Critical Globalization

The Nature of Anti-Globalism today - The Case of Populist Parties in Europe
Populist Parties and Anti-Globalizations

A strong backlash to Globalisation has materialized with the voters going to the polls and electing anti-globalist parties. The rise of these populist or anti-globalist parties is a relatively new phenomenon that has gained momentum since the Global Financial Crisis of 2007. These parties are found on both the far-right and far-left of the political spectrum albeit fighting for different reasons. This corpus will analyze the rise of these parties in Spain, Greece, and France, and seek to answer why and how they emerged.

The Rise of Anti-Globalist Populist Parties

To understand the rise of anti-globalist populist parties especially in Europe, one needs to have a definition or at least an understanding of what Globalisation entails. The concept was first adopted in the 1990s when economic free trade rapidly interconnected on a global level. While Global interconnectedness is not new, the phrase Globalisation:

“Is part of the neoliberal economic policy, which aims at abolishing protectionist rules, tariffs, and regulations. Three phenomena made this rapid change possible: first, the long-term political strategy of those who wanted to replace post-1945 Keynesian economics by neoliberalism. Second, the new communications technology; and third the breakdown of socialism in Eastern Europe” (Mies, 1999)

It is this integration and fear of losing not only national sovereignty but the loss of a national identity that started the anti-globalist populist parties’ rise to power. This emerging crisis in European politics is one of the most serious that Europe has ever faced. Mainstream parties and the two-party systems are threatened by the emergence of new anti-globalist populist parties throughout the European Union. European politics, especially politics in Western Europe are:

“In the grip of a political identity crisis. The disrupting effects of globalization, the permanent retrenchment of welfare states, and the development of a “media audience democracy” accompanied by fundamental changes in the political system. The triumph of the floating voter, i.e. the unprecedented rise of electoral volatility, and the spectacular jump in the political arena of neo-populist movements” (Cuperus, 2007).
These changes have given rise to an unsettlement in the “labor, family, and cultural lifestyles.” The deteriorating political representation is leading to a fragile framework of the European welfare states and the party democracies (Cuperus, 2007). The rise of populist parties in Europe whether on the Far-Left or the Far-Right can be described as “a particular style of politics, referring to ‘the people’ as a homogeneous entity against ‘a corrupt elite’ and in this sense, the neo-populist citizens' revolted. This revolt is rooted in the perception that the people are ‘betrayed’ by the ruling elites” (Cuperus, 2007).

The ideology of the populist parties is rooted in the belief that society can be categorized into two distinctive similar yet antagonistic groups, the ‘pure people' versus 'the corrupt' elite.’ Hence, politics should be “an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people” (Mudde, 2004). While this hypothesis is exaggerated, it is yet another definition used to describe the popularity of the populist parties. In the wake of the Global Financial Crisis, Europe faced and continues to face the worst backlash against globalisation (Berezin, 2013).

**Who are the Far-Right and Far-Left Anti-Globalist Parties?**

According to the classification of alternative parties in Europe and the Far-Right:

> “For whom opposition to the EU has become a central policy plank. The have sought to widen their domestic appeal beyond their traditional ‘bread and butter’ anti-immigrant discourse. Parties like the French National Front have a long history of anti-globalist and Eurosceptic dialogue and rhetoric” (Underwood, 2013).

The parties that fall under the realm of the Far-Right, have received media attention due to the misguided view that they are Pro-Russian, racist, and anti-immigrant. With regards to this paper, only the National Front (NF) of France will be discussed.

The Far-Left goes “beyond the mainstream left, as opposed to the neo-liberal direction in which they see European integration progressing and who believes that the EU is increasingly run as a capitalist club on behalf of capitalists. Such parties have enjoyed significant electoral success in recent years, deploying an alternative vision of a more social Europe with a clearer global vision” (Underwood, 2013). These parties have made considerable political gains since Greece’s political, economic meltdown began with the Eurozone Crisis.
In studying anti-Globalization movements, a common unifier is that both the left and right are anti-globalist. Those on the far-left political spectrum often operate outside the standard political institutions, not necessarily, non-governmental organizations (NGO). These parties show a tendency towards “expressive public demonstrations and disruption” (Berezin, 2013). Those on the far-right political spectrum are more traditional and work inside the political institutions, in particular, “nationalist political parties and electoral systems.” However, both the left and the right to share a “mutual animus” towards the narrative of globalisation and progress (Berezin, 2013).

Crisis in Greece and the rise of Far-Left and Far-Right Parties

The Global Financial Crisis; which began in 2007; had tremendous political and economic implications for Greece. The popularity of the Far-Left and Far-Right was a direct result of this crisis. Greece’s problems which began in 2009 would eventually cause considerable economic and political turmoil. A quoted source wrote, “Seven years and counting, into the perfect economic storm, and still no sign of recovery for the Greeks. Five ballots cast since 2009, and four different prime ministers (PMs) have tried to put the country back on track, having to deal with a severely fragmented and volatile party system” (Stavrakakis, 2014). The financial turmoil that Greece was facing saw the rise of populist and Eurosceptic parties on both the Far-Left in Syriza, and Far-Right in Anel, and Golden Dawn. These parties sent shockwaves not only within Greece but also in the entire European Union.

Syriza, the far-left party emerged in 2012 as a response to the interference of the Globalist impact in Greece by the Troika. The Troika is the European Central Bank, the European Commission, and the International Monetary Fund. Syriza’s popularity was a direct result of Greece’s high debt and economic crisis. According to Stavrakakis (2014), after its spectacular performance in the general elections in 2012, Syriza, emerged as a force to be reckoned with in the European public sphere. This previously unknown party was able to tap into the anger and distrust that the majority of Greeks had, not only against the Greek government but the European Union as well. The swift electoral success that Syriza experienced was unheard of. “Within a very short period, Syriza managed to climb from 4.60 percent to 26.89 percent of the vote, performing an electoral leap rather unique in modern Greek, if not European, political history” (Stavrakakis, 2014). Alexa Tsipras, the current Greek Prime Minister, was able to use his influence and personality to help Syriza achieve this stunning success, which had quite significant implications
for not only Greece but the entire European Union. Syriza again won the general elections in 2015 and formed a coalition with the populist radical right Independent Greeks (Anel). This marked the first-ever “governing alliance of left-wing and right-wing populist parties in Europe” (Aslanidis, 2016).

Anel, a coalition partner, is a new party associated with the Far-Right. “The Independent Greeks (Anel), led by Panos Kammenos, a recent defector, rose as another potent representative of the new populism. With 7.5 per cent of votes in June 2012, somewhat lower than the 10.6 percent his party had gathered in May. His fiery speeches in the parliament became viral on YouTube. Kammenos retained a strong grip on the conservative electorate that did not drift so far to the right” (Papas, 2015). His use of media allowed those who felt disenfranchised to get their voices heard whereas before they felt forgotten. The arrival of Anel marks the rise of a populist radical right-wing party which is not “characterised by violent extremist tendencies” (Papas, 2015). Due to the independence of Anel it is an alternative to Syriza of the Far-Left, and Golden Dawn of the Far-Right. The rhetoric that Anel produces is common amongst those associated with the Far-Right. For example, Anel “supplies a quota for immigrants, up to a maximum of 2.5 percent of the total population. When it comes to economic issues, the picture is mixed: on the one hand, corporate taxes as low as 8 percent, and VAT up to 10 percent favoured to kick-start the economy and focus on export-oriented growth” (Papas, 2015). This rhetoric by Anel is one that allows it to become a coalition partner of the Far-Left Syriza. Never before have a coalition of two extremes, the Far-Left and the Far-Left joined to form a coalition to run a nation.

Golden Dawn, another Far-Right party, has also been making headway in Greek politics. Unlike Anel, Golden Dawn is an older party. Founded:

“In 1983 by Nikor Michalokiakos. The statutes of the party from 1987 were promoting a European Civilization”. This definition of the party closely linked to the right-wing party in France, the National Front. This European definition resembles the fact that the Golden Dawn was aware of contemporary developments in Europe related to the creation of the “New Right” (Lampe, 2014).

Golden Dawn accomplished little political success throughout the 1980’s, 1990’s and early 2000’s. The party’s ideology explains while initially, it did not achieve success in the ballots:
The party is affiliated with the extreme right and has close and avid links to being pro-neo Nazi. Also noted is that many of the party’s leadership were imprisoned during the general elections due to the government’s concern about their right-wing extremism. Golden Dawn’s first success came in the 2010 general elections. The party leader received 5.29 percent of the total seats in the Athens council (Lampe, 2014). Two years later, in the general elections of May 2012, Golden Dawn gained 6.97 percent of all the votes. This increase can be attributed to the fact that after the crisis an increasing number of voters had started favoring the extremist parties (Lampe, 2014). The sudden success of the Golden Dawn Party seemed to have finally arrived with its ever-increasing gains in Greek elections. In further elections, this time competing against Anel on the Far-Right and Syriza, in the May 2014 elections Golden Dawn “received 9.4 percent of the vote and elected three members to the European Parliament. In the snap elections of January and September 2015, the party sustained most of its electoral standing, receiving 6.3 percent and 7 percent of the vote and winning 17 and 18 seats in the 300-member parliament, respectively. In the fragmented Greek party system, the GD became the third largest political party” (Ellinas, 2016).

Spain and the Rise of the Far-Left Podemos

Podemos is similar to other populist parties that emerged as a political force throughout Europe in 2014. In the 2014 European Elections a new party, Podemos, arose to power in Spain. Only three months after its formation, the party secured five European Parliament seats. In December 2015, in the Spanish National Elections Podemos secured 20.66 percent votes, helping it emerge as the third-largest party in Spain (Casero-Ripollés, 2016).

Overnight this new Spanish party threatened to undo the mainstream parties within Spanish politics. The “European elections held on 25 May 2014 had an unexpected result: Podemos
receiving more than 1,245,948 votes (7.89 percent of the total). This party had the fourth-best showing in a dynamic political context” (Casero-Ripollés, 2016). This sudden upsurge in popularity and votes was unheard of in Spanish politics.

Upon analyzing the ideological spectrum of Podemos it was discovered that it is quite similar to other left-leaning populist parties, such as Syriza in Greece (Casero-Ripollés, 2016). According to Casero-Ripollés (2016) Podemos “is at the forefront, in redefining and rethinking the left and its (media) tactics, messages, and concerns”, especially with regards to anti-Globalisation.

Before Podemos, the Spanish political system was governed by a two-party system similar to that of the United States. However, with the rise of Podemos in the general election of 2015, the two-party system; prevalent in Spain since democracy’s restoration; came to an end (Orriols, 2016). Shockwaves emanated throughout the Spanish political system and ushered in a new era of third party politics. From “1982 to 2015, the Spanish party system was dominated by a two-way competition between the PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español - PSOE, Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party) and PP (People’s Party (Partido Popular)” (Orriols, 2016). The rise of Podemos as Spain’s third most popular party became the new norm due to voter discontent over the existing political order.

**France and the Rise of the Far-Right National Front**

The National Front emerged in the 2012 elections in France. In 2012, during the first round of the French presidential election, Marine Le Pen emerged as a powerful candidate with a record score of 17.9 percent votes (Mayer, 2013). The upsurge and support for the National Front “rose from 10.4 percent in the presidential race of 2007 to 11.4 percent in the 2010 regional elections, 15 percent in the 2011 cantonal elections, 17.9 percent in the 2012 presidential election and 13.6 percent in the following legislative elections” (Mayer, 2013).

The beginning of the National Front in French politics traces back to its founding in 1972 with the emergence of Jean-Marie Le Pen as the party’s leader. Since, its first electoral surge back in 1984, The National Front’s “voters have shown a marked right-wing tropism” (Mayer, 2013). However, it took nearly thirty more years for the National Front to become a recognised political force. In the presidential election of 2002, “Jean-Marie Le Pen made headway among rural and
small-town voters, worried by the progression of crime and delinquency beyond the large cities and their suburbs. Among farmers Le Pen’s popularity doubled, from 10 percent in 1995 to 22 percent in 2002, leveling with his scores among small shopkeepers and artisans, manual workers and nonmanual clerical employees” (Mayer, 2013).

It is interesting to note that even at the early stages of its beginnings, the National Front was anti-Globalist and anti-European. The 1986 party platform of the National Front:

“Introduced the first set of protectionist measures against imported agriculture commodities while stressing France’s need for food self-sufficiency. This nationalistic tone heralded a more substantial policy shift during the mid-1990s. During that period, the FN toned down free-market capitalism to espouse a more protectionist agenda. This move was consistent with the party’s platform against EU federalism and the loss of national sovereignty” (Ivaldi, 2015).

The National Front saw the loss of national sovereignty and the EU federalism as a threat even back then. In the anti-Globalist arena, the party began campaigning against it in the early 1990’s. In 1993, the party introduced new features in its manifesto regarding the social and anti-globalization aspects. The new manifesto called; pertaining to farming regulations, for rejecting the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), the EU and the WTO (Ivaldi, 2015).

With the French Presidential Election scheduled from April 2017 and running through May, the National Front’s candidate Marine Le Pen (the daughter of Jean-Marie Le Pen) is expected to do well. This expectation is due to the results seen in the 2014 elections of the European Parliament (EP), France’s largest party in the EP. French journalist Pierre Haski in 2014 stated that: “Marine Le Pen has long anticipated the discomfiture of the two main parties. It is a marketing ploy that has captured voters' imaginations”. According to Fred Imbart (2017) of CNBC, “French elections typically happen in two rounds. Recent polls show Le Pen (National Front) winning the first round of voting, scheduled for April 23, but losing in the May 7 run-off vote between herself and whoever comes in second in the first round”. With Le Pen and the National Front narrowing the gap in French public opinion and recent poll failures, Le Pen could pull off a magnificent upset in the upcoming 2017 French Presidential Elections.

Conclusion
The rise of the anti-Globalist movement is sweeping across Europe. These movements primarily sprung as a result of the Global Financial Crisis; that erupted between the years of 2007-2009, and the disastrous 2015 refugee crisis within the European Union. The fascinating aspect of the anti-Globalist and anti-European Union populist movements is that they are from both ends of the political spectrum ranging from the extreme Far-Left to the extreme Far-Right.

In France, the National Front party under the leadership of Marine La Pen is expected to do extremely well in the 2017 French presidential elections; especially due to the 2015 Refugee Crisis and the current riots in Paris. France is experiencing riots necessitating increased security presence due to almost daily threats. Le Pen’s platform stands strong against open borders and globalist policies.

Greece is a country with a coalition of the Far-Left and Far-Right. The Far-Left Syriza and the Far-Right Anel are relatively new parties, only emerging after the 2007-2009 Global Financial Crisis. Syriza has achieved remarkable success due to the instability in Greece caused by the disastrous policies of the European Union and globalism. In 2017, the country is still in financial disarray and owes money to international creditors who are refusing to allow Greece much say in its internal affairs.

Spain has seen the rise of a Far-Left anti-globalist party in Podemos with a rise in popularity status due to the discontent that voters have with the current two-party system. Voters see this two-party system as not representational to the average voter.

While the rise of anti-globalists parties in this paper mainly focuses on Greece, Spain, and France, it would be remiss to neglect anti-globalism elsewhere. In 2016, the United Kingdom left the European Union on 23 June, in what would later be known as Brexit. Brexit was heavily pushed by the United Kingdom Independent Party or UKIP. UKIP was led by Nigel Farage a Nationalist, anti-Globalists, and anti-Eu politician. Nigel Farage viewed globalism, European Union encroachment, and mass migration as a threat to the UK while the British people saw this election as a means of taking back their country.

The United States witnessed one of the most contentious presidential elections in its history. American voters through the electoral process and by a majority of states elected Donald J. Trump as the 45th President of the United States over Hillary Clinton. Many within the United
States regarded Clinton as a corrupt politician who viewed most Americans with contempt and disgust. Hillary Clinton, a mainstream globalist candidate, advocated open borders for the United States. In the end, President Trump won due to his nationalistic, anti-Globalist, “Make America Great Again” rhetoric that eventually paved his way to the White House. These elections were signs that a good portion of the American electorate had lost faith in the mainstream elitist politicians.

The dream of one world globalism that many politicians and governments championed has begun to crumble. People are tired of losing their national identities, customs, and beliefs and are rallying against alien cultures that clash with their way of life. Political correctness and multiculturalism are failed policies and people want to take back control of their country. Is Globalism at its end? Will it succeed? Only time will tell.
Bibliography


