

Borderless fear?

How right-wing populism aligns in affectively framing migration as a security threat in Austria and Slovenia

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Studies have highlighted differences between right-wing populism in Western and Central Eastern Europe but suggested that discourses have been converging since the so-called “refugee crisis” in 2015. This article examines this claim by focusing on right-wing populist frames and affective communication on migration in Austria and Slovenia. Taking a communication-centred approach, the study is based on a critical frame analysis of 70 speeches from far-right to centre-right parties in parliamentary debates on migration between 2015 and 2019. The results show that right-wing populist discourses in the two adjacent countries have aligned in appealing to affects, particularly to fear and in framing migration as a threat to security and culture. Despite differences in mobilizing affects, the findings indicate a mutual alignment of right-wing populism beyond borders, signalling a potential risk of a broader right-wing populist bloc unified by fear of migration.

Keywords: right-wing populism, migration, discourse, affects, framing, Austria, Slovenia

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, right-wing populism has gained ground in the parliaments of Western and Central Eastern Europe alike (Merkel and Scholl 2018, 36; Brubaker 2017a; Minkenberg 2017; Buštková 2018). Studies have noted differences between right-wing populism in the two regions, arguing that right-wing populist parties in Central Eastern Europe exhibit a stronger nationalism (Minkenberg 2017), while populists in Western Europe embed “the people” in

European civilization that needs to be defended, especially against Islam (Brubaker 2017a). Recent research suggests that these differences have diminished in the context of the so-called “refugee crisis” in 2015, when right-wing populists in Eastern Europe “effectively mobilized against new minorities arriving from non-European countries”, which has the potential to unify European right-wing politics (Buštková 2018, 567, 573).

Research has paid little attention to a possible convergence of right-wing populist discourses in Western and Eastern Europe. This article contributes to filling this gap by analysing right-wing populist communication in parliamentary debates from Austria and Slovenia, focusing on affective frames of migration. The two neighbouring countries located along the so-called “Western Balkan Route”, which gained prominence in 2015, are characterized by different political histories. While Austria has been a constitutional democracy since the end of the Second World War, Slovenia became democratic in 1991, after the fall of state socialism. However, up to the end of the First World War the two geographical regions shared a common political history under the Habsburg monarchy, which makes the comparison even more interesting. Their recent histories situate the countries in broader clusters of Western and Central Eastern Europe (Brubaker 2017a) where right-wing populist parties have flourished (e.g. Aichholzer et al. 2014; Betz 2001; Heinisch 2012; Krzyżanowski 2013; McGann and Kitschelt 2005; Pajnik 2019). Since 2015, both countries have faced challenges from the sudden increase in the number of refugees, albeit in different roles. While Slovenia functioned primarily as a transit country, Austria was considered the country of destination for many refugees (Gruber 2017; Vezovnik 2018; Žagar, Kogovšek Šalamon, and Lukšič-Hacin 2018). The two countries closely cooperated in closing the “Balkan Route” in 2016 (Kogovšek Šalamon and Šeruga 2018, 36).

We argue that this international cooperation to restrict the movement of refugees indicates a cross-border alignment of right-wing populism’s “politics of fear” (Wodak 2015, 2021). We understand right-wing populism as a discourse that constructs antagonisms between “the people”, a “corrupt elite”, and dangerous “Others” (Aslanidis 2016; Brubaker 2017b; Mudde 2004, 2007). Drawing on theoretical and empirical contributions (Salmela and von Scheve 2017; Wirz 2018), we argue that this discourse is inherently *affective*: Its appeal stems from the ability to channel affects and emotions,¹ and to guide who or what is to be feared, hated, or loved (Wirz 2018). Our analysis aims to carve out the affective structures of right-wing populist discourses on migration in the two countries.

1. We use affect and emotion synonymously, while nevertheless being aware of conceptual differences.

Several studies have analysed discourses about migration since 2015. Krzyżanowski, Triandafyllidou, and Wodak (2018, 3, 7) identified “discursive shifts” towards “Islamophobia” and “securitization” with the effect of an “endorsement of anti-immigration rhetoric”. Chouliaraki and Zaborowski’s (2017, 631) analysis of newspapers found three linguistic practices of “symbolic bordering” and misrecognition of refugees. Krzyżanowski and Ledin (2017, 571) focus on how right-wing populists transform public debates through a “borderline” language.

For our analysis, we conducted an affect-sensitive frame analysis (for frame analysis: Verloo and Lombardo 2007) of 70 speeches from six parties in seven Austrian and seven Slovenian parliamentary debates on migration between 2015 and 2019 (for a linguistic analysis of newspaper articles on migration in 2015 in eight European countries see Chouliaraki and Zaborowski 2017; for a visual analysis of photographs see Chouliaraki and Stolić 2019). Our analysis implements a discursive, communication-centred approach (Stanyer, Salgado, and Strömbäck 2017, 354) that determines right-wing populism by the content of a message. In this article, we first set the scene of the Austrian and Slovenian context, then clarify central concepts, introduce our methods and material, and present our findings. The findings indicate that right-wing populism aligns beyond borders in framing migration as a threat to security and culture. A closer look into the affects underpinning the framing of migration reveals subtle differences. While right-wing populist frames are primarily characterized by anger in Austria, they are more strongly characterized by fear in Slovenia. Nevertheless, we conclude that our findings indicate a cross-border alignment of right-wing populist framings of migration.

2. Right-wing populism in Austria and Slovenia

Few studies have carved out ideological, discursive, and affective differences between right-wing populism in Western and Central Eastern Europe. One exception is Brubaker’s (2017a) paper, which identifies a distinct cluster of populism in Northern and Western Europe (see also the special issue of the *Journal of Language and Politics* in 2017 and Wodak and Krzyżanowski 2017). Within this cluster, “the people” is often discursively constructed as sharing a European civilization that is threatened by Islam. Eastern European right-wing populists, in contrast, maintain a nationalist vision of “the people”, do not refer to liberal values, and are more concerned about security than identity (Brubaker 2017a, 1206). In a study that focuses on the radical right in Eastern Europe, Minkenberg (2017, 96), notes that the Eastern radical right is ideologically more nationalist than its Western counterpart, and that it tends to romanticize an anti-democratic past.

Bušťíková (2018, 567) identifies a point of convergence between Eastern and Western right-wing populism. She notes that in 2015, the radical right in Eastern Europe has mobilized effectively against non-European immigrants and Muslims. This suggests “that issues of immigration and mobilization against Islam [...] could unify Eastern and Western radical right movements” (Bušťíková 2018, 573). To our best knowledge, this claim has not been investigated further. We aim to narrow this research gap by exploring the affective underpinnings of right-wing populist framings of migration since the “summer of migration” 2015 in Austria and Slovenia.

Several contextual characteristics render an alignment of right-wing populist migration discourses in the two countries plausible. *Firstly*, both countries share a border, have faced similar movements of refugees since 2015, and are located along the so-called “Western Balkan Route” that has been a migration hotspot since 2015 (e.g. Gruber 2017; Vezovnik 2018, 42). In the aftermath of 2015, we can observe a recurrent pattern in which Austria tightened its border regime, for example by erecting fences, and Slovenia, for its part, responded by imposing even tighter restrictions on its border with Croatia (Gruber 2017, 49). In 2016, the governments of both countries and other “Balkan countries” dedicated joint efforts to closing the “Balkan Route” (Kogovšek Šalamon and Šeruga 2018, 36). We expect that convergence in restricting migration policies was accompanied by a mutual alignment of right-wing populist discourses across the border. Nevertheless, we also expect to observe differences in the two discourses, not least because both countries played different roles for refugees: Austria continued its history as a destination country for refugees and migrants, receiving 89,875 applications for asylum in 2015 and 12,853 in 2019, according to UNHCR data, while Slovenia remained a transition country that received only 270 applications for asylum in 2015 and 3,869 in 2019 (UNHCR 2023).

Secondly, both countries share similar political party landscapes with strong right-wing populist parties and signs of “radicalized mainstream parties” (Bušťíková 2018, 574). Austria’s party system has been dominated for decades by the social democratic SPÖ (Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs) and the Christian-conservative Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP, Österreichische Volkspartei). This constellation was challenged first in the 1980s by the Greens and the Freedom Party (FPÖ, Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs), then led by Jörg Haider, who turned the anti-Semitic, revisionist, niche-party into a successful right-wing populist force (e.g. Mudde 2007, 42). In 2017, in a remake of a coalition from the early 2000s, the FPÖ, now led by Heinz-Christian Strache, entered a government coalition with the ÖVP, led by Sebastian Kurz. Scholars noted ÖVP’s adoption of a harsh anti-immigration stance that accompanied the party’s makeover initiated by Kurz (Gruber 2017, 575; Rosenberger and Gruber 2020).

Arguably, the ÖVP successfully copied this rhetoric from the FPÖ, which has a long record in mobilizing against migrants (e.g. Pelinka 2019). The coalition collapsed due to the “Ibiza scandal” in 2019 (Eberl, Huber, and Plescia 2020).

Slovenia’s party system is characterized by instability, as in most post-socialist countries (Minkenberg 2017, 59). The right-wing populist Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS, Slovenska demokratska stranka), however, has played a lasting role in this system ever since the first democratic elections in 1990, and led the government for three terms, though not in the time frame observed here. The party leader Janez Janša is known for his aggressive rhetoric, often attacking critics and minorities (Pajnik, Kuhar, and Šori 2016; Pajnik 2019). Unlike in other Central Eastern European countries, right-wing populists in Slovenia mobilized against refugees earlier on in the 1990s, when people fled from wars in the Balkans (Mudde 2007, 70; Rizman 1999). Centrist political parties, such as the Christian Democratic Party New Slovenia (NSi, Nova Slovenija), or the Party of the Modern Centre (SMC, Stranka modernega centra) (established in 2014 and merged into the party Concretely in 2021), also make use of right-wing populist rhetoric (Pajnik and Šori 2021). In this study we expect that the exclusionary discourse of right-wing mainstream parties travels across borders and party lines, and we aim to show which discursive frames and affects it mobilizes.

3. Right-wing populist discourse and affects. Theoretical considerations

We conceptualize right-wing populism, in line with a growing consensus in the literature (Aslanidis 2016; Brubaker 2017b; Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Mudde 2004, 2007; Rooduijn 2019), as an ideological discourse that rests on three core messages that construct social antagonisms: *anti-elitism*, *people-centrism*, and *Othering*. Our concept echoes Cas Mudde’s (2004, 543) definition of populism as an ideology, or as a “hybrid political ideology” (Wodak and Krzyżanowski 2017, 475), which stresses the antagonisms between “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite”. Right-wing populism is characterized by additionally constructing and excluding “Others” (Mudde 2007) – in our context, these are primarily migrants and refugees. By defining right-wing populism as discourse, we follow a communication-centred approach that considers right-wing populism as a characteristic of a message (Stanyer, Salgado, and Strömbäck 2017, 354; Aslanidis 2016; de Vreese et al. 2018), instead of focusing on a predefined set of political actors. According to Aslanidis (2016, 98), populism functions as discursive *frames* that “organize experience and guide action” (Snow et al. 1986, 464). Krzyżanowski and Ledin (2017, 570) label right-wing populism as “linguistic struggles regarding the border between ‘civil’ and ‘uncivil’”.

This study expects that Austrian and Slovenian right-wing populist discourses have aligned over the migration issue in what Ruth Wodak (2015, 3) has coined a “politics of fear”, i.e. a specific construction of out-groups as a threat to “the people”. The central argument suggests the need to focus on the *affective* structure of right-wing populist discourses to understand their functioning and to detect the crucial commonalities and differences. A growing number of scholars argue that right-wing populism is inherently affective and draws its persuasive power from its appeal to emotions (Canovan 1999, 6; Salmela and von Scheve 2017; Wirz 2018). Affective appeals reach out to those who feel insecure or deprived (Hameleers, Bos, and Vreese 2018; Salmela and von Scheve 2017, 571), stir their anger against “those at the top” (Rico, Guinjoan, and Anduiza 2017), arouse pride for what Taggart (2000, 95) has called the populist “heartland”, and, importantly, construct threats to “the people” (Wodak 2015). Appealing to affects can mobilize and convince people (e.g. Valentino et al. 2011), and can legitimize political decision-making.

Our understanding of affects, in line with our concept of right-wing populism, stresses the importance of discourse, messages and meaning. We understand affects not to be opposed to rationality, but interwoven with cognition, meaning, and discourse (Wetherell et al. 2015). This assessment is seconded by psychological appraisal theories of emotion, which highlight how emotions help individuals to evaluate events and situations (Nabi 2003, 226), and hold that “different emotions arise in response to different meaning structures” (Frijda 1988, 349). Consequently, we understand affects as thoroughly social phenomena that are entangled in social relations, structures, and discourses (van der Löwe and Parkinson 2014, 129), which can solidify to “collective emotional standards of a society” (Stearns and Stearns 1985, 813), or what Arlie Hochschild called (1979, 2016, 15) “feeling rules”. Affective appeals, then, are targeted messages that aim to stir specific affects in the audience “in order to ultimately produce some change in the values, beliefs, opinions, attitudes, or behaviors of a receiver” (Jorgensen 1996, 405–6). In the political realm, appeals to anger, for example, may emphasize injustices, point out norm violations, or blame political opponents (Walter et al. 2019, 74). Fear appeals, in turn, rely on constructing serious threats to the audience (Mongeau 2013, 185), while empathy and love aim at fostering solidarity of a “we”.

We aim to analyse the shaping of migration discourses in the two countries since the so-called “refugee crisis” in 2015. We focus on the affective appeals underpinning right-wing populist framings of migration. In dialogue with the comparative literature (Brubaker 2017a; Minkenberg 2017), and pursuing a frame and affective analysis, we look at whether Western and Central Eastern European right-wing populisms differ in framing migration as a security and cultural threat,

or whether we can see a mutual alignment of right-wing populist discourses across borders (Buščíková 2018).

4. Material and method

Our empirical analysis covers 70 speeches from parliamentary debates on 14 policies relating to migration, asylum, border, and integration issues adopted between 2015 and 2019 – seven per country. We coded speeches from all parliamentary parties but narrowed down our sample in two ways: Firstly, we focus only on coded units that include a right-wing populist antagonism. Secondly, we focus on political parties that exhibit a substantial share (20%) of right-wing populist messages² in their overall statements, resulting in a sample of 70 speeches from six far-right to centre-right political parties. Table 1 provides an overview of the analysed speeches per party.

Table 1. Sample Overview

	Party	N Speeches	Governing ^a
Austria	FPÖ	15	2017–2019
	ÖVP	7	2013–2019
	TS ^b	6	
Slovenia	SMC	17	2014–2018
	NSi	13	
	SDS	12	
Total		70	

a. Government participation within our time frame (2015 to 2019) b. Team Stronach

We aimed to select all migration laws that were discussed and adopted in our time frame in the lower houses of Austria (*Nationalrat*) and Slovenia (*Državni zbor*). With only one exception, all laws tightened the migration legislation. In Austria, four laws were proposed by the SPÖ-ÖVP coalition that governed until 2017, including an amendment to the asylum law,³ two amendments to the aliens law,⁴ and one “integration law” that banned full face covering.⁵ The coalition

2. We have focused on measuring “thicker” populist discourse (Pelinka 2013).

3. Bundesgesetzblatt (BGBl). I, No. 24/2016, (2016-04-27)

4. BGBl. I, No. 84/2017 (2017-07-28) and BGBl. I, No. 145/2017 (2017-10-04)

5. BGBl. I, No. 68/2017 (2017-05-16)

between the ÖVP and FPÖ (2017 to 2019) tightened the already restrictive migration policies even further (Josipovic and Reeger 2018), adopting changes of the aliens law,⁶ a law governing the employment of foreign nationals⁷ and a law that terminated the provision of legal advice for asylum seekers by independent NGOs.⁸ Unlike in Austria, four out of the seven selected Slovenian laws were adopted in a shortened procedure, citing pressing security threats. All seven acts were adopted during the-then coalition of the liberal SMC, the Social Democrats and the pensioners' party DeSUS (2014 to 2018). The acts aimed at reducing migration or closing the "Balkan Route", and introduced harsh securitarian measures,⁹ compensated landowners for a razor-wire fence erected at the border,¹⁰ or regulated the employment of foreigners and family reunifications.¹¹ Only one law that was adopted prior to the peak in the numbers of refugees did not restrict migration but enabled family reunifications.¹²

To narrow down the material, we selected from each parliamentary debate the first two speeches per political party¹³ and, if not covered, the speeches from the proposers of the bill and the floor leaders. To analyse this material, we drew on a qualitative frame analysis (Verloo and Lombardo 2007) and enhanced this method in joint discussions of the Austrian and Slovenian teams with a focus on right-wing populist antagonisms and affects. The discussions resulted in a joint manual for the frame analysis in English. The starting point of the frame analysis are "sensitizing questions" (Verloo and Lombardo 2007, 35) that split up a given text into a *diagnosis*, i.e. a problem definition, and a *prognosis*, i.e. a "solution", that "frame" the issue at hand. The three coders per country read the parliamentary speeches in the two respective languages, answering the following questions: What is the problem to be solved? Who or what causes the problem? Who is affected by it? What is presented as its solution? Who should solve the problem? Who benefits from the solution? The resulting diagnoses and

6. BGBl. I, No. 56/2018 (2018-05-07)

7. BGBl. I No. 94/2018 (2018-12-13)

8. BGBl. I No. 53/2019 (2019-05-16)

9. Uradni list RS [Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia], No. 95/15 (2015-12-10), Uradni list RS, No. 86/15 (2015-11-12), Uradni list RS, No. 5/17 (2017-02-03), Uradni list RS, No. 5/17 (2017-02-03)

10. Uradni list RS, No. 5/17 (2017-02-03) and Uradni list RS, No. 68/17 (2017-12-1)

11. Uradni list RS, No. 59/17 (2017-10-27)

12. Uradni list RS, No. 19/15 (2015-03-20)

13. Discursive features tended to repeat with subsequent speakers.

matching prognoses constitute the basic units of our coding.¹⁴ On average 2.5 diagnosis-prognosis pairs were identified per speech. For each prognosis and each diagnosis, right-wing populist antagonisms *anti-elitism*, *people-centrism* or *Othering* were detected. Additionally, the coding process devised affective appeals, and provided an open coding for examples and explanations. Affects are expressed through affective words (i.e., words which express an affect or emotion, such as fear and anger) and through the syntax of a sentence, such as incomplete sentences or repetitions, aiming at exaggerating or downplaying the meaning. We ensured inter-coder and cross-country reliability by parallel coding a sample of speeches and intensive group discussions. We clustered the resulting open coding into categories of diagnosis and prognosis frames and identified the frame categories across both countries.

All pairs of diagnoses and prognoses considered in our analysis include a right-wing populist antagonism on the side of the problem, the solution, or both. Our sample features the right-wing populist parties FPÖ (36 right-wing populist diagnoses and prognoses) and SDS (29 pairs) most strongly. As intended, our sample also covers diagnoses and prognoses from the conservative parties ÖVP (12 pairs) and NSi (38 pairs), from the short-lived Austrian party Team Stronach (TS, 15 pairs), and the then liberal-centrist party SMC (15 pairs). Our analysis substantiates its claims by presenting qualitative insights along with basic quantitative distributions for comparing the relative importance of discursive fragments.

5. Securitarian mobilization of right-wing populist migration frames

We begin our analysis by identifying which political parties contributed most strongly to the right-wing populist antagonisms *anti-elitism*, *people-centrism*, and *Othering*. In Austria, the FPÖ accounted for 57% of all right-wing populist diagnoses and prognoses, followed by TS (24%) and the ÖVP (19%). Notably, the FPÖ accounted for the largest share (83%) of *anti-elitism* and *people-centrism* (64%) while “*Othering*” was more equally distributed across the three parties. In Slovenia, the conservative NSi accounted for the largest share of right-wing populist diagnoses and prognoses (44%), followed by SDS (36%) and SMC (19%). Like Austria’s FPÖ, the SDS was the only party to make substantial use of all three antagonisms. However, we find that *anti-elitism* was comparably less frequently used in the Slovenian discourse (8%) compared to Austria (21%). “*Othering*” was

14. The frames identified in the parliamentary documents were translated into English by the responsible coder in each country.

similarly important to the discourses in both Austria (54%) and Slovenia (65%) and was strongly featured in the speeches of centrist parties of both countries.

In a next step, we analyse how right-wing populism framed migration. Table 2 presents the most important migration frames for each country, separately for diagnosis and prognosis, and includes the share of each frame, with the absolute number of problems and solutions in brackets.

Table 2. Right-Wing Populist Frames of Migration^c

	Frames	AT	SLO
Diagnosis	Migration threat to security	36% (21)	52% (32)
	Migration threat to society and culture	19% (11)	19% (12)
	Government incompetent or harmful for the state	14% (8)	15% (9)
	Blaming NGOs or proponents of migration	15% (9)	0% (0)
	EU policies ineffective	3% (2)	5% (3)
	Integration failures	5% (3)	2% (1)
	Other	8% (5)	8% (5)
	Total	100% (59)	100% (62)
Prognosis	Reducing migration	45% (24)	32% (18)
	Protection of our country, culture, or people	25% (13)	16% (9)
	Protection of the border	13% (7)	25% (14)
	International response needed	0% (0)	11% (6)
	Strengthening the police and army	0% (0)	7% (4)
	Integration	6% (3)	0% (0)
	Reform of asylum legislation	6% (3)	0% (0)
	Other	6% (3)	9% (5)
Total	100% (53)	100% (56)	

c. Only diagnoses and prognoses with a right-wing populist antagonism were coded.

On the diagnosis side, migration was framed most frequently as a *threat to security* by right-wing populist discourse in both countries, accounting for over half of the Slovenian cases and about one-third in Austria. In line with Brubaker (2017a, 1206), this finding indicates a high priority for securitarian migration frames on the Slovenian side, and it shows that Austria's right-wing populism also framed migration primarily as a security threat and less so as a threat to cultural identity, as suggested by Brubaker (2017a, 1198). Hence, this finding speaks in favour of Buštková's (2018, 567) convergence hypothesis. Zooming into the

speeches reveals that Austrian right-wing populism weaves together security concerns and issues of identity. Walter Rosenkranz (FPÖ), for example, equated accepting refugees with “importing” criminality and sexual violence on 28 June 2017, and continued: “These are the real problems that our continent will have to deal with [...]. We do not want sexual harassment and raping women to become part of daily life in Austria.” Apparently, he framed immigration as a security threat for Austria, and for women in particular. While this is a textbook example for what Brubaker (2017a, 1211) has termed “civilizationism”, the framing clearly has a securitarian spin.

This framing is also connected to the second-most frequent diagnostic frame of *migration as a threat to society and culture*. In a similar vein, Gernot Darmann (FPÖ) warned of a “barbaric invasion” (16 April 2016), and Walter Rosenkranz (FPÖ) stated in the debate on a public ban of full face covering on 16 May 2017: “We Austrians cannot rely on the hope that what we have accomplished since the Enlightenment a few hundred years ago [...] will be accomplished in other cultures or other religions in one or two years”. We found very similar civilizationist statements in Slovenian debates, e.g., by Jožef Horvat (NSi) on 1 March 2016: “Now is the time to decide whether to preserve the civilizational heritage of three millennia or to leave our homeland and continent to another civilization. Do we care if our granddaughters have to cover their faces with a veil in half a century?” These statements construct the antagonism Islam vs. European civilization and thus classify as civilizationism. Our analysis shows that right-wing populist discourses in both countries share common ground in framing migration as a security threat to the European civilization. Not very surprisingly, *Othering* was the antagonism that was coded most frequently to accompany these frames.

In the diagnosis frame migration as a *threat to society and culture* we identified threats to the economy and society. An example is the statement of August Wöginger (ÖVP) on 26 May 2017, who commented that “[n]inety percent of the accepted refugees can be found in the unemployment statistics”. In Slovenia, one major concern was the allegedly impending transformation of Slovenia into a destination country, as stated by Žan Mahnič (SDS) on 17 October 2017: “Slovenia cannot afford to [...] become either a target country or a country that those living here would primarily use as a welfare state.” We conclude that the right-wing discourses in the two countries paint a clear image of migrants as threats but denies their status as vulnerable and victims (Chouliaraki and Stolić 2019, 312).

The third most salient diagnosis frame blamed the *government as incompetent or harmful to the state*, accounting for about 15% in each country, bolstering up the *anti-elitist* side of the discourse. The fourth diagnosis frame marks a country difference. Only in Austria did the right-wing populist politicians shift *blame on NGOs and proponents of migration*. Most notably, the FPÖ used this frame,

after entering the government coalition in 2017. Apparently, attacking humanitarian NGOs that support refugees provided the FPÖ with an opportunity to maintain its *anti-elitist* discourse while being in government. We are aware of similar examples for Slovenia from other contexts but note that these are not featured in the data analysed here.

Analysing the prognosis side revealed greater disparities. Still, the most frequently used prognosis frame indicates commonalities: Praising the *reduction of migration* as a problem-solving strategy was popular both in the Austrian (45%) as well as in the Slovenian (32%) right-wing populist discourse. Important for this frame in both countries was the distinction between undeserving “illegal immigrants” and deserving “genuine refugees”, as Austria’s then-minister of the interior Herbert Kickl’s (FPÖ) statement on 16 May 2019 illustrates: “We want to implement a stable asylum system that clearly distinguishes between those who actually deserve our protection and those who make their way to Austria for completely different reasons and that we have to remove from our country as quickly as possible.”

The positively formulated flip-side of this solution is the frame *protection of our country, our culture and/or our people*, which constructs an in-group that is to be protected, as in Vinko Gorenak’s (SDS) statement, delivered on 20 October 2015: “Protect the Slovenian people. Protect our citizens in such a way that it will be effective.” We found very similar statements in Austria, also in a comparable frequency. The main difference in the offered solutions stems from the Slovenian focus on the border itself. The second most frequently used prognosis frame in the Slovenian right-wing populist discourse was *protection of the border*, used in one quarter of the prognoses. In Austria, this frame accounted for only 13%. Closely related to this frame is the demand to *strengthen the police and army*, which was present in 7% of the Slovenian solutions, but completely absent in the Austrian discourse. The Slovenian parties analysed here tried to outdo each other with security propositions for “protection of the Schengen border”, as documented in Vinko Gorenak’s (SDS) statement on 20 October 2015, when he demanded that soldiers be sent to the borders and be allowed to use “physical force” “of a stick” and given the “means to bind and lock” immigrants. This finding indicates that Slovenia’s right-wing populist discourse focused strongly on securitarian solutions, with a pronounced self-stylization as protectors of the Schengen border, suggesting a shift away from a purely nationalist discourse.

To sum up, we found visible commonalities of the right-wing populist framing of migration in both countries, especially regarding the construction of security and cultural threats. In both countries, migration was repeatedly framed as a threat to Europe and its civilization. “Civilizationism” thus did not clearly differentiate the Austrian right-wing populist discourse from its Slovenian counter-

part. Slovenian right-wing populism still differs from Austrian by proposing more securitarian, even militaristic measures to protect the borders. In the next section, we dig deeper into these similarities and differences by analysing the affective structure underpinning right-wing populist frames in both countries.

6. The affective structure of right-wing populist discourses

In this section, we focus on the affective appeals that underpin right-wing populist discourses in both countries, adding to the discursive similarities analysed so far, while carving out more subtle differences. Figure 1 presents the relative frequencies of the three antagonisms in the right-wing populist discourse per country, and, as indicated by the differently coloured segments of each bars, the distribution of the affective appeals. For better readability, we grouped the positive affects love, hope, trust, and empathy into one category in this graph.

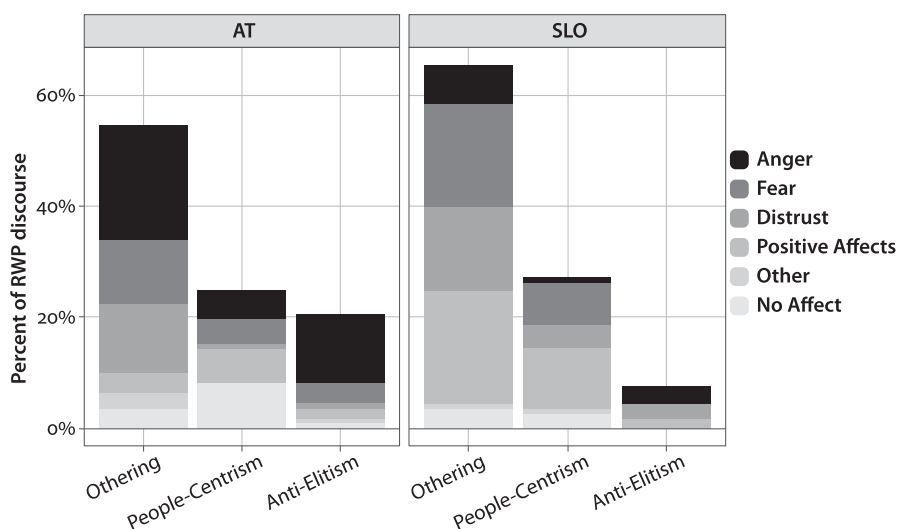


Figure 1. Affects in right-wing populist discourse

While 38% of the Austrian right-wing populist problems and solutions appealed to *anger*, we found this affect in only 11% of the Slovenian discourse. In Austria, anger was most frequently employed by the FPÖ discourse, and was strongly tied to *anti-elitism*, as illustrated by Walter Rosenkranz' (FPÖ) blaming of the grand-coalition government on 28 June 2017 to deceive the people: "These laws, as many of the announcements by the governing parties stated here in the moment, merely serve to pull the wool over the eyes of the people." Similar angry

accusations were found in the Slovenian discourse but less frequently. Anger was the most important affect for *Othering* in the right-wing populist discourse in Austria and contributed to constructing asylum seekers as “invaders”, who would come “from all corners of the Earth” to Austria – to cite Herbert Kickl’s (FPÖ) statement on 16 May 2015.

The two countries align more closely in the right-wing populist appeals to *fear*. This affect played a considerable role for all three right-wing populist antagonisms, and it was essential in constructing dangerous “Others”. In Slovenia, speakers fuelled fears by envisioning doomsday scenarios caused by migration, for example Jožef Horvat (NSi) on 4 January 2015: “this migrant crisis [...] has a tremendous potential to destroy everything we have achieved well within the EU.” Robert Lugar, a parliamentarian of the Austrian TS employed an even broader horizon 27 April 2016: “[W]ith the Muslims that you let into the country, [...] political Islam comes along. Political Islam is probably the most serious threat to world peace [...] since the Nazi regime.” Both cases are examples of a broader tendency of framing migration as a threat to *security*, on a *civilizational* level.

Closely linked to *Othering*, *distrust* was frequently directed against allegedly fraudulent or delinquent asylum seekers, but also against Muslims. Again, this affect was frequently accompanied by security concerns, as Martina Schenk’s (TS) speech on 27 April 2016 exemplifies. Asking “How many more need to be raped [...] before something [...] happens?”, she lamented on the insufficiency of conventional methods to take fingerprints and suspected that “asylum-seekers [...] burn or cut their fingertips.” Or as Branko Grims (SDS, 20 October 2015) stated: “Because if [...] you allow a serious security threat to occur, you have to take more serious measures later and take responsibility for [...] any violence that may occur on this basis. And we are at this point, unfortunately, because all the time that would have been available for security preparations has been missed.” Taken together, fear and distrust structure right-wing populist discourses in both countries in a similar fashion.

Among the positive affects *trust* featured prominently in the Slovenian discourse on *Othering*. In most of these cases, parliamentarians from the-then governing party SMC aimed to win the audience’s confidence in their crisis management by assuring them that national security outweighs human rights of refugees. In both countries, positive affects played a relatively important role for *people-centric* messages. In Austria, people-centrism was mainly tied to *hope*, featuring prominently in the discourse of the FPÖ, which presented itself as a tribune of the people. The statement of the then-Minister of the Interior, Herbert Kickl (FPÖ, 16 May 2019), in the parliamentary debate on withdrawing NGOs’ right to counsel refugees illustrates this: “You can call me the driving force behind this project, since it was an important concern to me, to live up to the high expecta-

tions of the population”. In Slovenia, *people-centrism* was tied rather to trust, love, and empathy, often constructing a sentimental vision of the “homeland”, as Marjan Pojbič’s (SDP) statement on 26 January 2017 illustrates: “To me, it is about the Slovene people, the Slovene nation and this beautiful, beautiful homeland of Slovenia, for which we have gained independence”. Overall, positive affects underpinned a somewhat more nationalist discourse in Slovenia, compared to Austria.

Summing up, the analysis of affective appeals provided further support for the claim that right-wing populist discourses on migration in both countries have aligned since 2015 in a “politics of fear” (Wodak 2015): Right-wing populism constructs migrants as dangerous “Others” that pose a threat to the security of “the people”. Empathy for the vulnerability of refugees is in no way part of the right-wing discursive universe (Chouliaraki and Stolić 2019). In both countries, “the people” are discursively constructed not merely in national terms, but also in terms of a European civilization, accompanied by affective appeals to fear. The analysis of affective appeals also revealed minor country differences: Anger played a more important role in right-wing populist framings of migration in Austria than in Slovenia, where fear was predominant.

7. Conclusion

Against the background of the claim that right-wing populist discourses converged in Western and Central Eastern Europe in the wake of the so-called “refugee crisis” 2015 (Buštková 2018), this article has compared right-wing populist frames of migration and their underpinning affective appeals in Austrian and Slovenian parliamentary debates. An affective frame analysis of 70 parliamentary speeches between 2015 and 2019 shows how right-wing populist discourses in both countries framed migration predominantly as a security threat and repeatedly saw European civilization in danger (similar Chouliaraki and Zaborowski 2017). These findings support our claim that Austrian and Slovenian right-wing populisms have aligned, discursively and affectively, in a specific “politics of fear”. This alignment arguably marks some mutual convergence: Slovenian right-wing populist discourse somewhat shifted ‘Westward’ in portraying itself as “defender” of the Schengen border. This discourse frequently incorporated calls to defend the “European civilization”, contrasting the more purely nationalist discourse that has been previously associated with Central Eastern European right-wingers (Brubaker 2017a; Minkenberg 2017). Austrian right-wing populist discourse, on the other hand, became more similar to its Central-Eastern-counterpart, by emphasising the framing of migration as a security threat (Brubaker 2017a, 1198).

The persisting differences found in our study – a angrier and more anti-elitist discourse in Austria – could be explained by the decade-long dominance of the established parties ÖVP and SPÖ and Austria's longer history as an immigration country. Both factors provide opportunities for right-wing populists to appeal to frustration and dissatisfaction. As the Slovenian debates were mainly convened citing urgent security issues, appeals to fear featured as the more obvious option and played a more prominent role.

Our study provides initial, yet limited, evidence for a proximity of Western and Central Eastern European right-wing populist discourses since the so-called “refugee crisis” in 2015. Some authors have argued that we are witnessing the emergence of a new cleavage that cuts across Europe and is organized around the position towards migration (Koopmans and Zürn 2019). A common ideological theme, such as defending Europe's security against migration, has the potential to unify Europe's right-wing populists in the European parliament – with gloomy outlooks for the already restrictive European migration policies.

Our study has important limitations. Firstly, our country selection was informed by a qualitative small-N approach, leaving future research to aim for a more comprehensive country selection to examine whether the alignment of right-wing populist discourse is reflected on a broader scale. Secondly, our study did not analyse dynamics in the selected material but focused on cross-cutting similarities and differences. We suggest that future research explores the claimed convergence of Western- and Eastern-European right-wing populist discourses in a longitudinal way. Combining a frame analysis with an exploration of its affective underpinnings has proven promising. We suggest continuing the line of research on right-wing populism and affects (e.g., Magni 2017; Salmela and von Scheve 2017; Wirz 2018) to improve our understanding of right-wing populism's appeal across countries, and to assess the risks of a pan-European right-wing populist bloc that might be unified in its fear of migration.

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