takes into consideration a more inclusive one (Hooghe & Marks, 2008, p. 13). People who hold exclusive identities and have a strong love for their country are thus incompatible with European integration. The PRR parties are the main drivers in this context, the stronger the party, the more an individual feels like an Eurosceptic. This also works vice-versa in the power of framing, people who hold inclusive identities are not influenced by the strength or existence of a PRR party (De Vries & Edwards, 2009, p. 21).

The systemic effect is to try and separate societies on a cultural divide, that conceivably depends on a long-lasting socio-political cleavage, but also on the transnational cleavage where the PRR is suspicious of the European elite (Kriesi, et al., 2006; Hooghe & Marks 2018, p. 111). The transnational cleavage as put forward by Hooghe & Marks (2018) introduces the idea that the EU is a shock for the radical right as it diminishes the national sovereignty on the one hand, and opposes cultural values on the other hand. While transnationalism is coined as a gain for all, it actually proved to create many losers. The cleavage idea connects issues that at first do not seem important for political parties. However, as the cleavage degenerates into serious conflict, the issues connected to them suddenly become part of the ideological core of a political party, and the PRR in particular, mobilises on these issues (Hooghe & Marks, 2018, p. 123). In this way postfunctionalism acknowledges European integration as a phenomenon for political conflict, where it evokes ‘the dimensionality of party competition’, the strategic interaction of political parties and voter choice (Hobolt & Tilley, 2016, pp. 985–986).

Thus, characteristics of the postfunctionalism theory can actually explain how EU authorities gave rise to the PRR in times of crises. Firstly, the change from ‘permissive consensus’ towards a ‘constraining dissensus’ among the mass publics. This limited the decisions of EU friendly elites attempted to deepen European integration and it became a major cause for crisis. Since the constraining factor blocked member states’ ability to delegate national sovereignty at an EU level (Börzel & Risse, 2018, pp. 84–86). Secondly, postfunctionalism asserts collective identities as an important factor for political mobilisation in the form of the GAL/TAN cleavage.
(green/alternative/libertarian vs traditional/authoritarian/nationalist), which makes it a two-level game. On the one hand, it can promote integration, but on the other hand it can also prevent it (Hooghe & Marks, 2008, pp. 16–17). For the PRR, which can be considered the TAN side of the spectrum, rejection of European integration becomes a strong part of their core strategy. It weakens national sovereignty and it undermines the national community. This kind of theorising resulted in the politicisation of identification patterns and accounted for how the constraining dissensus hampered a common European response to the refugee inflows (Börzel & Risse, 2018, p. 87).

Although it can be noted that the member states developed a whole set of joint measures to ‘share the responsibility’ (Council of the European Union, 2015) for refugees who already entered the EU and future refugees coming to the European continent. However, this shared responsibility has failed for “effectively register and process those in need of protection and who are not returning to their home countries or safe third countries they are transited through” (European Commission, 2016, p. 3). In the failure of a joint responsibility on a European level, especially with trying to delegate efforts towards supranational institutions. These efforts to depoliticise the issues completely failed and national governments took matters into their own hands with tightening their own borders. In turn, it fuelled the right-wing populist Eurosceptic parties (Börzel & Risse, 2018, p. 91). Thus, in this case, the Eurosceptic parties strongly politicised the issue and helped with the refusal of common EU solutions.

However, it is also salient to acknowledge that characteristics of postfunctionalism cannot explain an actual deepening of European integration during the euro crisis (Schimmelfennig, 2014; Niemann & Ioannou, 2015; Börzel & Risse, 2018). Initially, EU policies concerned with the euro crisis, changed into a domestic character and were politicised. Furthermore, they sparked mass protests and a loss in support and trust for the EU (Schimmelfennig, 2014, p. 323). Thus, postfunctionalism theory would explain the euro crisis as a response of domestic politics in its rise of nationalist opposition towards European integration (Hooghe & Marks, 2018, pp. 109–110). The PRR parties that were on the rise back then focussed its discourse on the public opinion, and individuals’ exclusive identity with becoming increasingly visible in the tabloid media (Hooghe & Marks, 2019, p. 1119). This kind of identity politics is in combination with a ‘constraining dissensus’, and would lead to a standstill in integration or even bring the Eurozone to a collapse (Schimmelfennig, 2014, p. 323; Schmidt, 2014, p. 199).

What happened instead was an approach where important issues were depoliticised and delegated towards supranational institutions, something that could be characterised by
neofunctionalism (Börzel & Risse, 2018, p. 84). The delegation empowered the European Commission and the European Central Bank (ECB) and led to credible commitments to international cooperation, protected political pressures and electoral accountability on the one hand. On the other hand, it removed decisions from the domestic governments (Schimmelfennig, 2014, p. 334). It can be noted that, despite the process of the euro crisis management being intergovernmental, with multiple member states involved with a shared preference for saving the euro. However, to preserve the common currency, member states had to transfer their fiscal competences to the EU level. This led to a minimised political conflict, which drove integration forward (Börzel & Risse, 2018, p. 89) and unexpectedly increased the European Commission’s role in economic governance (Bauer & Becker, 2014). Schimmelfenning (2014, p. 335) therefore suggests that member states during the euro crisis were able to exclude Eurosceptic parties from government and when survival of the Eurozone was at stake avoided the ‘constraining dissensus’ as postfunctionalism proposed.

3.2 The identity game of the European Union

Nevertheless, it can be noted with the rise of PRR and its powerful Eurosceptic voice in recent years the European level game has more and more become an identity game and one that is politicised. European authorities struggle to find a common solution towards this threat. To start with, during the euro crisis, debates heavily involved an identity game of ‘the Europeans’ against the PRR. However, during these debates ‘self/other’ distinctions were rarely made, it was not a debate about European borders, but rather about political and economic order (Börzel & Risse, 2018, p. 98). When millions of refugees reached the European borders the discourse completely changed. Suddenly, the identity discussion was about migration and how they fuel identitarian and cultural feelings: ‘who are we’ and ‘who belongs to us’ (Curtis, 2014). In these debates surprisingly it was not about national priorities, but rather about Europe as a whole: an open and cosmopolitan Europe vs an alternative ‘nationalist Europe’ or ‘Fortress Europe’ (Risse, 2010, pp. 245–246). The latter are PRR parties, who rally nationalist identities against the inclusive European identity (De Vries & Edwards, 2009, p. 9). Therefore, this time the discussion was not driven by economic or political issues, but a conflict between European identity and national identity (Börzel & Risse, 2018, p. 100).

This notion is shared by Hooghe & Marks (2008, p. 21), who advocate that European integration is a project from the mainstream parties, and the PRR is challenging this in terms of identity.

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5 Merkel as the responsible European person: ‘The euro is our common fate, and Europe is our common future.’ (New York Times, 2010) vs. the PRR who tried to deploy nationalist feelings against the ‘lazy Greeks’ and others.
Therefore, postfunctionalism is not about an expanding gap between the elite and the public, because this gap has always been wide. The ‘permissive consensus’ that was visible and used to help with furthering integration levels, without much domestic refusal, is now eroded. In turn, the European issues have become significantly more politicised (Hooghe & Marks, 2008, p. 21). Furthermore, when the PRR used its strong discourse, the elites did little to counter argument these identity claims. Instead of focussing on a ‘communicative discourse’ as explained by Schmidt (2008) with providing a counter-vision of a multi-cultural Europe and therefore engaging with the inclusive national identity (Börzel & Risse, 2018, p. 101). What happened is that certain elites even used PRR vocabulary and copied campaigns on key EU-related issues. This ‘adaptation technique’ is in the PRR’s advantage, as this is a perfect example of paralysed policy response. The circle of Europe’s failure in the migration crisis, leads to heightened tensions and eventually to decreasing levels of common solutions (Balfour, et al., 2016, pp. 50–51).

Fortunately, a positive note can also be recognised in this identity discussion. To begin with, some public opinion figures. Debomy & Tripier (2017) researched European public opinion following the peak of the migration crisis, and found some interesting insights. Firstly, despite the various crises the support for the EU remained positive, with 53% stating that member states have benefited from the EU against a 16% ‘not benefited’ and 29% ‘mixed views’. Furthermore, a slight majority of 45% tends to be fairly optimistic for the future of the EU (against 35% being fairly pessimistic). Though it has to be noted that the trust levels have slightly decreased over the years, but trust in EU institutions is still higher on average than towards national institutions (Debomy & Tripier, 2017, p. 22). Interestingly, the public opinion is still one of

![Figure 3.1 Identification with nation and/or Europe (EU average, 2005–2019)](Image)

Source: (Eurobarometer, 2020).
Europeanisation of identities. Immigration is considered to be the main issue in the EU by far and a large majority (69%) agrees with a common European policy on migration. Therefore, the public still holds a significant inclusive identity as introduced by Hooghe & Marks (2008), where the national identity is accompanied by a European one. This can be confirmed by figure 3.1.

The more people identify with Europe, the more people are prepared to accept economic governance within a European framework as researched by Kuhn & Stoeckel (2014). Moreover, Gerhards & Lengfeld (2013) discovered that these inclusive identities lead to rising levels of social integration within the EU. European citizens tend to allow each other equal social and political rights, in contrary to people holding exclusive nationalist identities, who strongly oppose transnationalism. Thus, even though trust levels have slightly decreased as a result of the various crises, there is no evidence for negative effects on the European identification level (Debomy, 2017; Eurobarometer, 2020).

Secondly, the inclusive identity within the EU proposes another important notion towards a more integrated Europe, one aimed at the international playing field. When the Juncker commission presented its joint communication for the strategic outlook with China in March 2019, interestingly the document took a geopolitical stance. It identified China as both a cooperation partner, but also a systemic rival and economic competitor (European Commission, 2019). This was the start for European institutions and member states to define a more rational and cooperative stance towards the ‘communist China’. Furthermore, the recognition of a systemic rival also marks the entry into power politics by the EU, since the essence of power politics is based on the division between friends and opponents (Laïdi, 2019, p. 7). This is shared by Borrell & Breton (2020), who suggest that ‘soft power’ politics is no longer enough in today’s world, and therefore to complement this with a ‘hard power’ dimension in order to defend European interests and enforce its vision of the world. Next to China, this is also a strong stance towards US and their backing out of multilateralism and its leader who regards allies as a burden and Russia’s revisionism that attacks the liberal world and its institutions (Blockmans, 2020). The leaders from these great powers all share the same idea, which is a deep attachment to national sovereignty and a hostility against sharing it. “There is a close link between

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6 These results come from 2017, therefore it could be assumed that the moment this thesis is written immigration made place for the Covid-19 virus as the most important issue.
liberalism and the sharing of sovereignty, just as there is a very strong link between the assertion of national sovereignty and illiberalism inside and outside Europe” (Laïdi, 2019, p. 7).

This illiberal challenge is also increasingly visible within the EU, a challenge which the EU thought it had overcome (Börzel & Risse, 2018, p. 102). In Hungary and Poland, with their strong populist discourse and hard Eurosceptic ideas, it challenges the protection of basic liberties. Thus, not the great powers, but those states within the EU form the biggest challenge to the legitimacy of the EU (Hooghe & Marks, 2019, p. 1125). The main reason for this, according to Hooghe & Marks (2019, p. 1125), is that they do not pose an economic threat and adhere to the rules of the single market. However other events undermine the core values of the EU, mainly the backsliding of the liberal democracy and the diminishing rule of law in Hungary and Poland. What makes this such a challenge is the difficulty of forcing sanctions on them. Because the European Council is hampered by the unanimity vote minus one for determining certain outcomes, therefore Poland and Hungary can always veto each other. Furthermore, domestic legislation is not reinforced by a secondary legislation such as a European one. These two phenomena reveal the unwillingness of national governments to authorise supranational institutions to mediate in domestic practices (Hooghe & Marks, 2019, p. 1125).

3.3 The changing motion of European integration

This motion leads to three compelling changes within the European integration project, as explained by Genschel & Jachtenfuchs (2016), in the form of integration of core state powers, differentiated integration as introduced by Schimmelfennig & Winzen (2014) and Schimmelfennig’s (2019) differentiated disintegration. The European integration of core state powers can be explained as follows: “the increasing involvement of EU institutions in key functions of sovereign government including money and fiscal affairs, defence and foreign policy, migration, citizenship and internal security” (Genschel & Jachtenfuchs, 2016, pp. 42–43). The EU’s involvement is measured in three ways: formal authority, capacity building and regulations, and over the years became a normal feature of European constitution and European politics. However, the strange part in EU’s case is they rather opt for assisting in national policymaking than promote centralisation in a supranational union (Genschel & Jachtenfuchs, 2016, p. 46). This makes it a case of differentiated integration as introduced by Schimmelfennig & Winzen (2014). What is meant by this is the ability of member states to pull out of certain EU policies. For example, six member states do not entirely participate in EU policies on Justice and Home Affairs, and nine member states are not part of the European Monetary Union (Schimmelfennig & Winzen, 2014). Kelstrup (2006, p. 278) considers this as an integration
dilemma, where a member state encounters the dilemma between autonomy and influence in supranational integration.

This phenomenon leads to three outcomes which are beneficial for Eurosceptic member states within the EU. Firstly, as Leuffen et al. (2013, p. 19) researched, the differentiation is not a uniform process, so it does not produce two distinct groups of ins and outs. This leads to overlapping practices and ‘variable geometries’ of integration, which results in the fuzziness and scattering of EU policies and its image. Juncker (2017, p. 12) identifies this as the continuous challenge of closing the gap between promise and delivery. Secondly, as explained above, treaty revisions for the deepening of integration require a unanimous vote of all member states. Therefore, Eurosceptic member states enjoy their strong institutional bargaining power as they favour the status quo situation and use their veto to oppose further integration (Schimmelfennig, 2019, p. 5). Thirdly, as core state powers include strong perimeters for state building, they are tightly connected to sovereignty and it thus sparks a commotion between Eurosceptics and pro-Europeans. On the one hand, Eurosceptic member states favour differentiation, since they want to keep stateness a national attribute. On the other hand, pro-European member states support EU-involvement in core state powers, as this helps to expand the stateness of the EU (Genschel & Jachtenfuchs, 2016; Schimmelfennig, 2019, pp. 4–5). Thus, “the integration of core state powers does not contribute to ‘an ever closer union’ and a more federal Europe, but drives people further apart and leaves the EU territorially and institutionally fragmented” (Genschel & Jachtenfuchs, 2016, p. 50).

However, this story also has another side in the form of differentiated disintegration (Schimmelfennig, 2019). Perhaps the major characteristic of differentiated disintegration is the reversal of bargaining power. Whereas Eurosceptic member states enjoyed their status quo bargaining power when the EU tries to deepen the integration, this completely reverses and turns into bargaining weakness (Schimmelfennig, 2019, p. 23). Schimmelfennig (2019) takes Brexit as his prime example, explaining that both parties suffer from disintegration because of its interdependence between the actors. However, the ‘asymmetry of interdependence’ means that the EU has a superior institutional bargaining power, and ensures a ‘no deal’ Brexit is not tolerable (Schimmelfennig, 2019, pp. 23–24). Instead, the myth of ‘no-deal’ Brexit is only an effective means to keep the hard-Brexiteers together and sustain a popular will (Kettell & Kerr, 2015).

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7 In 2015 for example, 53% of UK imports (in goods and services) came from the EU and 44% of UK exports went to the EU. Vice-versa, the UK only reported 6% of EU exports and 4% of EU imports (Office for National Statistics, 2016).
2019, pp. 25–26). Therefore, the Brexit case most likely acted as a benchmark where other Eurosceptic member states are afraid to experience any kind of differentiated disintegration and as a result it deepened European integration with defending the integrity of its single market and raised the EU stakes (Schimmelfennig, 2019, p. 25).

This ‘more or less Europe’ discussion, as it is often framed by the PRR, that is also visible in the changing motion of the European integration as explained above, is, according to Juncker’s White Paper, way too simplistic (Juncker, 2017, p. 15). In his paper he identifies the occurring problems such as isolationism, geo-political threats, the different crises and the questioning of trust and legitimacy which get filled by populist rhetoric. As a response the former president of the European Commission presented five scenarios for the future of the EU, all in relation to the most important policies (single market & trade, economic & monetary union, Schengen migration & security, foreign policy & defence, EU budget and capacity to deliver). The scenarios aimed to tackle the misleading approach of ‘more or less Europe’. The scenarios in the White Paper therefore present a range from the status quo, to a focus on certain priorities or a collective leap forward (Juncker, 2017).

However, Bartholomeusz (2017) amounts the five scenarios to basically three views on the future of the European project as a whole: confederal continuity, national separation and federal integration. Where the last option is the most favourable, “why are the other options not serious possibilities? Because they will both, sooner or later, lead to the collapse of the EU itself” (Bartholomeusz, 2017). In his article he describes that a federal Europe is the only chance to solve the contradictions of the EU and therefore the only chance to face the challenges of the 21st century. He dedicates great importance to the dominance of intergovernmental decision-making as a contradiction and moral hazard of the EU and whether it is still possible to turn back the populist tide. Therefore, Bartholomeusz (2017) sees the European Commission as an important future player, the way neo-functionalism describes it.

Interestingly though as concluded by Genschel & Jachtenfuchs (2016, p. 55) the more the European institutions are involved in motions that define the process of national federations, the more it seems to have a reversed effect on the EU. “Perhaps ironically, the more involved the EU is, the less it looks like a state: more integration, less federation!” (Genschel & Jachtenfuchs, 2016, p. 55). Bickerton (2012, pp. 14–15) on the other hand sees a possible intergovernmentalist future, suggesting that even though disagreements within the EU could lead to the collapse of member statehood. Member states serve as a fundamental transformation in European politics and society and thus will not be overturned, however serious a crisis in
Europe may be. Bickerton et al. (2015) even appoint the post-Maastricht era of European integration to ‘new intergovernmentalism’.\(^8\) Where integration has been intensified because of policy coordination between member states, mainly because of ‘deliberative and consensual quality’ of EU decision making, with the European Council as the prime example.\(^9\) All this was done to pursue more integration, but most importantly, in reducing any power for traditional supranational bodies,\(^10\) such as the European Commission and the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) (Bickerton et al., 2015, pp. 704–705).

Lastly, a postfunctionalist future of the EU, revolves strongly around the nationalist-internationalist identity cleavage, the increasing involvement of domestic politics on EU issues and the mass politicisation of these issues (Hooghe & Marks, 2008). In their pessimistic view they consider “a downward pressure on the level and scope of integration”, mainly due to exclusive identities and EU issues increasingly becoming politicised (Hooghe & Marks, 2008, p. 21). However, both these suggestions are partly invalid. Firstly, as Debomy (2017) and the Eurobarometer (2020) show, European identities are increasingly inclusive identities and these inclusive identities can also be mobilised. This is shown by many ‘Pulse of Europe’ demonstrations that are happening in various European cities (Börzel & Risse, 2018, p. 102).\(^11\)

Secondly, despite mass politicisation appeared during recent crises, this has not led to disintegration within the EU project. In order to tackle the ‘constraining dissensus’ in member states, governments avoided governing coalitions with Eurosceptic parties, or from dependence on such parties, avoiding national referendums, and probably most importantly delegating decision-making to supranational institutions during the euro crisis (the ECB as prime example) (Schimmelfennig, 2014, p. 333; Grande & Kriesi, 2016, pp. 296–297). Interestingly though, these supranational institutions that received considerable executive and legislative power, are according to Bickerton et al. (2015, p. 705) *de novo* bodies which contain mechanisms for

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\(^8\) The post-Maastricht era can be characterised as a time spanning since the Maastricht Treaty signed in 1992 which marked the beginning of the European Union.

\(^9\) Deliberation and consensus-seeking have imposed themselves as dominant norms regulating the relations between national actors. In the new intergovernmentalism approach these terms are understood as ‘behavioural norms’ as introduced by Haas (2004). He believed European integration was not only about the creation of a decision making regime, but also about a particular set of behaviour that regulated a certain style of politics (Haas, 2004, in Bickerton et al., 2015).

\(^10\) According to Bickerton et al. (2015) the European Commission and the CJEU are traditional supranational institutions since they are established on a formal mandate. This means they can take independent decisions, because they enjoy enough autonomy from member states. Traditional intergovernmental institutions such as the European Council, the Council and the Eurogroup are founded on the representation on member states and thus deal with collective decision making.

\(^11\) Pulse of Europe is a pro-European citizen initiative founded in 2016. Following ten basic principles it aims to encourage citizens of the EU to strive for a pan-European identity. The organisation is largely self-organised and is active in over 130 cities in 20 European countries (Pulse of Europe, 2020).
member state representation. These bodies were created to address tasks which could have been delegated to the European Commission instead.

However, it would be inaccurate, based on these insights, to contradict the postfunctionalist theory. The strategy to de-politicise high salient issues came at a very high price: ‘the intergovernmental and technocratic deformation of European integration’ (Grande & Kriesi, 2016, pp. 296–297). Building on a postfunctionalist future, more and more citizens are becoming part of the agenda-setting in European politics. Thus, domestic and transnational politics of EU affairs are changing with becoming more tightly connected, and moreover it will lead to more conflicts between pro-Europeans and Eurosceptics (Grande & Kriesi, 2016, p. 298; Börzel & Risse, 2018, p. 102). This already became clear in the 2014 EP elections with sweeping victories by PRR parties in various member states. The PRR became the biggest party in France and the UK and gained substantial support in other member states such as Austria, Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands (Grabbe & Groot, 2014).

3.4 European integration in the European Parliament
In 2014, despite the populist parties increased their voting numbers in the EP elections, they stayed marginalised with having difficulties finding a common coalition. For example, Marine Le Pen leader of the French Front National failed to find 25 Members of EP from seven member states, a minimum to form an EP political group (Grabbe & Groot, 2014, pp. 37–38). However, the populists could still influence EU policies, legislation and funding with pressuring mainstream parties, the ability to obstruct parliamentary proceedings and shape voter attitudes and opinions (Grabbe & Groot, 2014, p. 38). Moving forward five years, prior to the 2019 EP elections there were significant worries that the populist movement would gain victories that would be disastrous for the future of the EU (Treib, 2020). Furthermore, Dennison & Zerka (2019) as part of a pro-European think tank, already sketched nasty prospects if populist parties gained over half the seats in the EP. Therefore, calling the elections: “it is already clear that this will be the most consequential parliamentary vote in the EU’s history” (Dennison & Zerka, 2019).

Although the prospects were very negative, the results appeared to be surprisingly pro-integrationist with celebrating unexpected victories. As Treib (2020, p. 2) observed the Eurosceptic voice did not lose terrain with having the same seat share as in the 2014 EP elections. Thus, “Eurosceptic parties are here to stay” reasoning that the 2014 elections were not just a short term effect for Eurosceptic parties (Treib, 2020, p. 2). In 2014 there was a strong divide along the left/right populist cleavage in the Eurosceptic arena, the 2019 elections showed
an increasing popularity for the PRR. Treib (2020, p. 6) identifies two reasons for this. Lots of radical left parties have changed their discourse and moved to a more pro-European stance. And secondly, some radical right parties gained major electoral gains. Especially this second reasoning confirms Hooghe & Marks (2008) GAL/TAN cleavage that political mobilisation asserts importance to collective identities. Finally, Treib (2020, pp. 10–11) suggests that the centralisation process of the EU led to a political backlash and gave the Eurosceptic a perfect narrative to mobilise against this. Thus, Eurosceptic parties continued electoral success and resistance against too much European integration gained popular support. He concludes that instead of excluding Eurosceptics by the mainstream parties, which may have helped in boosting votes for the PRR, Eurosceptic parties should be included into political decision making at the European level as this could result in less conflict-prone form of politics (Treib, 2020, p. 12).

However, the 2019 EP elections also saw some kind of isolation for Euroscepticism and this is going against Treib’s (2020) assumptions. Although The Lega Nord radical right party of Matteo Salvini gained a significant victory, Italy is side-lined as they watch how the EU embarks on a process of deepening its project (Tocci, 2019). Italy’s Salvini wanted to form a populist movement in the EP, just as Marine Le-Pen in 2014. However Tocci (2019) marks this as ‘completely irrelevant’. Firstly, outside Italy it was not clear there was a possibility for a pan-national populist movement. Secondly, the PRR, as they are so nationally minded, they pretty much disagree on any policy dossier. The point is they are nationalists and nationalists do not like to help each other (Tocci, 2019). These assumptions are shared by Galpin & Trenz (2019, pp. 666–667), as there were signs of transnational mobilisation by the far-right, these dynamics eventually turned into a ‘Europe-wide blame game’. Furthermore, the 2019 EP elections came to be known as an election of the ‘first order’ as for the first time in 40 years the voter turnout rose. And it characterised itself as a true politicisation of European public space, with not only fighting on domestic policies, but genuinely taking a stance in the pro-European vs Eurosceptic cleavage (Tocci, 2019). However, this discussion is not just one-dimensional, as the discussion around Europe is increasingly linked with values and preferences about democracy (Galpin & Trenz, 2019, p. 668).

All three European integration theories thus have various explanations of the different crises. Although it can be confirmed that crisis is a strong ‘tool’ for the PRR to gain popularity, this is especially done via the identity cleavage and politicisation issues as explained in postfunctionalism. Moreover, the systemic effect of dividing societies along a cultural divide,
which builds on the socio-political cleavage. However, EU institutions also increasingly make use of this identity game in forming their message along the inclusive nationalist identity of the EU. This can be acknowledged in their message in order to fight geopolitical threats, isolationism and the threat within the EU of trust and legitimacy. These threats, and especially the illiberal one framed by the PRR within the EU fuelled the changes of the European integration project (integration of core state powers & differentiated (dis)integration). Therefore, table 3.1 frames three possible future scenarios along the main schools of thought within the European integration project and consequently displays how populism is involved in these scenarios. Lastly, I ended with the recent 2019 EP elections, which confirm that the PRR/Eurosceptic voice is here to stay.

Table 3.1 Outside-in and inside-out interplay of the three European integration theories (Author’s conceptualisation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future EU-scenarios (outside-in)</th>
<th>Neofunctionalism</th>
<th>Intergovernmentalism</th>
<th>Postfunctionalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A federal Europe where the European Commission receives increasing authority. In this environment issues get depoliticised, and supranational organisations are favourable. In this way populist parties have a limited chance to exert influence over key decisions.</td>
<td>Member states are the fundamental player in European politics. The European Council will drive integration forward as a deliberative and consensual interplay between member states.</td>
<td>An identity game where the EU revolves around the inclusive identity of its people. This results in a strong interplay between domestic- and European decision making, and automatically leads to more political conflicts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist involvement (inside-out)</td>
<td>Populism radicalises its stance on the EU, and especially focusses its discourse on the illiberal character of the EU. As undemocratically chosen officials get authority and power.</td>
<td>Populist parties will try to become part of national parliaments to influence coalition partners on subjects that are close to the ideological core of populists. More drastically, populist parties form a single party coalition to preserve the status quo and minimalize further integration.</td>
<td>An identity game where populism touches upon the exclusive nationalist identity of its people. Domestic- and European politics strongly intertwine, where highly salient issues can be politicised by the populists. This will lead to more political conflicts and indirectly could lead to disintegration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What follows now is the methodology and case selection in order to test the assumptions which are put forward in the literature review and the theoretical extension. These assumptions can be divided into three distinctive categories: political, discourse and European and are further elaborated on in table 4.1 on page 37 and 38. By taking an inside-out and outside-in perspective focussing on the three European crises, I can, on the one hand trace the PRR party’s foreign policy ideas within a single member state that is examined. On the other hand, by taking an European standpoint I will be able to analyse how these two parties respond to each other. This way I can gain insight in whether the recent Covid-19 pandemic outbreak fuels the PRR, or helps EU institutions in framing a successful deepening of the European integration project. In the methodology I will thus identify key issues which will be researched in the case studies and explain which methods I will use in order to answer my research question in the conclusions.
4 Methodology and case selection

Following the conceptual framework presented in chapter two, the theoretical extension of the changing motion of European integration was explained in chapter three. Chapter five will use the most important outcomes of these chapters in order to put forward a case study where these regularities will be tested empirically. In this deductive way, these theories can be either confirmed or rejected which results in a combination of scientific objectives. It leads unambiguously to theory testing and possibly to theory development (Moses & Knutsen, 2007, p. 140).

Therefore, chapter five will include a two dimensional case study of the Dutch political party Partij voor de Vrijheid (Party for Freedom, PVV). Taking the PVV as a case study in order to test the theory put forward in previous chapters is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, its leader, Geert Wilders, was a former member of the liberal party Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy, VVD) and marked as the future leader of that popular party in the Netherlands. However, he left the VVD in 2004 as he had more extreme viewpoints which were not catered for. Those viewpoints include actively supporting the Iraqi-invasion by US troops, he argued that the EU should take an active role in democratising the Middle East, he had strong criticism against liberalism as he marked the Dutch elite as homogeneous, self-serving and not listening to its people. Lastly, Wilders started to view Islam as a totalitarian ideology putting it on the same pedestal as communism and fascism as the greatest threats to Western democracy (Wilders, 2006; Vossen, 2011 pp. 182–183).

As a result, in 2006 he established his own political party: PVV. After this establishment he increasingly moved in the direction of the PRR (Vossen, 2011, p. 184). Two striking examples confirm stronger nationalist views: his remark that European Muslims who do not follow Western values should be banned from Europe, and his stance against supranational cooperation, which led to a successful ‘no’- campaign in a national referendum for a EU-treaty where 61% voted against such a treaty (Vossen, 2011, p. 185). Moreover, he made a strong distinction between the ‘corrupt elite’ and ‘the people’, which is a key characteristic of populists according to Mudde (2004). “Not the political elite, but the people should have the opportunity to express more often their will, because together the people know better than that left-wing clique” (PVV Vision, 2010). Lastly, because of Wilders own fascination, he interestingly regards foreign policy to be a very important part of the PVV, in comparison with other PRR parties (Vossen, 2011, p. 186).
In my analysis, I will take the time frame of the three crises (economic crisis 2008 – migration crisis 2015 – Covid-19 crisis 2020) to put forward my research results. As the literature addressed crises to be a vital influence of PRR, it is interesting how this manifested in the Netherlands. This time frame also introduces the aspect that the PVV provided parliamentary support for a governing minority coalition in the Netherlands in 2010 and they were part of the opposition. Furthermore, during the EU budget negotiations of 2020 the Netherlands was marked as the leader of the ‘frugal blues’ countries (Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Austria) that were reluctant to support financial solidarity between EU member states (Zerka, 2020).12 The question that therefore arises are what do the frugal blues gain from the new agreements, and consequently will this awaken the cost-benefit analysis of the EU membership? It is thus striking to research if the Netherlands took this stance, because of the popularity of the PRR.

In the theory multiple explanatory mechanisms and positions were identified that seemed to be important for the PRR. The characteristics in table 4.1, I will use to further explore certain positions and actions taken by the PVV in the Netherlands. These characteristics are thus essential in providing the inside-out perspective.

Table 4.1 Explanatory mechanisms populist radical right (Author’s conceptualisation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political characteristics</th>
<th>PRR explanatory mechanisms and positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The growing traction between the demands of representation and the demands of government. Responsive vs. responsible (Mair, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Easy solutions for complex situations (Moffitt, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreign policy vs. domestic politics: does transnational decisionmaking, instead of domestic raises the democratic legitimacy in world politics (Chryssogelos, 2018)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Only thrive when part of the opposition, or also has a potential when being part of government (Chryssogelos, 2017; Verbeek &amp; Zaslove, 2015; Mouffe 2005)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Utilising PRR discourse: do mainstream parties move further to the right in order to strengthen their rhetoric? Domestic constrains vs. international decisions (Piro &amp; van Kessel, 2017; Balfour et al., 2016).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12 The EP, the European Council and the European Commission negotiated the main elements of a package consisting of a €1.07 trillion framework covering the next seven years, including a temporary recovery instrument of €750 billion for the Covid-19 pandemic hard-hit countries along the lines of ‘Next Generation EU’ (European Commission, 2020).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse characteristics</th>
<th>Does PRR have a direct impact on foreign policy or just on the processes of foreign policy making (Plagemann &amp; Destradi, 2019).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Populist agendas: policy content vs. how demands are put forward (Chryssogelos, 2018).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European characteristics</td>
<td>PRR’s reducing of Euroscepticism vs. radicalisation of Euroscepticism (government vs. opposition) (Pirro &amp; Kessel, 2017).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hard vs. soft Euroscepticism, is it part of strategy or ideology (Mudde, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The European identity game: The PRR’s goal is to achieve cultural divide along socio-political cleavage (Hooghe &amp; Marks, 2019).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The politicisation of issues and political conflict on a EU-level are key drivers for PRR to gain popularity (Börzel &amp; Risse, 2018; Hooghe &amp; Marks, 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PRR favors differentiated integration and integration of core state powers (Genschel &amp; Jachtenfuchs, 2016; Schimmelfennig &amp; Winzen, 2014)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to further explore these positions, I will make use of two different methods. Firstly, as populism in foreign policy is best analysed at the two intersections of state and society and domestic and international relations (Chryssogelos, 2018, p. 28). I will use a qualitative approach in order to optimally research the explorative line of this thesis and thus make use of an in-depth content analyses of PVV’s party manifestos. I will keep in motion the neo-classical realist approach to ensure the two intertwinements. This can also be confirmed by the framework put forward by Alons (2007). In her framework she distinguishes these two intersections as vital in order to understand a state’s foreign policy preferences: “the polarity of the domestic system (the degree of concentration of power in the hands of government relative to society ‘state-society relations’); and the polarity of the international system (the degree of power concentration in the international system)” (Alons, 2007, pp. 211–212). In my analysis, I will focus on the regional perspective of the EU.

This framework is already put forward by Fenko et al. (2019) in order to investigate the link between Euroscepticism and populism in Central European and Eastern European states. The foreign policy tools that will be analysed are globalisation, its cultural aspect in the form of immigration and its political/economic aspect in the form of protectionism, and obviously a majority focus on European integration. This is similar to Verbeek & Zaslove’s (2015) research as they regarded these foreign policy tools to be important for the PRR. Besides introductory
reference to expert survey data, the strategic documents of the party manifestos are analysed. These documents are beneficial for qualitative content analyses and they are recognised to be the most reliable source of ideological stances (Laver & Garry, 2000). The party manifestos that will be used are those developed for national elections in 2006, 2010, 2012 and 2017 and those developed for the EP elections in 2009, 2014 and 2019. Of course it has to be taken into consideration that national elections are more important, than EP elections.

Secondly, “the impact of PRR has been to increase tensions, expose existing fractures and legitimise a political diatribe which uses confrontational tones and language” (Balfour, et al., 2016, p. 31). According to Chryssogelos, (2018, p. 28) party manifestos should be analysed by the form of which demands are put forward, rather than by its policy content. Therefore, in addition to the in-depth content analysis, discourse analysis is used to discover how language is framed by the PRR family. I will make use of the critical discourse analysis, as critical discourse analysis aims to “expose strategies that appear normal or neutral on the surface, but which may in fact be ideological and seek to shape the representation of events and persons for particular ends” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 5). Furthermore, critical discourse analysis is interested in investigating the link between language, power and ideology and is thus well-positioned to recognise the communication of political actors in various contexts (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 5). As there are several discourse-analytical approaches within critical discourse analysis I will focus on the discourse-historical approach. In the literature this particular approach has a strong focus on the discourses of nationalism, ethnicism and right-wing populism (Reisigl, 2017, p. 46; Sengul, 2019, p. 3). It can trace its roots back to Habermas’ Frankfurt School as it seeks to focus on culture, philosophy and language, rather than on political economy in overcoming social domination and oppression (Fairclough et al., 2011, p. 364; Sterling-Folker, 2013, p. 170).

Data for critical discourse analysis are often collected via various forms of political communication, such as party manifestos, political speeches and media reports (Sengul, 2019, p. 5). Therefore, the chosen party manifestos and three key speeches of Geert Wilders will be analysed. The key speeches are chosen along the line of the principles of ‘purposive sampling’, as this way of sampling “will yield the most relevant and plentiful data, given the topic of study” (Yin, 2011, p. 88). As a majority of the speeches and all the party manifestos are only available in the Dutch language all extracts are the author’s translation from the original. Each speech corresponds with a vital moment in one of the crises, as in this way I can analyse if and how the discourse changes over time and consequently, I am able to compare the speeches with the
party manifestos. Furthermore, this discursive element leads to a more comparative research of PRR in an internationalised context, as populist leaders create a discourse which get constructed around the representational claim of the ‘people’ (Chryssogelos, 2018, p. 28). Thus, I will draw my analysis on a set of five discursive strategies put forward by Reisigl and Wodak (2001) and two argumentation strategies developed by van Dijk (1997) as can be seen in table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Discursive and argumentation elements defining critical discourse analysis approach (Author’s conceptualisation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discursive strategies</th>
<th>Argumentation strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nomination: how are people/social groups referred to?</td>
<td>Strategies of positive self-presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predication: The characteristics and qualities attributed to certain policies</td>
<td>Strategies of negative other-presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspectivisation: The positioning of the speaker’s point of view.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentation: What arguments are used to support these characteristics?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensification: Intensifying the illocutionary force and thus the epistemic status of utterences. This refers to those structures of thought and speech that make argument and reasoning possible. It defines the limits of that what can be thought or said.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to find these discursive elements a set of linguistic devices is used. In discourse analysis, and DHA in particular, contextualisation and identification of such devices is vital to arrive at meaningful analysis. Such instruments are the use of *metaphors, stereotypes, rhetorical questions, fallacies*, among others.

From an outside-in perspective I will focus on responses from European institutions during the three crises. As analysed in the conceptual framework, crises are an important discourse of the PRR (Minkenberg, 2002; Moffitt, 2015; Pirro & Kessel, 2017). However, how do crises constrain or perhaps help European institutions in implementing new issues, which could indirectly help with a further deepening of European integration? The euro crisis and migration crisis are accepted to be among the worst crises in EU history. However, as 2020 is largely affected by the biggest crisis the world has seen in the last decades. In my opinion, it is captivating to discover whether Covid-19 actually helped the PRR in framing a stronger stance
towards European integration. Or has the pandemic and its large-scale European struggles actually led to a deepening of the European project? To find sufficient information on this topic, I will conduct an in-depth analysis of primary news articles from the Covid-19 crisis and focus on documents published by European institutions and European think tanks. Furthermore, as the euro crisis and migration crisis are already widely researched next to primary documents of European institutions I will also make use of secondary scientific literature.

To provide a better overview from the analysed documents, speeches and crises, appendix A on page 84 puts forward a time table with all the important dates in chronological order.
5 The Dutch populist radical right: Adopt crises to take back control

As explained in the methodology section, this fifth chapter will put forward the two dimensional case study of the PVV and their transformation of foreign policies based on PRR explanatory mechanisms and positions. Furthermore, insights are provided how European institutions responded to these PRR influences. I will explore the positions by focussing on the three crises that largely affected the EU (economic crisis 2008 – migration crisis 2015 – Covid-19 crisis 2020) and make use of party manifestos and key speeches in order to formulate valuable analysis. The inside-out and outside-in analysis will then be discussed and tested with the existing literature. Before diving into the analytics section, first I will provide an elaborate explanation of the PVV and its rise in politics.

5.1 The rise of the PVV

In 2001, as member of the VVD party, Geert Wilders was marked as the future leader of the Dutch liberal party. However, five years later, despite receiving various death threats, he left the VVD and established his own right-wing party PVV. Before his entrance into the Dutch parliament he wrote an influential piece ‘declaration of independence’ where he put forward his ideas for a better Netherlands. His goal: “give back the country to its people and start a frontal attack on the political elite of the Netherlands” (Wilders, 2005). This document can officially mark its direction towards the PRR, and already showed its strong stance against European integration. Firstly, Wilders accounted for the loss of Dutch national identity, centuries old roots and the selling of sovereignty in order to replace these for cultural relativism and a European super state. He, therefore, considered the EU as an undemocratic individual state, which stands above its member states and thus slowly abolishes the national democracy. Secondly, he favoured a strong immigration policy especially against Muslims (Wilders, 2005). Lastly, Wilders regarded referendums as vital in order to close the gap between the political elite and the people. This stance immediately paid off. With the build up towards the process of legitimating the Maastricht Accord (1992), it opened an intricate elite bargain to public inspection (Hooghe & Marks, 2008, p. 21). The rejection of the Accord in a national referendum in the Netherlands (with 61% voting against) revealed this elite-public gap and encouraged the populist rhetoric of Wilders that important decisions should be made with public opinion, instead of only relying on executive and legislature operating elites. Therefore, it defended the national community against the foundation of a European super state.

Interestingly though, Wilders distanced himself from other PRR parties within Europe, such as the British National Party, Front National (France), Vlaams Belang (Belgium) and the
Freiheitliche Partei (Austria) (Vossen, 2011, p. 186). However, he showed sympathy towards the Dansk Folkeparti, and Denmark itself as they successfully managed to secure an early opt-out from Asylum, Immigration and Judicial Co-operation in Civil Matters. This kind of differentiated integration marks the idea that an ever-closer EU with equal and solidary members is impossible (Adler-Nissen, 2008, p. 63). Following the literature, Denmark and Geert Wilders’ PVV clearly favoured autonomy over influence in the EU-setting. The motivation behind such decisions is thus to avoid a deepening of integration. Despite the favouring of autonomy, interestingly Wilders had a stance against protectionism in the beginning years of his party. He opted for a cooperation with other countries who believed in free trade and established negotiations with members of the North American Free Trade Agreement in order to develop an Atlantic Free Trade Association (Wilders, 2005).

His leaning towards North America is most likely a result of an expanding network of followers in the US, especially their shared vision for the Islamisation of Europe and the US. Corresponding this cultural aspect of globalisation, in 2005 and the following years, Wilders understood Islam and democracy as incompatible with each other, however he did envision that Muslims could be won for democracy. Moreover, international treaties seriously hindered implementing correct rules against the immigration problems, such as the inability to close the borders to prevent the immigration from countries such as Morocco or Turkey. Nevertheless, Wilders did not have problems with already integrated Muslims into the Dutch culture (Wilders, 2005). This ‘mild’ politicisation against immigration and Islamisation would change drastically as the popularity of the PVV increased.

This popularity made way for major electoral gains during the national elections on 22 November 2006. Whereas national polls only expected that a maximum of four seats could be realised, the PVV and Wilders eventually won nine seats (out of a total of 150 seats), making it the fifth biggest party in the Netherlands (Kiesraad, 2020). In figure 5.1 the popularity of the PVV, based on zetels (=seats) between 2006-2020 is displayed. In the literature, I put forward several assumptions to justify the rise of populism and PRR: voters endorse the standpoints of the PRR, disapproval of the internationalised state and cultural backlash, voters miss identification with traditional parties and thus PRR is a welcoming alternative, PRR’s powerful

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13 This instrument was the follow up of the initial ‘first phase’ of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) from 1999-2004. This programme highlighted EU’s ambition to develop a single asylum procedure (European Parliament, 2020).

14 American organisations such as Stop Islamisation of America, David Horowitz Freedom Center and Robert Spencer’s Jihad Watch are all inspired by Geert Wilders as the fighter of international Islamophobia (Vossen, 2011, p. 187)
plead of their discourse helps to form identification which give people hope and crises is a helpful tool for the PRR.

Aalberts (2012) researched why citizens chose to vote for Geert Wilders, and how to explain the popularity of the PVV. He comes to the conclusions that voters mostly instinctively feel attracted towards the PVV and a few of its standpoints. Moreover, the most important quality of Wilders is that he ‘awakes’ both citizens as well as elite politicians. His electorates appreciate the fact that Wilders uses clear and simple rhetoric in order to address important issues. Interestingly, the expressive side of politics is vital; “issues need to be appointed and discussed, the implementation clearly deserves a second place” (Aalberts, 2012, p. 74). This assumption can be shared with Mair’s (2011) two-way game in where the PVV distinctly aims to represent its supporters and in lesser terms being responsible. Accordingly, the followers of PVV feel most drawn to three ideological areas: its political message, the society and multiculturalism (foreigners in the eyes of PVV-supporters) (Aalberts, 2012, p. 75).

Figure 5.1 Seat distribution PVV 2006–2020. The graph is made up out of seven different polls, making it a consolidated range (minimum vs. maximum). Bullet points mark the outcome of the national elections and the star represents most predicted seats or lowest amount of predicted seats

Thus, the results of the 2006 national elections brought Geert Wilders and his party into Dutch politics with far-reaching consequences as a result. In the continuation of Wilders’ project both his rhetoric and his stance became more radical. This is also noted with the following graphs where figure 5.2 and 5.3 present data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey on the overall party leadership towards European integration and the relative salience of European integration in the
party's public stance (Bakker, et al., 2020). PVV’s stance is compared to its mainstream rival the VVD on a cross-temporal basis in order to assess the changes over the years.

Figure 5.2 Chapel Hill Expert Survey trend file 1999–2019. Note: 1= strongly opposed; 7= strongly in favour

Figure 5.3 Chapel Hill Expert Survey trend file 1999–2019. Note: 0=European integration is of no importance; 10= European integration is the most important issue

Overall orientation of party leadership towards European integration

Relative salience of European integration in the party's public stance

Source: (Bakker, et al., 2020).

Figure 5.2 shows PVV’s stance on the European integration aspect where orientation towards European integration is somewhat opposed in 2006, but becomes strongly opposed in the years that follow. Also the salience of European integration, displayed in figure 5.3, starts off equally neutral with the VVD in 2006. However, the topic becomes one of the most important issues of the PVV in the following years. The changes in this stance will now be further analysed taking on the time frame euro crisis starting in 2010, migration crisis 2015 and the Covid-19 crisis 2020.

5.2 Euro crisis

The global economic crisis erupted in September 2008, which resulted in the euro crisis in late 2009 and dragged on over the course of several years. Eventually it resulted in a further deepening of European integration with the establishment of various supranational institutions and therefore resulted in depoliticising controversial issues (Börzel & Risse, 2018, pp. 88–89). To arrive at such an outcome, European institutions avoided domestic involvement, which could potentially block or delay the process. In the Netherlands, the PVV increased its Eurosceptic stance with referring to the EU as “a superstate that wants to take our independence away … a people which is led by the elite has to say goodbye to a prevailing ideology” (PVV,
2010, p. 6). Also, the time frame 2009–2013 marked the creation of a new government with minority coalition of the PVV in 2010.

In 2009 the PVV entered the elections for the EP for the first time, with an election manifesto that was less than one page long (PVV, 2009). The aim of the manifesto was to reject the project of furthering European integration. The looming economic crisis resulted in a rhetoric where billions of euros should be spent on the Netherlands, instead of helping French or Polish farmers or building new roads in Bulgaria or Portugal with Dutch tax money. Furthermore, a strong dismissal towards abandoning any more veto powers, no enlargement of the EU and Turkey would never be welcome in the EU. However, Wilders was in favour of economic cooperation. Despite a turn-out of just 36%, the PVV became the second party with 17% of the votes (Kiesraad, 2020).

Consequently, Wilders continued this strong rhetoric in the build up towards the national elections of 2010. He compared the EU with former Soviet Union: ‘the EUssr’ and stated that this kind of EU nationalism is a degradation of democratic legitimacy. Democratic legitimacy, that according to Wilders could only be saved in giving a voice back to ‘the people’ with for example the implementation of a binding referendum; “its people understand, not the elite /…/ and let it be clear, the PVV takes the side of the everyday man and woman” (PVV, 2010, p. 17). Therefore, Wilders opted for only economic and monetary cooperation, and abandoned the political aspect. Furthermore, the Netherlands would receive all its veto powers back, absolute transparency of European subsidy and each EU-proposal that could affect the Dutch sovereignty would only be accepted when there is a clear majority in parliament (PVV, 2010, p. 19).

Eventually, the PVV gained a staggering 15.4% and a total of 24 seats, compared to the 9 seats in the 2006 elections, making it the third biggest party in the Netherlands (Kiesraad, 2020). Various parties did not want to form a coalition with the PVV, but because of such major electoral gains the PVV eventually formed as coalition partner in a government with the liberal VVD and the Christen-Democratisch Appèl (Christian Democrats, CDA).

Interestingly, this support to a minority coalition also led to the first compromise of Wilders. From his standpoint, this would be seen as a potential vital problem, as his party had a major appeal against the ‘corrupt elite’. However, based on the literature the governing role brought Wilders more to the responsible side in order to justify his standpoints with international- and domestic stakeholders (Mair, 2011). Although it sounded promising, within two years Wilders would betray his coalition partners and withdrew, thus choosing for his electorate. As part of government, it is striking to further analyse PVV’s stance during the euro crisis. Firstly, based
on the literature Schimmelfennig (2014, p. 335) suggested that during the euro crisis Eurosceptic parties were side-lined from government and thus circumvented the ‘constraining dissensus’ as is a vital character of postfunctionalism. What happened instead does hold certain characteristics with postfunctionalism. Wilders became increasingly visible in tabloid media in order to touch upon the exclusive identity of the public opinion and focussed its discourse on the political and economic issues of the EU (Schmidt, 2014, p. 199). Schmidt (2014, p. 206) arrives at the conclusion that EU’s elite leaders had difficulties in arriving at common solutions in the euro crisis since their discourse should satisfy the markets, the people, make the case to the media and convince one another. Wilders instead, arrived at solutions to satisfy its people.

The speech that I will analyse was printed in the *NRC Handelsblad*, abbreviated to NRC, on 16 June 2011. NRC is a newspaper of record in the Netherlands. In the speech, during the turmoil of the euro crisis, Wilders pleads for Greece to leave the EU and abandon the Euro (Wilders, 2011).

The Dutch citizen knows very well that his/her money is being gambled away to save a country which cannot be saved. The Greeks have cheated time and time again. They do not adhere to agreements. Now they have fallen so low that they can no longer even keep the agreements. The Greek economy is a laughing stock which is trapped in the euro.

The first sentence applies to the *discursive strategy of intensification* where ‘being gambled’ is used as a fallacy to try and convince the reader. The rest of the extract is dedicated to *discursive strategy of nomination* and to create a sense of *negative other-presentation*. By repeatedly presenting the Greeks as something negative. Furthermore, in using the rhetorical device of ‘fallen so low’ and ‘laughing stock’, a metaphor is created that exaggerates the nomination of the negative ‘other’.

The euro is built on the basis of lies and deceit. The euro has the illusion to create political European solidarity. Every member state needs to carry its own weight. Even a bail-out according to Article 125 of the Treaty of Lisbon is prohibited.

In this extract there are strong motions of the *discursive strategy of predication and argumentation* as Wilders wants to characterise the euro as an illusion, which cannot attribute to anything worthwhile. To support this predication, he uses the hyperbole ‘carry its own weight’ to exaggerate on the member state as being something individual. In the last sentence, Wilders creates a sense of *intensification* with referring that something is prohibited. Automatically supporting his earlier statement of the illusion, instead of European solidarity he considers the EU to be illiberal.
The Treaty of Lisbon on itself is a lie, it is almost identical to the European Treaty which got rejected by the Dutch electorate during a referendum in 2005, but was forced on us through the back door. Therefore, a big majority of the Dutch people is against providing aid to Greece, but those European leaders want to impose it on the Netherlands against our will. That is not leadership, but the bankruptcy of representative politics.

Firstly, in this extract he continues with his discursive strategy of intensification about the illiberalism aspect of the EU. Through the use of the fallacy of the ‘Lisbon Treaty being a lie’ and further on ‘the bankruptcy of representative politics’ he questions the legitimacy of the EU and constructed it in opposition to democratic principles, especially with using the referendum, which can be considered a vital tool of the PRR. Furthermore, he uses the strategy of nomination to create a strong sense of us vs. them. Through ‘forced on us’ and ‘against our will’ he tries to construct his message around the ‘people’ and considers ‘those European leaders’ as the enemy and corrupt elite.

One year ago the VVD was a fierce opponent of emergency aid to Greece. VVD and CDA – supported by the oppositional political lap dog PvdA – want to concede to Brussels. This is unbelievably stupid. Stop the support to Greece. The faster this poisonous adventure stops, the better. For our welfare, for our economy, for our democracy, but also for Greece itself.

In the last extract he goes a step further in the strategy of nomination calling it ‘our welfare’ and so on against the national elite. Particularly, he uses the ‘lap dog’ metaphor to refer to a Dutch political party. Moreover, in order to give extra ‘meat’ to the last sentence he uses the fallacy of a ‘poisonous adventure’ to try and construct the idea that the European aid towards Greece only has dreadful consequences for the Netherlands and ‘our’ nation state.

Interestingly, the mention of Article 125 of the Treaty of Lisbon, which prohibited bail-out, is the only remote mention of anything policy related. Instead, Wilders only constructed its claim around the ‘people’ and therefore focussed on how demands should be put forward. Furthermore, Wilders’ focal point was his rhetoric to blame the illiberal character of the EU institutions in depoliticising highly controversial issues such as the euro crisis. Mainly because European integration connects with core areas of state sovereignty and national identity, with EU policies becoming more domestically important, but also controversial. This leads to Eurosceptic public opinion and automatically gets mobilised by Eurosceptic parties such as the PVV (Hooghe & Marks, 2008). Thus, according to the postfunctionalist thought, the euro crisis would lead to a mobilisation of these Eurosceptic thoughts, with losses in support for the EU and thus changes in mainstream governments.

However, from an outside-in perspective, during the euro crisis, European institutions and governments managed to circumvent the ‘constraining dissensus’ and instead focussed on
isolating the crisis from entering mass politicisation (Schimmelfennig, 2014, p. 331). So how did this happen and what were the effects of these measures for the minority government in the Netherlands? Firstly, European institutions managed to delegate important issues towards supranational organisations. The Eurozone countries assigned the complete monetary policy to the ECB, as the ECB is both independent from EU institutions as well as from member states. Therefore, it could easily implement certain policies without the constraint of member states. For example, in order to bypass Article 125 of the Treaty of Lisbon with the strict ‘no-bailout-clause’ which states that “the Union and the member states shall not be liable for or assume the commitments of other central governments of any member state”. The Eurozone countries together with the ECB replaced this by providing public credit through institutions for indebted Eurozone countries, such as Greece. Even though, the highly solvent member states were sceptic, they all shared the same vision of the preservation of the euro and the Eurozone (Schimmelfennig, 2014, p. 328). However, Mark Rutte – then prime minister of the Netherlands and head of the VVD – was more reserved “we can only make the EU a successful corporation if everybody at home also behaves well” (Rutte, 2012).

Secondly, the avoidance of referendums. As could be read by the speech of Wilders, he felt like the Dutch people were betrayed with not adhering to the public opinion of the referendum in 2005. Referendums can thus be seen as a major conventional form for Eurosceptic parties to domestically politicise EU-level policies and thus constrain further European integration. EU treaties need to be ratified by all member states through referendum or parliamentary vote (Schimmelfennig, 2014, p. 333). Consequently, in the Netherlands, but also in Ireland, Denmark and France, this led to dissatisfaction for the ratification of a treaty, all through referendums. This process also seemed to unfold itself in Greece. When Greek prime minister Pandreou wanted to hold a referendum over the bailout package of the EU, Sarkozy & Merkel pressured to call off the referendum, otherwise Greece would not receive the bailout money (Treanor, 2011). Eventually, the Greek prime minister stepped down and the interim government accepted the package.

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15 The Treaty of Lisbon is the international agreement that forms the constitutional basis for the EU, it amended the Treaty of Rome (1957) and the Treaty of Maastricht (1992). Article 125 is part of union policies and internal actions – economic and monetary policy section of the treaty.
16 The first emergency aid for Greece in 2010 was provided by the European Financial Stability Facility, a private owned company which got backed by the highly solvent euro countries. The EFSF was eventually diminished and followed up by the permanent international financing institution; the European Stability Mechanism in September 2012.
Thirdly, a euro-compatible government formation. During the first part of the euro crisis the PVV was part of the minority coalition led by Mark Rutte’s VVD. Since Wilders had such a strong voice against supporting the euro and further European integration, this led to Rutte’s reserved response towards providing aid to Greece. This is in line with the literature, if the PRR enjoys wide domestic support, it leads the mainstream parties to adjust their international stance further to the right (Balfour, et al., 2016, pp. 18–20; Pirro & Kessel, 2017, p. 408). However, this approach can be seen from a positive/negative approach; due to popular public opinion for the PRR, it pressures the mainstream party to stay on track. Or negatively, the mainstream party only takes electoral reasons into consideration and thus jeopardises their own ideas to follow the PRR rhetoric (Schumacher & van Kersbergen, 2016, p. 309). Fortunately, in the Netherlands the first approach prevailed. When Rutte eventually accepted the bailout package for Greece, this was the straw that broke the camel’s back for Wilders. By betraying his coalition partners, Wilders chose for his electorate instead and pulled the plug out of the minority coalition government (Kollau, 2016).

From an inside-out perspective, in the case of the Netherlands, I can therefore share Mouffe’s (2005) assumption that the PRR is only able to flourish when part of the opposition. Mainly because of strong feelings of wrongdoing in the Greek process during the euro crisis led to a dissolution of the minority coalition. Furthermore, during PVV’s brief governing moment it tried to exploit influence over the coalition and its foreign policy, with trying to pressure the senior coalition parties and eventually bring down the government. These tactics can be ascribed to the neo-classical realism approach as suggested by Verbeek & Zaslove (2015, p. 530). As analysed in the literature, systemic domains in neo-classical realism filter through domestic constraints, and thus are strongly connected. Especially in bureaucratic and democratic nations various internal power struggles, such as the presence of a variety of political parties can seriously hinder desirable foreign policy outcomes (Taliaferro & Wishart, 2013, p. 58).

Moreover, Wilders and his PVV took an even more radical Eurosceptic stance in the run up towards the national elections of 2012, with their party manifesto titled ‘Their Brussels, Our Netherlands’. Therefore, I will analyse some quotes to show how Wilders’ rhetoric changed, in order to fuel the Eureject stance, instead of coming up with alternative solutions (PVV, 2012).

We are no longer boss of our own home. We are guests in our own country; no longer able to determine our own future, we are impotent spectators of un-Dutch policy, while the EU-nationalist elites celebrate and enjoy their perpetual lunches. There is no policy area where we will not be harmed by the blind inhabitants of the ivory towers in Brussels. /…/ We only
get back our own strength if we become boss of our own economy, so out of the EU and of course we go back to the guilder.

Europhile or democrat. Dutch freedom or Brussels slavery. Voluntary cooperation or commands from unelected Eurocrats. The euro or the guilder. Build our own castles or continue to transfer to Greece. Our interests are the Netherlands, and after that more Netherlands. Everybody their own culture, own decisions, own bills, own responsibilities.

These extracts show a strong sense of the discursive strategy of nomination and intensification where strategies are used for positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. Especially, the second extract gives the reader the opportunity to choose between ‘the positive Dutch society’ against the ‘corrupt elite in Brussels’. Furthermore, the use of fallacies – ‘We are guests in our own country; we are impotent spectators of un-Dutch policy’ – in the first part of the extract and hyperbolically speaking – ‘blind inhabitants of the ivory towers in Brussels’ – about the EU in the second part, Wilders tries to convince the reader, with an exaggerative note, that the Netherlands surrendered its sovereignty and decision making to Brussels. Thus, it comes to the rather extremist conclusion that the Netherlands should leave the euro and the EU.

In the build up to the 2014 EP elections, Wilders continued his stance towards the EU with leaving the EU, demanding back the money it lent to ‘bankrupt countries’ and being able to pursue national economic policies, such as to conclude ‘trade agreements with the rest of the world’ (PVV, 2014). Therefore, from an inside-out perspective, it can be suggested that Wilders and his PVV focussed its stance on the negative socio-economic and financial effects of European integration during the euro crisis. Furthermore, as a result of implementing certain European solutions during the euro crisis, the PVV ended the coalition and radicalised its Eurosceptic point of view while it became part of the opposition. This kind of strategy is in line with the literature. Nevertheless, the drastic radicalisation of his rhetoric did not help Wilders when he lost nine seats during the 2012 elections. From an outside-in perspective, during the euro crisis, the European institutions did their utmost to exclude Euro sceptic parties from involvement in policy related discussions and thus avoid mass politicisation. This in order to create favourable outcomes where European integration actually deepened, despite assumptions that the euro crisis would lead to a standstill in integration or even to a collapse of the Eurozone.

5.3 Migration crisis
Next to the salient European integration policy, the PVV considered the immigration issue as another vital subject within their standpoints, and especially their fierce rejection of Islam. It
was also the PVV who increasingly politicised it, referring to the Islam as a “political ideology; a totalitarian thought, aimed at domination, violence and oppression” instead of a religion, in the build up to the 2010 national elections (PVV, 2010, p. 13). Although, the official migration crisis and its arrival of refugees in Europe started in 2015, it was already prior to 2015 that Wilders voiced his discontent with the looming immigration problem. Firstly, when the minority government coalition was formed in 2010 the coalition agreement famously started with the following statement (Rijksoverheid, 2010).

The three parties VVD, PVV and CDA differ on the nature and character of the Islam. The divide lies in characterising Islam either as a religion or a (political) ideology. Parties accept each other’s difference in this topic and will act accordingly on the basis of their own views.

Wilders maximally exploited this difference in order to try and create internal disagreements between the two senior coalition partners, and to push his foreign policy attitudes to the top of the agenda. He succeeded in the early months of 2012, when Wilders established a ‘hotline’ for people to anonymously report nuisance for Eastern European, and Polish people in particular. This hotline led to furious reactions from the Polish embassy, the Dutch parliament, but also the EP. On the one hand, Mark Rutte, then prime minister, refused to distance himself from the problem, and the VVD Dutch social affairs minister even acknowledged the assumption that Eastern Europeans cause nuisance. On the other hand, CDA representatives found the hotline ‘polarising and stigmatising’ (Kollau, 2016). Although, the hotline did not lead to official policy changes it did create disagreements between the coalition partners, and perhaps more importantly it generated international buzz (Ebels, 2012).

It can be suggested that Wilders’ inside-out perspective was increasingly aimed at politicisation of the immigration issue, and Islam in particular, in two directions: firstly, to cater the exclusive Dutch identity and secondly, to fight the anti-establishment order with counterbalancing the (inter)national elite.

The mass immigration is intensely harmful to the Netherlands. Apart from the problems we created with Islam which we imported, we also experience an overrepresentation of non-Western immigrants in the areas of antisemitism, homophobia, women’s discrimination and criminality. Non-western immigrants cost the Netherlands 7.2 billion euro each year. /…/ The PVV chooses for the rights of gays and women and values traditional Judeo-Christian and humanistic civilisation which turned the Netherlands into a success.

In this extract from the 2012 election manifesto Wilders tries to negatively exploit the immigrants (PVV, 2012). With associating immigrants with homophobia and discrimination, he not only depicts the immigrants as intolerant, he also uses nomination and predication to try and create the Dutch exclusive identity as superior. Ironically, in order to characterise this, he
uses secularising values such as gay rights. Historically though, these rights are ascribed to anti-religion instead of the ‘traditional Judeo Christian rights’. However, these progressive values are crucial in the Netherlands to win electorate, as the Dutch population can be characterised as highly secularised. This is what makes the PVV such a peculiar case, compared to other populist parties in Europe. For example Matteo Salvini’s Lega Nord strongly supports traditional Italian references to love and families (Stille, 2018) and Marine Le Pen condemns gay marriage and denounces the possibility for gay families to adoption (Damhuis, 2020, p. 165).

Nevertheless, Wilders did not only share his vision about the ‘Islamisation of the West’ with his Dutch electorate. In 2013 he went on a tour through Australia to share his visions, and also spoke about the ‘Muslim problem’ multiple times in Germany. His goal was to gain international appeal of his stances and a confirmation of how Wilders valued foreign policies in not just a Dutch context, but also a European and global context. In February 2013 he gave a speech in Bonn, Germany, after the invitation of the right wing movement Bürgerbewegung Pax Europa (Wilders, 2013).

The dogma that all lifestyles, opinions and convictions have the same value signifies the destruction of Western culture. It heralds the return to barbarism. Western politicians turn a blind eye. Everywhere we are confronted with Islamic racism, while the elites refuse an open discourse about it.

In this first extract there is strong sense of strategy of intensification with using the hyperbole of ‘destruction’ and ‘barbarism’ in relation to Islam, Wilders constructs it as a grave danger and an enemy of its ‘people’ which is the Western culture in this extract. Furthermore, he also confronts the ‘political elite’ as the enemy. With the use of predication and argumentation he sees the elite as the reason for ‘Islamic racism’. Especially through the metaphoric use of ‘turn a blind eye’, Wilders tries to characterise and attributes the Western destruction to the political elite.

In a free society every politician, every author, every cartoonist, every citizen should be in the position to express his opinion without having to fear for his life. /.../ I also pay a high price for my views about Islam. Islamic death threats force me to go into hiding. For nine years now I have been living under police protection. I even had to live in barracks and prison cells, because they were the most secure places in which the police could protect me from assassins.

This extract puts forward two main strategies: perspectivisation and intensification. Wilders takes his own perspective into mind in order to positively portray himself as someone who

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17 In the Netherlands more than half the population (54%) above 15 years old does not belong to any religious group. From the remaining 46%, 24% considers him/herself as Roman Catholic (CBS, 2018).
should have freedom of speech, is honest and so on. As a result, he intensifies Islam as gravely negative, with referring to them as ‘assassins’ and ‘Islamic death threats’. He thus constructs Islam as a clash with democratic principles.

Fourthly, we must restore the precedence and the sovereignty of the national state. As Germans you must appreciate the culture and identity of the German nation. You must demand that you are governed not from Brussels, but from Berlin. /…/ The European unification process serves the goals of Islam because it undermines our national identities and robs us of the most important instruments for halting Islamisation: our national sovereignty.

The final extract clearly marks the positive self-presentation vs. negative other presentation. Furthermore, the populist rhetoric is strongly visible here, with commonly referring to sovereignty and identity and the ‘undermining’ of those values by Europe. Wilders petitions a sense of crisis when Germany keeps adhering to the European unification process. This is a common populist rhetoric to try and overwhelm. By using the fallacy that Europe serves the goals of Islam, Wilders invokes a sense of crisis. In this, he automatically fuels his own vision of the illiberal character of Europe, and especially by using the metaphor ‘robs us’ he tries to confirm his vision.

As Wilders used the euro crisis in order to put forward the negative socio-economic consequences of European integration, with his immigration stance he clearly tried to divide a society along the socio-political cleavage. This consists of the cultural divide where ‘the people’ hold exclusive identities versus the immigrants and the European political elite are seen as the ‘enemy’. This strategy is strongly in line with the literature, where the PRR on the one hand uses this cultural divide as a systemic effect to create a political conflict. On the other hand, it perceives the European elite and its transnational character as a catalyst for immigration and destruction of national values as a result (Hooghe & Marks, 2018, p. 110). The inside-out perspective thus connects the political elite and values of Europe with the immigration problem. The European identity versus exclusive national identity grew even stronger when millions of refugees reached the European borders in 2015 and this time the depoliticising strategy of European institutions, used during the euro crisis, did not prevail.

From an outside-in angle, the member states developed a whole set of joint measures to ‘share the responsibility’ for refugees who already entered the EU and future refugees coming to the European continent (Council of the European Union, 2015). However, this shared responsibility has failed for “effectively register and process those in need of protection and who are not returning to their home countries or safe third countries they are transited through” (European Commission, 2016, p. 3). With member states refusing to take on a coordinated European
response, once again the European Commission tried to delegate efforts towards supranational institutions. Firstly, the European Commission pushed for the creation of the EU Border and Coast Guard Agency in where the vital role was to push member states for corrective action and help in ‘sharing the responsibility’ and the ‘capacity to intervene’ at the request of a member state, or if the member state was unwilling to act. Hence, if they did not adhere to accepting asylum seekers, member states would have to pay a ‘solidarity contribution’ to the member state who was hosting the refugees (European Commission, 2015). Secondly, fingerprinting proved to be vital in the asylum seeking process. As member states did not implement these measures, the European Commission stepped up the policy and delegated the fingerprinting to EU agencies, such as Frontex (European Commission, 2016).

With creating new bodies and appointing them key operational and monitoring tasks, it immediately raised the question of the democratic character of these bodies. It can be noted that the European Commission had the authorisation to perform these tasks. However, with delegating their authorisation to other agencies, it led to those agencies setting agendas on the asylum and migration policy and thus receiving more powers (Scipioni, 2018, p. 1367). These findings can confirm the suggestion of Bickerton et al. (2015) that de novo bodies take on important tasks, which could also be appointed to the European Commission.

In the Netherlands too, the European Commission’s goal to share the joint responsibility in the relocation of refugees failed. As the European Commission had the intention to relocate 160,000 refugees from Italy and Greece to other member states in 2016, after nearly one year the relocation figures were slightly above 2 per cent (Europa Nu, 2017; Scipioni, 2018, p. 1368). For the PVV these EU struggles were right up the alley of Wilders. With his strong salience for opposing immigration and European integration, as could already be assumed by the various analysed party manifestos, it mobilised the transnational cleavage. Consequently, as a result of the migration crisis, the PVV gained massive electoral gains as can be confirmed by figure 5.1, where the polls calculated over 40 seats. Moreover, PVV’s mainstream competitors, most notably the VVD have been forced to step up its nationalist voice, despite the concerned issues were far from their ideological core. One striking example can confirm the change to an increasing nationalist rhetoric. In the build up towards the national elections of 2017, then prime minister Mark Rutte wrote a full page ad in the newspaper where he used a rather nationalist

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18 Fingerprinting stems from the EURODAC Regulation. EURODAC establishes an EU asylum fingerprint database, this makes it easier for EU member states to determine responsibilities for asylum application (European Commission, 2020)
discourse to warn immigrants: “people who do not want to adjust, reject our habits and values /…/ act normal, or go away” (Rutte, 2017). It can be assumed that Rutte is touching upon the Dutch exclusive identity and the illiberal ‘other’ is actively rejecting that identity.

Wilders’ inside-out viewpoint, on the other hand, continued and further escalated the populist rhetoric. With actively touching upon his electorate, rather than coming up with feasible solutions for such complex situations. Whereas the party manifestos for 2006, 2010 and 2012 included at least 50 pages, the party manifesto of 2017 consisted of one page with only bullet points and even more deteriorating language on the immigration issue: “Zero asylum seekers, no immigrants from Muslim countries: close the borders” (PVV, 2017). This language did not help Wilders in the elections. Going from over 40 expected seats in the polls, the PVV eventually reached 20 seats, where Mark Rutte’s VVD became the majority party with 33 seats. Moreover, because of this blunt language no other political party wanted to form a government with the PVV. Therefore, it is even more remarkable to consider the PVV became the second party in the Netherlands. It thus can be assumed that the way how demands are put forward are more important than its actual content (Chryssogelos, 2018, p. 28). Wilders’ rhetoric is articulated actively around the representational claim of the ‘people’ taking complex international dislocations and framing it in an easy to understand domestic context.

From an inside-out perspective, issues related to the migration crisis were close to the ideological core of the PVV, this is a stark difference with the socio-economic issues visible during the euro crisis. With the cultural divide Wilders could divide a society along the socio-political cleavage and hold the European political elite accountable. Thus, decisions made by the European political elite actually justified Wilders’ radical stance on immigration. From the outside-in perspective, European institutions thought to overcome the migration crisis with the same trick that was implemented during the euro crisis. However, due to the populist popularity, as could be seen in the Netherlands, member states refused to accept a coordinated European response and instead took matters into their own hands. Furthermore, by delegating authorities to supranational organisations in order to circumvent the PRR once again, it actually led to more deteriorating language aiming to tackle the illiberal character of the EU. Lastly, whereas the PVV actively touched upon the exclusive nationalist identity, European institutions and the European elite seriously lacked a counter-attack with focussing on the multicultural and cosmopolitan character of the EU (Börzel & Risse, 2018, p. 101). Thus, they failed to touch upon the inclusive identity, which are held by a majority of the European citizens.
5.4 Covid-19 crisis

As the Covid-19 crisis is still actively affecting every one of us, it is still in the early stages of viable research outcomes. Nevertheless, I will still briefly examine the European response towards this horrible pandemic and whether this touched upon the populist discourse of Wilders.

We must look out for each other, we must pull each other through this. Because if there is one thing that is more contagious than this virus, it is love and compassion. And in the face of adversity, the people of Europe are showing how strong that can be.

Ursula van der Leyen (2020), president of the European Commission made this statement on 26 March 2020. But how did EU institutions back up these claims? Firstly, the European Commission laid the groundworks for a European Health Union which is based on two pillars. The first pillar is ‘a stronger health security framework’ where a new EU emergency system would trigger closer cooperation and rapid action needed to face the crisis. The second one is ‘more robust EU agencies’ where a new Health Emergency Response Authority will be created (European Commission, 2020). Thus, once again with creating de novo bodies the European Commission tries to depoliticise highly salient issues with delegating powers to newly created bodies. Nevertheless, the Commission acted as a regulatory actor in issuing guidelines on measures to stop the virus, ensure an increase of the production of medical equipment and supporting research on vaccines. Moreover, the Commission also took its place as a redistributing actor. Especially, the vaccine project led to unprecedented transnational cooperation. The European Commission, on behalf of all member states, authorised and purchased two billion doses of future vaccines, it authorised two vaccines and even marked 27 December 2020 as the official vaccination day where not only its member states, but all European countries received the first doses of the vaccine (European Commission, 2020).

However, it is salient to note that during the pandemic the ‘my country first’ mentality was visible everywhere in the EU. With even bringing back the production of certain goods to a domestic environment, to answer the fear of overdependence on export goods (Zuleeg, 2020). Therefore, the European Commission also stepped up its socio-economic game to tackle the virus. Probably the most vital implementation was strongly loosening up state aid rules for national governments to save companies and jobs. With Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and Denmark profiting from these flexible rules, it starkly affected the ‘level playing field’,19 and

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19 The ‘level playing field’ can be marked as the core foundation of European economic integration. It governs an equal playing field between member states where everybody plays by the same rules and thus ensures that there is a fair competition between all member states (Zuleeg, 2020).
thus sparked a European debate that wealthier member states have a prejudiced advantage at the European Single Market and this could even affect European unity in the long run (European Commission, 2020, p. 26; Fleming & Espinoza, 2020). Therefore, the European Commission concluded that a recovery instrument of around 750 billion euro could ensure “a swift and sustainable recovery /…/ where the package would be particularly beneficial for lower-income member states, it would also raise the gross domestic product in higher-income member states by increasing demand for their exports” (European Commission, 2020, pp. 25–26).

Thus, next to the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 being negotiated in July 2020, perhaps more importantly, the EU institutions and member states also negotiated a 750 billion euro recovery package “to help repair the economic and social damage caused by the coronavirus pandemic” (European Commission, 2020). The negotiations for the NextGenerationEU recovery fund led to heated discussions, where Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte was marked as a scapegoat by other member states. Rutte, as leader of the frugal four states (Netherlands, Austria, Denmark and Sweden), raised a populistic voice only focussed on the economic consequences – and not on vital (geo)political reasons like Germany and France (De Gruyter, 2020) – of the recovery package and therefore received the nickname ‘Mr. no no no’ by other member states and journalists alike (De Gruyter, 2020). Ironically though, Rutte also raised his populistic voice to keep the two PRR regimes of the EU (Hungary and Poland) in line. As researched by Hooghe & Marks (2019, p. 1125), Hungary and Poland are diminishing the rule of law and thus not adhering to European values. In order to have the possibility to sanction them, the Netherlands among other member states, proposed to link the recovery fund with a rule of law mechanism so the European Commission would be able to cut subsidy if they were not willing to adhere to the proposed criteria. The goal was to sufficiently address the backsliding of their liberal democracy. Eventually it was both Hungary and Poland that did not want to ratify the recovery instrument at first because of this mechanism. However, with the looming prospect to be cut-off from the recovery package would lead to devastating effects for both economies they accepted the recovery instrument (Walker, 2020).

Another reason for the Dutch Eurosceptic stance abroad is the strong populistic voice domestically. Rather than taking a stance based on his own party’s ideological stances, Rutte, well aware of the PVV’s domestic popularity, raised his populist voice on the international theatre in order to win votes domestically. For the Netherlands, this strongly reflects how transnational decision making influences domestic politics. As prime minister he was stuck between other European member states urging him to accept the recovery fund and thus further
deepering European integration. However, the oppositional parties and the PVV in particular, used its strong discourse to try and punish him for adhering to European values. Since Wilders and his PVV strongly oppose the transnational cleavage, when Rutte eventually accepted the recovery fund, Wilders raised an extremely simplistic and ‘hard’ Eurosceptic voice. The first extract depicts a response before the acceptance of the recovery fund on 27 May 2020 (Wilders, 2020). The other two extracts are taken from a speech given by Geert Wilders on 9 September 2020 when the EU negotiations were concluded (Wilders, 2020).

750 billion for the bottomless pits like Italy and Spain. They abuse every crisis to receive billions of euros. Unacceptable, we have to leave the EU as quickly as possible and put our country and our people on the first place.

Mr. prime minister, who gave you the permission to once again make the Netherlands the ATM of Europe? Of course, nobody did that, the Dutch population was not asked at all. And I will assure you, the Dutch population would choose something else. That is why the Netherlands has to leave the EU right now, and you have to leave right now as well.

The UK is not tied to these absurd rules. The UK gets Unilever, the UK closes the borders for fortune seekers, the UK does not have to transfer 100 billion for the recovery fund and the EU budget.

Although these extracts are from two different speeches, they still can be connected to each other. Firstly, the first extract is part of the strategy of intensification with using the rhetorical statement ‘bottomless pits like Italy and Spain’. Secondly, the first extract illustrates a predication where the other two extracts are the argumentation. Especially, in the second extract, he keeps the prime minister accountable for giving the money to Italy and Spain. Furthermore, in using the fallacy that the Dutch population would not choose for this, despite he did not have any evidence, he claims that the Netherlands has to leave the EU.

Next to that, with using such a simplistic message in the third extract, he is actively trying to mobilise his electorate rather than being responsible and taking into consideration what ‘Nexit’ would set in motion in the Netherlands. Therefore, Wilders clearly did not take in mind the complex situation of differentiated disintegration (Schimmelfennig, 2019, p. 25), where the Brexit case could be seen as a benchmark case where other member states are afraid to lose European membership. Hungary and Poland on the other hand, despite being Eurosceptic, value their membership. As small states they depend on the EU and its joint cooperative approach to survive within the contemporary global world. Nevertheless, Wilders’ rhetoric is working as he is gaining more expected seats in the polls (Alle Peilingen, 2020). Conversely, the Dutch public

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20 Nexit is the term used in the Dutch media for a possible Dutch withdrawal from the EU. Derived from the English Brexit.
opinion remains to have a positive view about the European future. On the question ‘our country could better face the future outside the EU’ 83% of the Dutch respondents disagreed with this statement, where the member state average was 63% (Eurobarometer, 2020, p. 101). Moreover, 41% of the Dutch respondents were satisfied with EU’s response to fight the Covid-19 outbreak, with 22% not having an opinion on the issue (Eurobarometer, 2020, p. 14). Thus, if the trend will follow these figures and takes into consideration the outcomes of the elections after the two other crises Wilders will win fewer seats than expected. With the national elections looming for March 2021, it is nevertheless interesting to discover how the people will respond to the Dutch position abroad.

From an outside-in perspective it seems that European institutions and the political elite learned from their mistakes. Firstly, they worked together to make sure issues were politicised and thus gave the PRR minimal motives to create their discourse around the illiberal EU. Secondly, with identifying the pandemic as a European problem and consequently acting towards this as a redistributing party, the European institutions were able to activate the inclusive identities of the European citizens. When the recovery fund eventually had to be ratified, only the populist regimes of Hungary and Poland had serious reservations, because the subsidies were connected with a rule of law mechanism. The Dutch case is actually the odd one out here. From an inside-out perspective Wilders was able to make prime minister Rutte sceptic about the recovery fund. Due to PVV’s domestic popularity, Rutte adjusted his stance on the European level in order not to lose domestic appeal. However, when the negotiations eventually ended favouring a recovery fund, Wilders returned to voice his socio-economic discontent of the EU. What already started during the euro-crisis, the socio-economic discourse eventually evolved into the suggestion of an unconditional withdrawal of the Netherlands from the EU.

Table 5.1 Summary of inside-out, outside-in perspectives during the three crises (Author’s conceptualisation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Euro crisis</th>
<th>Migrant crisis</th>
<th>Covid-19 crisis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Populist involvement</strong> (inside out)</td>
<td>The PVV focussed its stance on the negative socio-economic consequences of European integration. However, socio-economic effects are not part of Wilders’ ideological core, this led to an uncoordinated</td>
<td>During the migrant crisis issues were connected to the socio-political effects, such as cultural divide and immigration, these effects are part of the ideological core. So when policy outcomes were made by the European institutions, Wilders could easily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European institutions (outside-in)</td>
<td>radicalisation of his discourse towards the EU. justify his stance towards his electorate and their exclusive identity. thus opted for an unconditional withdrawal of the Netherlands from the EU.</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three policies were used to actively side-line the PRR. Depoliticising highly salient issues to supranational organisations, the avoidance of referendums and a euro-compatible government formation. These policies avoided mass politicisation and created a deepening of European integration.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying to implement the same policies as during the euro crisis tremendously failed. Instead it led to more politicisation and member states took matter into their own hands. Furthermore, European institutions failed to touch upon the inclusive identity of the European citizens, and thus failed to counter-attack the discourse of the PPR.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned from their mistakes, so mass politicisation did not lead to beneficial input for PRR discourse. As a redistributing actor, European institutions identified the pandemic as a universal problem and consequently activated the inclusive identity of the European citizens.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 Conclusions, limitations and future research

In this thesis I examined whether and how the PRR influences European integration and how European institutions were responding to this threat. The contemporary changes in the global world put the PRR in the front row on the world theatre. With globalisation and regionalisation, it became clear that domestic and international politics strongly intertwined and thus increased the role of political parties within this context, especially in the case of the EU. Therefore, more specifically, by investigating key populism mechanisms which I identified in the literature and its extension, I explored the way how the Dutch PVV tried to exert influence over the Dutch foreign policy by taking into consideration the three European crises (euro crisis – migration crisis – Covid-19 crisis). Moreover, I analysed how the European institutions responded to these crises and indirectly wanted to reduce the influence of the PRR parties. With this inside-out and outside-in approach I will answer the research question: What systemic characteristics are driving the rise of populists, and if so, how are populists changing these characteristics?

My most important finding is that, international discourse such as the strong opposition of European integration and immigration, and an active hostility towards European and domestic elite is put forward by the PRR as a core of their ideological stance and consequently drives the rise of populism. With the determined attention towards these international topics, and the contradictions of the universalist values populism can indeed be seen as a distinct part of international relations, especially in a European context. Furthermore, this finding immediately ties two populism mechanisms together. With focussing on how demands are put forward, the PRR puts forward the message that being responsive towards its electorate, its ‘people’, is fundamentally more vital than to be responsible towards complex problems. Secondly, in the case of the Netherlands, it meant that the popularity discourse moved its mainstream competitor and majority party further to the right.

Wilders caters his message around the claim of the ‘people’ and their exclusive identity. This cultural divide is strongly connected with the transnational cleavage as researched by Hooghe & Marks (2018). It is with tying these two systemic characteristics together that drives the rise of the PRR, undermines liberal democracies and becomes suspicious of the EU and its integration process. Firstly, the cultural divide is used to divide the people along lines of identity. Secondly, by using the transnational character of the EU as the catalyser for the massive immigration crisis, the PRR is able to actually justify its core ideological strategy in its opposition against the ‘corrupt elite’. Furthermore, the transnational cleavage also makes member states tend to lose control over institutions they created. Since supranational
organisations enjoy partial autonomy, there is a restricted time window of political decision makers because of unexpected shifts in government preferences. Consequently, member states fail to regain control over those supranational organisations, because of resistance and institutional barriers to reform such as veto powers. “This account of a path-dependent integration trajectory relies completely on systemic EU-level conditions and processes” (Schimmelfennig, 2014, p. 327). It is this process that creates friction and drives the message of populism in Europe into approval.

As the Dutch case study reflected, the PVV could accurately function when part of the opposition. Wilders was able to exert influence over the prime minister’s thinking on the international level which poses an additional potential threat to liberal democracies and thus raises yet another populist mechanism. In the contemporary internationalised state where elites delegate authority towards European institutions, it seriously questions the liberal character of a democratic state (Chryssogelos, 2018, p. 27). PRR parties, as explained by the Dutch case, undermine these European values and use this discourse as part of their core ideological strategies in order to try and influence its electorate domestically. With the recovery fund negotiations during the Covid-19 crisis, this systemic force shaped the domestic practice within a state. With the PVV’s ‘hard’ Eurosceptic stance as a core ideological strategy, it is able to constrain a state’s ability to respond to crucial implementations.

This marks the vital connection between domestic and international politics and associates with the neo-classical realism thought. Furthermore, neo-classical realism characterises the interplay between systemic and domestic constrains, especially the internal power struggles within modern democratic states can hinder favourable foreign policy outcomes. When Wilders’ discourse fell on death ears during the euro crisis, he stepped up his radical voice and deliberately hindered these outcomes. Firstly, by trying to create frictions between coalition partners by putting his foreign policy stance to the foreground and thus try to shape the state’s domestic goals and policies. Secondly, when that did not work, it was Wilders who personally finished the minority coalition. Therefore, the way demands are put forward by the PRR is thus strongly connected at the intersection between state and society and between international and domestic.

In going even one step further, it became clear that by questioning the democratic legitimacy of the EU and radicalising its discourse on these international topics, the PRR tries to justify its anti-elitist and representational claim around the ‘people’ as the democratising factor in the internationalised world. This can be seen as another characteristic that drives the rise of
populists. However, when using the critical discourse analysis approach, I can conclude that Wilders’ rhetoric is the one with an illiberal character. The rhetoric depicts the ‘other’ as something negative, whether it is the European elite or the immigrants. He sees these groups as incompatible with the true culture and values of the Netherlands. By constructing the ‘people’ as something homogenous, he automatically nullifies the idea of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism, on the one hand, can be marked as a notion of pluralism and thus intrinsic to liberal democracy, the construction of the ‘people’ on the other hand, is singular and illiberal. Furthermore, through the use of intensified rhetoric Wilders tries to overwhelm its audience. By using fallacious statements he constantly tries to undermine liberal democracies. This is thus in line with Chryssogelos (2018, p. 27), according to whom unaddressed demands are linked with each other to create a divide between the ‘people’ or society and power or the elite. This public-elite gap, which is also put forward by Hooghe & Marks (2008, p. 21), the PPR uses its homogenous exclusive identity to fill the gap and construct itself as representational party aiming to be closer to the public opinion. This discursive view provides the opportunity to place populism in its international dimensions.

The discursive view also provides the insight that its mainstream competitor (VVD) was influenced by the PVV during the three crises, due to Wilders’ strong reliance on cultural divide, identity claims and hostilities towards the establishment. Also from a European standpoint it can be considered that European institutions tried to implement policy outcomes which would side-line the PRR, and therefore it can be concluded that these two parties are closely intertwined with one another. Where neofunctionalism characteristics, such as depoliticising important issues and thus remove decision making from the European political theatre during the euro crisis, could explain a deepening of the European integration. In this process, the influence of the PRR was circumvented and thus led to a successful deepening.

When European institutions wanted to repeat this process during the migrant crisis it actually led to more politicisation. This time the PRR reaped the rewards by exploiting the ‘constraining dissensus’ with successfully mobilising exclusivist identities and utilising a discourse where the European elite disregarded national sovereignty. It is these postfunctionalist characteristics that are closely connected to the PRR. While the European Commission depoliticised highly salient issues to newly formed supranational organisations during the euro crisis and as a result it increased European integration, at the same time however, it increased its democratic illegitimacy. Moreover, when the same trick failed during the migration crisis, an illusion of European solidarity struck the EU at its core and was grist to the mill of the PRR. Therefore, in
times of crises the two parties are strongly linked with each other. With on the one hand, EU institutions trying to depoliticise vital issues in order to side-line the PRR and thus deepen the European integration project. On the other hand, because of implementing these measures Geert Wilders radicalised its stance towards the EU. With firstly, being seriously reserved about the EU, towards a complete Dutch withdrawal from the EU. It has to be concluded though, in the case of the Netherlands, that although the PVV gained massive numbers in the polls it could not translate those numbers to a positive election result. This is an example case where a PPR party is able to represent, but does not deliver (Mair, 2011, p. 14).

The Covid-19 crisis initially implied another crisis which could fuel the PRR, especially during the beginning phase of the crisis with member states implementing a ‘my country first’ approach. However, it seems that the EU institutions learned from the past. With identifying Europe’s needs during the Covid-19 crisis and the decision to negotiate a 750 billion euro recovery package, the European institutions tried to further deepen economic integration. “For a genuine, investment-led and sustainable recovery to be achievable, a concerted effort will be required by all actors and levels“ (European Commission, 2020, p. 27). In this matter, issues were not depoliticised and due to an intense cooperation, European solidarity did prevail. The preliminary outcomes from the Covid-19 crisis put forward the idea that when member states and the European Commission commonly work towards one goal it can lead to unprecedented cooperation. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is not only about what EU institutions could do for member states, but also what member states can do for the EU. With taking the characteristics of postfunctionalism into consideration, the Covid-19 crisis could lead to a ‘permissive consensus’ with actively touching upon the inclusive identity and would help with deepening its integration levels once again. Though, as analysed in the literature, postfunctionalism also asserts attention towards an escalation of conflicts between pro-Europeans and Eurosceptics (Grande & Kriesi, 2016, p. 298).

Therefore, there should be some sense of reservation and it is here I arrive back at the PRR. The PRR actively uses characteristics of postfunctionalism. Whereas the frugal four, especially the Netherlands, due to PRR’s domestic pressure, had its initial objection towards the recovery fund. In the case of the Netherlands, the PRR could only exert oppositional pressure. What marks the true danger for the EU is the PRR regime that is in charge in member states, namely Poland and Hungary, which are the two member states that initially vetoed the recovery fund. Despite receiving large sums of subsidy, they did not want to adhere to a rule of law mechanism. With undermining the rule of law, member states are undermining European values from within
the EU. It is thus at this point that a PRR regime comes to power in a member state that it poses an immediate threat.

Therefore, the Covid-19 crisis is an example where European institutions learned from the other two crises and stood up against the populist rhetoric and actively acted around the inclusive identity of the Europeans. As the Eurosceptics enjoy the status quo, or in the case of the PVV, even opt for differentiated disintegration, the European institutions were able to not just act as a regulatory actor as described in the literature (Genschel & Jachtenfuchs, 2016; Scipioni, 2018). As a redistribution party, EU institutions and member states alike acknowledged the pandemic caused inequalities and acted with the recovery fund which also raised the democratic legitimacy of the EU. Therefore, it is not only the PRR that can profit from crises, as explained in the literature. The Covid-19 crisis opened up a window of opportunities for the European institutions where further integration can be realised, and automatically decreases the role of the PRR. I can thus confirm that the more a state favours transnational cooperation and regionalisation, the more opposing the message gets by the PRR. Although it might differ between different PRR parties, it is their radical message against opposing liberal democracies and as such, cater an alternative democratising message. It is this message that will stay afloat on the world theatre.

The outcomes of this study thus help to further build on the PRR context in an internationalised context, especially through the use of discourse analysis and thus the ability to put populism in an international dimension. This discursive approach of populism could also be used for future research, which also immediately puts forward one of my limitations. As the discursive approach would be an ideal tool to compare populist parties in how they construct their message, my case study only represented one PRR party. In order to compare and contrast, populist parties from various member states can be analysed. However, it also provides an opportunity to cast a light on comparing populist regimes in a world setting. Furthermore, with actively researching and comparing PRR claims with how EU institutions responded and vice-versa it opens up to future research with various other regional organisations. Further research would be to investigate how populism tries to influence Mercosur in South-America, the Arab League in the Arab world, or the African Union. However, these regional organisations are not anywhere near the level the EU evolved into. That is why additional research should provide further insights on how European institutions actively try to side-line the PRR. As I used all three European integration theories to provide a general overview, by explicitly focussing on one theory it could contribute to new understandings.
Moreover, from an international relations perspective it would be interesting to further build on the motion that PRR acts on the intersection between the international and the domestic and thus strongly connects to the neo-classical realist approach. However, neo-classical realism overlooks the role of political parties. Therefore, studies of PRR parties can further explore how they are actively trying to exert influence over a state’s foreign policy, and in addition to that, build on the understanding of how mainstream parties respond to the PRR in an international setting. While often the domestic perspective is taken into consideration. By taking the example of the recovery fund negotiations in the Dutch case, Mark Rutte altered his international rhetoric in order to take into account the domestic pressures.

With the use of in-depth qualitative content analyses of the party manifestos and critical discourse analysis I was able to construct various contextual variations and explore these variations over a particular time frame. Nevertheless, I also have to acknowledge the fact that PRR parties behave distinctively across various countries (Pirro & Kessel, 2017, p. 417) and it is therefore difficult to translate outcomes of this study to general conclusions. Future research could thus include how PRR parties in various member states acted towards the European crises and how the domestic situation altered because of this. Mainly, the ongoing Covid-19 crises could provide future research with new insights about how European institutions reflect on the PRR threat and how this alters the European integration perspective. In the short term, future research may focus on whether the Covid-19 crisis response actually led to an ever changing deepening of European integration, or whether things go back to ‘normal’ once the pandemic is over.
Slovenian summary

Populizem postaja čedalje pomembnejši del mednarodne politične scene. Izvolitev Donalda Trumpa v Združenih državah Amerike (ZDA) leta 2016, pojav Brexita v Združenem kraljestvu (ZK) in drugih populističnih režimov na Madžarskem, Poljskem in v Evropski uniji (EU) nasploh, so najbolj znani primeri vzpona populistične desnice. Še posebej radikalna populistična desnica (RPD) in z njo povezani evro-skeptični diskurz sta skozi leta opazno rastla. Ko se RPD znajde na razpotju mednarodne in domače domeno, ter na drugi strani države in družbe, njeno delovanje aktivno škodi regionalnemu procesu integracije znotraj EU. Znotraj regionalnega integracijskega procesa lahko krize označujemo kot prelomno točko, ki lahko omaja status quo, vsekakor pa je proces njegovega spreminjanja dolgotrajen in dvostranski proces. Na eni strani lahko evropskim institucijam to prinaša priložnost za pospeševanje evropskega integracijskega procesa, po drugi strani pa lahko krize razširijo ideologijo RPD in radikalizirajo njihov diskurz glede mednarodnega vladanja. Magistrska naloga temelji na dveh perspektivah proučevanja tega dogajanja: z vidika vpliva RPD na evropski integracijski proces in z vidika vpiva evropskih institucij na pojav in grožnje RPD.

Posledično gre za dvorazsežnosti študijo primera, kjer sta uporabljeni poglobljena analiza vsebine in kritična analiza diskurza kot metodi za proučevanje delovanja obeh strani, RPD in evropskih institucij, med kriznimi situacijami. Vidik Nizozemske stranke svobode (Partij voor de Vrijheid – PVV) bo uporabljen za analizo populističnih mehanizmov v mednarodnem kontekstu. Nizozemski primer je posebej zanimiv zaradi opozicijskega položaja PVV v parlamentu, kjer služi kot zunanja podpora manjšinski koaliciji. Še več, PVV je s tem uspela spremeniti ideološki položaj svojega glavnega tekmeca. S perspektive evropskih institucij magistrska naloga analizira, kako se te odzivajo na RPD. Z analizo treh kriz, ki so globoko vplivale na evropski integracijski proces (eurokriza, migracijska kriza in Covid-19) pridobim vpogled na dejanje obeh strani, da bi lahko ugotovil, ali imajo njihove odločitve medsebojni vpliv, ter poiskal odgovore na naslednje raziskovalno vprašanje:

Katere sistemske lastnosti vzpodbujajo rast populizma in kako populisti spreminjajo tovrstne lastnosti?

Magistrska naloga bo pokazala kako RPD zlorabljajo določene sistemske lastnosti, kot so kulturne razlike in transnacionalni konflikti znotraj EU, za namene izoblikovanja sporočil, ki naj bi predstavljala poglede ljudstva oz. ljudi. Na drugi strani evropske institucije uporabljajo igro identitet, da ošibijo popularnost RPD. Na tak način obe strani vplivata ena na drugo, kjer
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Appendix A: timeline of events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 March 2006</td>
<td>The establishment of the PVV with the introduction of the party document: A new realistic vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 November 2006</td>
<td>Dutch national elections, PVV received 9 seats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 June 2009</td>
<td>European Parliament elections, PVV received 4 seats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2010 – June 2014</td>
<td>Euro crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 June 2010</td>
<td>Dutch national elections, PVV received 24 seats.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 June 2011</td>
<td>Speech Geert Wilders in the <em>NRC Handelsblad</em>: ‘the Greeks now really have to leave the euro’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 April 2012</td>
<td>Geert Wilders pulls the plug on the minority coalition government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 September 2012</td>
<td>Dutch national elections, PVV received 15 seats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 February 2013</td>
<td>Speech Geert Wilders for the <em>Bürgerbewegung Pax Europa</em> in Bonn, Germany.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 May 2014</td>
<td>European Parliament elections, PVV received 4 seats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2015 – March 2019</td>
<td>Migrant crisis</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 March 2017</td>
<td>Dutch national elections, PVV received 20 seats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 May 2019</td>
<td>European Parliament elections, PVV did not receive any seats.</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 2020 – ongoing</td>
<td>Covid-19 crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 May 2020</td>
<td>(online) Speech Geert Wilders: ‘NEXIT!’</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 September 2020</td>
<td>Speech Geert Wilders at the Dutch Parliament: Debate on the outcome of the European summit on the recovery fund</td>
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