

KUKUH SETYO PAMBUDI
TUTUT CHUSNIYAH
WILDANA WARGADINATA

FATTAH HANURAWAN
KRESYA VAN GOBEL
BASMA TANIA

POPULISM, ISLAM, AND THE QUEST FOR UTOPIA: POLITICAL DYNAMICS IN 21ST CENTURY EUROPE

Kukuh Setyo Pambudi

Universitas Negeri Malang, Faculty of Psychology, Indonesia

Email: kukuh.setyo.2301139@students.um.ac.id

Fattah Hanurawan

Universitas Negeri Malang, Faculty of Psychology, Indonesia

Email: fattah.hanurawan.fpsi@um.ac.id

Tutut Chusniyah

Universitas Negeri Malang, Faculty of Psychology, Indonesia

Email: tutut.chusniyah.fpsi@um.ac.id

Kresya Van Gobel

Anadolu University, Public Finance, Turkey

Email: kgkg@anadolu.edu.tr

Wildana Wargadinata

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Arabic Literature, Indonesia

Email: wildana@bsa.uin-malang.ac.id

Basma Tania

Center for Social Psychology and Society, Indonesia

Email: csps@um.ac.id

Abstract: In the early 21st century, Europe has experienced a profound political transformation marked by the ascendance of populism, which emerges as a reaction to the multifaceted challenges posed by globalization, migration, and demographic changes. This paper explores the intricate interplay between populism and Islam within the context of contemporary European political dynamics, arguing that the rise of populist movements is not merely a manifestation of political discontent but a complex response to perceived existential threats to national identity and cultural integrity. By examining the narratives constructed by populist parties, this study highlights how these movements utilize Islam as a focal point for their utopian visions, often idealizing a return to a homogeneous national identity while simultaneously demonizing the “other.” The analysis delves into the role of digital media in amplifying these narratives, creating echo chambers that reinforce radicalized political discourse and shape public perceptions of Islam. Ultimately, this paper contends that the convergence of populism and Islamophobia reflects deeper societal anxieties and underscores the urgent need for a critical examination of the implications for social cohesion and democratic values in Europe. Through a comprehensive review of relevant literature and case studies, this research contributes to the understanding of how populist ideologies are reshaping the political landscape and influencing the future of European integration.

Key words: Populism, Islam, Political Dynamics, 21st Century Europe .

Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies, vol. 24, issue 71 (Summer 2025): 96-111.

ISSN: 1583-0039 © SACRI

1. Introduction

In the early 21st century, Europe has undergone a complex political transformation characterized by the rise of populism, which responds to the challenges of globalization, migration, and demographic shifts. This phenomenon is not merely an expression of political dissatisfaction; rather, it represents a profound manifestation of identity crises and social tensions that have emerged within the region. According to Kübler, Strebel, and Marcinkowski (2024), the rise of populism in Western Europe is often portrayed as a reaction to globalization and supra-national integration processes. Additionally, research by Marois, Potancokova, and Gonzalez-Leonardo (2023) highlights how demographic changes and migration patterns have significantly impacted European societies. The intersection of these factors has led to a resurgence of populist movements, which often exploit fears related to cultural identity and economic security (Jones 2019).

Populism has emerged as a systemic response to entrenched structural inequalities within European societies. The discontent stemming from economic disparities, coupled with a perceived erosion of national identity, has fueled a narrative that positions the “people” against a corrupt “elite” (Mauritti et al. 2016). This dynamic has been further exacerbated by the influx of migrants, which has intensified fears surrounding cultural dilution and social cohesion (Van Mol & de Valk 2018).

Moreover, the interplay between populism and religious identity, particularly Islam, has become increasingly salient. Populist movements often exploit religious sentiments to construct a narrative that frames Islam as a threat to national values and identity, thereby deepening societal polarization (Peker 2022). This discourse not only mobilizes support for populist agendas but also reinforces stereotypes and prejudices against Muslim communities (Saarinen & Koskinen 2022). For instance, populist leaders frequently highlight incidents involving Muslim immigrants to stoke fears and justify restrictive immigration policies, which in turn, fosters a climate of mistrust and division within society.

In this context, the concept of utopia becomes particularly relevant, as populist rhetoric frequently promises a return to an idealized past, free from perceived external threats. The aspiration for such a utopian society resonates with voters who feel marginalized and disillusioned by the status quo (Claeys 2020). Populist leaders often invoke nostalgic imagery of a “golden age” when the nation was perceived to be more homogeneous and prosperous, free from the complexities and challenges of globalization and multiculturalism (Smith 2017). This idealized vision of the past serves

as a powerful tool to mobilize support, as it taps into the deep-seated desires of individuals for stability, security, and a sense of belonging (Jones 2019).

The promise of a utopian society is particularly appealing to those who feel left behind by economic and social changes. These individuals often perceive themselves as victims of a corrupt elite that has betrayed the interests of the “common people” (Bonikowski 2016). By offering a vision of a restored and purified nation, populist rhetoric provides a sense of hope and direction for those who feel disenfranchised and disillusioned by the current state of affairs (Rasmussen 2013). This narrative not only galvanized support for populist movements but also reinforces a binary worldview that pits the virtuous “people” against the corrupt “elite” and perceived external threats, such as immigrants and religious minorities (Peker 2022). As Frunză and Rațiu (2024, 34) argue, social media plays a crucial role in amplifying this discourse, enabling populist leaders to construct echo chambers that demonize alterity and promote exclusionary ideologies under the guise of cultural and religious preservation.

This study aims to analyze the intricate relationship between populism, religious identity, and the quest for utopia in contemporary Europe. By employing a qualitative approach, the research will explore populist narratives related to Islam through the analysis of political advertisements, public speeches, and social media from various populist parties across Europe. Through this exploration, the study seeks to illuminate how these narratives shape public opinion and influence policy-making in the region (Saarinen & Koskinen 2022). The analysis will focus on how populist leaders use religious identity to construct a narrative of cultural and existential threat, thereby justifying exclusionary and discriminatory policies (Van Mol & de Valk 2018).

2. The Rise of Populism in Europe

The resurgence of populism in Europe represents a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has emerged from a confluence of social, economic, and political factors. This rise can be traced back to the early 21st century, a period marked by significant transformations in the political landscape of the continent. Central to understanding this resurgence is the interplay between economic discontent, cultural anxieties, and the evolving nature of political discourse.

Economic discontent has been a primary driver of populism's rise. The effects of globalization have led to profound economic changes, including job losses in traditional industries and the emergence of precarious employment. Many citizens feel left behind by the rapid pace of economic transformation, leading to a growing sense of disenfranchisement. The 2008 financial crisis exacerbated these feelings, as

austerity measures implemented by governments across Europe resulted in cuts to public services and social welfare programs. This economic strain has fostered a fertile ground for populist movements, which capitalize on the frustrations of those who perceive themselves as victims of an unjust economic system (Gozgor 2021; Scheiring et al. 2024). The rise of economic inequality and the concentration of wealth among the elite have further intensified these grievances, creating a sense of economic injustice and fueling populist rhetoric (Mauritti et al. 2021).

Cultural anxieties also play a crucial role in the rise of populism. The influx of migrants and refugees, particularly following the Syrian civil war, has intensified fears about cultural identity and national sovereignty. Populist leaders have effectively harnessed these fears, framing immigration as a threat to social cohesion and national values. This nativist rhetoric resonates with segments of the population who feel that their cultural identity is under siege. The portrayal of immigrants as “the other” has not only served to galvanize support for populist parties but has also contributed to a broader climate of xenophobia and Islamophobia (Hesová 2021; Morgan 2020). The construction of a national identity that excludes certain groups is a powerful tool for populist leaders, as it simplifies complex social issues and provides a clear target for public frustration (Coenders et al. 2020).

Moreover, the evolving nature of political discourse has facilitated the rise of populism. Traditional political parties have often struggled to address the concerns of their constituents, leading to a growing disconnect between the electorate and established political institutions. In this context, populist parties have positioned themselves as authentic representatives of the “common people,” contrasting themselves with the perceived elitism of mainstream politics. This narrative has been particularly effective in appealing to voters who feel alienated from the political process and disillusioned with the status quo (Bonikowski & Gidron 2021). The use of direct communication channels, such as social media, has allowed populist leaders to bypass traditional media and engage directly with their supporters, further enhancing their appeal (Engesser et al. 2017).

The dominance of right-wing authoritarian populism is particularly noteworthy in this context. Unlike democratic populism, which seeks to empower the electorate through inclusive policies, authoritarian populism often relies on exclusionary tactics and a strongman approach to governance. This shift raises critical questions about the future of democracy in Europe. The rise of nativist, authoritarian populism has not only reshaped political landscapes but has also posed significant challenges to democratic norms and values (Wodak et al. 2013; Gross 2022). The emphasis on national sovereignty and the rejection of supranational institutions, such as the European Union, reflect a broader trend towards isolationism and protectionism (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017).

Understanding the political economy of this populist revolt is essential for grasping its true roots. The interplay of economic grievances, cultural fears, and political disillusionment has created a potent mix that populist leaders exploit to gain support. Without addressing these underlying issues, it becomes increasingly difficult to devise effective democratic alternatives to counter the populist tide (Bonikowski 2016). The rise of populism in Europe is a complex interplay of economic discontent, cultural anxieties, and political disillusionment. As traditional parties struggle to adapt to the changing political landscape, populist movements have capitalized on these sentiments to gain traction. Understanding the roots of this phenomenon is essential for devising effective responses that address the underlying issues driving populist support.

As Europe navigates this challenging political terrain, it is crucial for policymakers to engage with the concerns of their constituents, fostering dialogue and inclusivity to counter the divisive narratives propagated by populist parties. Only through a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to the rise of populism can effective strategies be developed to promote social cohesion and democratic values in the face of growing polarization.

3. Populist Instrumentalization of Islam in European Political Discourse

In recent years, the political landscape of Central and Eastern Europe has witnessed a notable trend: the instrumentalization of Islam by populist parties to construct a European identity that is perceived as under siege from non-European influences. Countries such as Hungary and Poland have increasingly framed Islam as a direct threat to the cultural and civilizational integrity of European Christian values. Prominent political figures, including Viktor Orbán, have positioned themselves as staunch defenders of these values, crafting narratives that suggest Europe is facing an imminent “Muslim invasion” that could undermine its cultural fabric (Oztig, Gurkan, & Aydin 2021; Hamid 2019). This rhetoric not only serves to galvanize political support but also reinforces a collective identity rooted in opposition to perceived external threats.

The rise of Islamophobia in Europe is intricately linked to a broader crisis of European identity, which has been exacerbated by significant shifts in global power dynamics in the postcolonial era. Within this context, Islam is often portrayed as the antithesis of Western values, with Muslims depicted through a lens of misogyny, violence, and cultural alienation. This narrative serves a dual purpose: it deflects criticism away from the failures of liberal values and governance within European societies, while simultaneously reinforcing a binary distinction between “us” (the West) and “them” (the Muslim world) (Cesari 2013; Eldora 2023). Such

a framing allows for a simplification of complex social issues, enabling populist leaders to rally support by invoking fear and division.

The historical and cultural narratives that shape perceptions of Islam in Central and Eastern Europe are deeply influenced by imperial and colonial legacies. The long-standing view of Muslims as the “other” has been reactivated in contemporary political discourse, drawing on historical conflicts such as the Crusades and colonial encounters. These narratives have contributed to a persistent perception of Islam as a threat to European civilization, which is often exploited by populist parties to legitimize their political agendas (Cesari 2013). As Mihnea Stoica (2023, 4) highlights, populist leaders often present themselves not merely as political saviors but as messianic figures, claiming a unique ability to rescue the “People” from existential threats. This messianic self-image is frequently constructed in opposition to Islam, which is portrayed as the symbolic “other” threatening national purity and cohesion.

In addition to historical narratives, socio-economic factors play a crucial role in the rise of Islamophobia. Economic insecurity, particularly following the 2008 financial crisis, has heightened fears regarding competition for jobs and resources. Populist parties have adeptly exploited these anxieties, framing Muslims as economic threats who undermine social welfare systems and take jobs from native citizens (Inglehart & Norris 2016). This strategy has proven effective in mobilizing support from voters who feel economically marginalized and culturally threatened, further entrenching the populist narrative.

The media’s portrayal of Islam and Muslims significantly shapes public perceptions and attitudes. Negative representations of Muslims as terrorists, extremists, or cultural outsiders are prevalent in European media, reinforcing harmful stereotypes and contributing to a climate of fear and mistrust. Research indicates that media coverage of Muslims is disproportionately negative compared to other religious or ethnic groups, exacerbating social divisions and fostering public support for restrictive policies against Muslim communities (Poole 2019; Eldora 2023). This biased representation not only influences public opinion but also legitimizes discriminatory practices and policies.

Muslims in Europe face widespread discrimination and harassment across various aspects of life, including employment, education, and public spaces. A 2017 survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) revealed that nearly one in three Muslims reported experiencing discrimination while seeking employment, and one in four reported harassments due to their ethnic or immigrant background. Visible religious symbols, such as the hijab, often make Muslim women particularly vulnerable to discrimination and abuse (FRA 2017). This pervasive discrimination undermines social cohesion and perpetuates cycles of exclusion and marginalization, further entrenching the divide

between Muslim communities and the broader society (European Parliament 2018).

Despite the prevalence of Islamophobia, legal and policy responses across Europe have been inconsistent. While some countries have implemented anti-discrimination laws and policies aimed at protecting Muslim communities, others have introduced measures that further marginalize them, such as bans on religious symbols in public spaces. The European Union has called for stronger measures to combat anti-Muslim hatred, yet progress has been slow and uneven (European Parliament 2018). This lack of uniformity in legal protections underscores the urgent need for comprehensive and coordinated efforts to address Islamophobia at both national and EU levels (Abdelkader 2017).

Islamophobia often intersects with other forms of discrimination, such as racism and xenophobia. Muslims who are also members of racial or ethnic minorities experience compounded discrimination, highlighting the necessity for comprehensive approaches that address the multiple dimensions of Islamophobia (Meer & Modood 2019). Understanding these intersecting forms of discrimination requires a holistic perspective on how various identities and social positions interact to shape experiences of exclusion and marginalization (Othering & Belonging Institute 2023).

In conclusion, Islamophobia in Europe is a complex and pervasive issue that significantly impacts the lives of millions of Muslims. It is driven by a confluence of historical legacies, political instrumentalization, socio-economic factors, media representation, and intersecting forms of discrimination. Addressing Islamophobia necessitates a multifaceted approach that encompasses legal protections, policy measures, and initiatives aimed at challenging negative stereotypes while promoting social cohesion. By understanding and addressing the root causes of Islamophobia, European societies can work towards greater inclusivity and social harmony, fostering an environment where diversity is celebrated rather than feared.

4. Mythmaking and Disillusionment: The Utopian Phantasms of Populist Regenerative Nationalism

In recent years, Europe has witnessed a significant rise in populist movements that capitalize on a growing sense of disillusionment among citizens. These movements often present utopian visions that promise a return to a perceived golden age, characterized by cultural homogeneity and national sovereignty, free from the perceived threats posed by globalization and immigration. Central to these narratives is the instrumentalization of Islamophobia, which serves as a tool for reinforcing nationalist sentiments and constructing a collective identity rooted in exclusionary practices.

Populist leaders and parties across Europe, such as Marine Le Pen in France and Viktor Orbán in Hungary, have effectively utilized the rhetoric of a “return to greatness” to galvanize support. This rhetoric is steeped in mythmaking, where the past is idealized, and the present is framed as a time of crisis. The notion of a utopian past is often constructed through selective historical narratives that emphasize cultural purity and national pride while downplaying or ignoring the complexities of history (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017). This selective memory serves to create a dichotomy between the “pure” nation and the “other,” often embodied by Muslim communities, who are portrayed as threats to national identity and social cohesion (Wodak 2015).

The promise of a utopian future is particularly appealing to voters who feel marginalized by contemporary socio-economic changes. Economic insecurity, job losses, and cultural anxieties create a fertile ground for populist rhetoric. Populist leaders exploit these fears by presenting themselves as the only ones capable of restoring the nation’s former glory. This strategy is effective in mobilizing support among disenchanted voters who feel left behind by the rapid pace of change and disillusioned with traditional political parties (Bonikowski 2016).

Despite their appeal, the utopian promises of populist leaders often fail to materialize. The idealized visions of a homogeneous and prosperous past are rarely achievable in the complex and interconnected world of today. As populist leaders struggle to deliver on their promises, the gap between expectations and reality becomes increasingly apparent. This disconnect leads to further disillusionment among voters, who may feel betrayed by the leaders they once supported (Rasmussen 2013). The failure to achieve these utopian visions can exacerbate social fragmentation and deepen existing divisions within society.

The construction of utopian narratives often involves scapegoating marginalized communities, such as immigrants and religious minorities, who are depicted as threats to national identity and social cohesion. This scapegoating not only mobilizes support for populist leaders but also reinforces stereotypes and prejudices, leading to increased discrimination and social exclusion (Cesari 2013). The harsh realities faced by these communities stand in stark contrast to the idealized visions promoted by populist rhetoric, highlighting the profound disconnect between populist promises and actual outcomes (Eldora 2023).

The media plays a crucial role in shaping and disseminating populist utopian narratives. Populist leaders often use media platforms to amplify their messages, creating a sense of urgency and crisis that demands immediate action. This media strategy helps to solidify the populist narrative and rally support by presenting a clear and compelling vision of the future (Engesser et al. 2017). However, the media’s role in perpetuating these narratives also contributes to the polarization of public discourse and the entrenchment of divisive ideologies (Poole 2019). The media’s portrayal of

events often emphasizes urgency and crisis, which aligns with populist leaders' strategies to create a sense of imminent threat. This portrayal can heighten public anxiety and fear, making the populist narrative more compelling. By framing issues in terms of crisis, the media helps populist leaders to position themselves as the saviors who can restore order and stability (Yanchenko 2022, 12). This framing is particularly effective in mobilizing support among individuals who feel threatened by socio-economic changes and cultural shifts.

The historical and cultural contexts of different European countries significantly shape populist utopian narratives. In nations with imperialistic pasts like the UK and France, populist leaders often invoke national pride and historical greatness to appeal to voters' sense of identity and belonging (Cesari 2013). Conversely, countries with histories of occupation and resistance, such as Poland and Hungary, emphasize themes of sovereignty and independence in their rhetoric (Oztig, Gurkan, & Aydin 2021). Economic disparities and social inequalities further fuel these sentiments, as seen in the UK's Brexit campaign and France's National Front leveraging fears of immigration and economic instability (Gross 2022; Couperus, Rensmann, & Tortola 2023).

Cultural trauma from historical events also plays a crucial role, with leaders exploiting these traumas to rally support. Viktor Orbán in Hungary frequently references the Treaty of Trianon to bolster national identity (Gross 2022, 492). The broader European integration process, perceived as eroding national sovereignty, has been particularly influential in Poland and Hungary, where leaders position themselves as defenders against external threats (Couperus, Rensmann, & Tortola 2023). Additionally, the strategic use of modern communication platforms by populist leaders amplifies their messages and broadens their reach, enhancing their influence across Europe (Gross 2022).

The utopian phantasms of populist regenerative nationalism in Europe are powerful tools for mobilizing support among disenchanted voters. However, the idealized visions they promote are often unattainable, leading to further disillusionment and social fragmentation. By critically examining the construction and impact of these narratives, we can better understand the dynamics of populism and its implications for European societies.

5. Echo Chambers and Radicalization of Political Discourse

The role of media in shaping populist narratives is critical, particularly in the context of the European Union's evolving stance towards Islam amid the rise of populism. Populist parties have skillfully harnessed new media platforms to disseminate their messages, recruit supporters, and cultivate a sense of belonging among their constituents. This

phenomenon is particularly pronounced in the digital age, where social media and algorithm-driven content delivery systems create echo chambers that reinforce existing beliefs and amplify radicalized political discourse. As Frunză and Rațiu (2024 36) emphasize, populist leaders such as those in Romania have effectively used social media to construct ideological communities that reject diversity and demonize alterity, often blending religious symbolism with nationalist rhetoric to heighten emotional resonance and mobilize support.

Digital echo chambers are environments where individuals are exposed primarily to information that aligns with their pre-existing views, leading to a reinforcement of those beliefs and a heightened polarization of opinions (Sunstein 2001). Algorithms employed by social media platforms prioritize content that generates engagement, often favoring sensationalist and emotionally charged narratives over balanced reporting. This algorithmic bias can lead to the proliferation of extremist viewpoints, including Islamophobic rhetoric, which resonates with the fears and anxieties of certain segments of the population (Bennett & Segerberg 2013). For instance, a study analyzing 12 million Twitter messages found that echo chambers significantly influence the spread of political information, often leading to increased polarization (Gunton 2022).

Research indicates that the consumption of media within these echo chambers can significantly influence political attitudes and behaviors. For instance, a study by Barberá et al. (2015) found that individuals who engage with politically homogeneous networks are more likely to adopt extreme positions and become radicalized. This radicalization is particularly concerning in the context of populist movements, which often frame Islam as a threat to national identity and cultural integrity. The narratives propagated within these echo chambers can lead to a normalization of Islamophobic sentiments, further entrenching divisions within society (Mudde 2004). Additionally, a report by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR 2018) highlights a disturbing trend of rising hate crimes and anti-Muslim sentiment across Europe, which can be traced back to the narratives propagated by populist movements and amplified by social media.

The rise of populism in Europe is closely linked to a resurgence of nationalist sentiments, which often manifest in a defensive posture against perceived external threats, including immigration and Islam. Populist leaders exploit the fears generated by these digital echo chambers to construct a narrative of crisis, positioning themselves as the defenders of national identity against an encroaching “other” (Inglehart & Norris 2016). This narrative is particularly potent in the context of the European Union, where the integration of diverse cultures and religions is often framed as a dilution of traditional European values.

The European Union’s response to these populist narratives has been mixed. On one hand, EU institutions have sought to promote inclusivity

and multiculturalism, emphasizing the importance of diversity as a strength. On the other hand, the rise of populist parties has led to a backlash against these ideals, with calls for stricter immigration controls and a reevaluation of the EU's commitment to human rights and equality (Kriesi 2014). This tension reflects a broader struggle within European societies to reconcile the ideals of a pluralistic democracy with the realities of growing populist sentiment.

The algorithmic radicalization of political discourse has profound implications for the future of European unity and social cohesion. As populist parties continue to gain traction, the narratives surrounding Islam and immigration are likely to become increasingly polarized. This polarization not only undermines the social fabric of European societies but also poses challenges to the EU's foundational principles of solidarity and mutual respect among member states (Rydgren 2007). Moreover, the normalization of Islamophobic rhetoric within these digital echo chambers can lead to real-world consequences, including increased discrimination and violence against Muslim communities. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to promote media literacy, counteract misinformation, and foster dialogue that transcends the divisions created by echo chambers. By understanding the dynamics of digital radicalization, European societies can work towards a more cohesive and inclusive future, one that recognizes the value of diversity while addressing the legitimate concerns of all citizens.

6. Conclusion

The political dynamics of 21st century Europe are profoundly shaped by the rise of populism, which has emerged as a complex response to the multifaceted challenges of globalization, migration, and demographic changes. This paper has explored the intricate relationship between populism and Islam, revealing how populist movements utilize Islam as a focal point to construct narratives that resonate with voters' anxieties about national identity and cultural integrity. The idealization of a homogeneous past, coupled with the demonization of the "other," serves as a powerful tool for mobilizing support and reinforcing exclusionary practices. The analysis highlights that the convergence of populism and Islamophobia is not merely a political strategy but reflects deeper societal anxieties rooted in economic discontent, cultural fears, and political disillusionment. As populist leaders exploit these sentiments, they create echo chambers that amplify radicalized political discourse, further entrenching divisions within society. The media's role in shaping these narratives cannot be overstated, as it often perpetuates negative stereotypes and fosters a climate of fear and mistrust towards Muslim communities.

Moreover, the utopian visions presented by populist leaders, promising a return to an idealized past, are often unattainable in the complex and interconnected world of today. The gap between populist promises and reality can lead to disillusionment among supporters, exacerbating social fragmentation and deepening existing divisions. This disconnect underscores the urgent need for a critical examination of the implications of populism for social cohesion and democratic values in Europe. As Europe navigates these turbulent political waters, it is imperative for policymakers to engage with the concerns of their constituents, fostering dialogue and inclusivity to counter the divisive narratives propagated by populist parties. Addressing the root causes of populism economic inequality, cultural anxieties, and political disillusionment will be essential in devising effective strategies that promote social cohesion and uphold democratic principles. Only through a comprehensive understanding of these dynamics can European societies work towards a future that embraces diversity, fosters mutual respect, and strengthens the foundations of democracy in the face of growing polarization.

References:

- Abdelkader, Engy. 2017. "A Comparative Analysis of European Islamophobia: France, UK, Germany, Netherlands, and Sweden." *UCLA Journal of Islamic and Near Eastern Law* 16 (1). Accessed July 20, 2025. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/870099f4>.
- Aryaeinejad, Kateira, and Thomas Leo Scherer. 2024. "The Role of the Internet and Social Media on Radicalization." National Institute of Justice, April. Accessed July 20, 2025. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/305797.pdf>.
- Barberá, Pablo, John T. Jost, Jonathan Nagler, Joshua A. Tucker, and Richard Bonneau. 2015. "Tweeting from Left to Right: Is Online Political Communication More Than an Echo Chamber?" *Psychological Science* 26 (10): 1531–1542. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797615594620>.
- Bennett, W. Lance, and Alexandra Segerberg. 2013. *The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bonikowski, Bart, and Noam Gidron. n.d. "Populism in Legislative Discourse: Evidence from the European Parliament, 1999–2004." Harvard University. Accessed July 20, 2025. https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/bonikowski/files/bonikowski_and_gidron_-_populist_claims-making_in_legislative_discourse.pdf.
- Bonikowski, Bart. n.d. "Three Lessons of Contemporary Populism in Europe and the United States." *Brown Journal of World Affairs*. Accessed July 20, 2025. https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/bonikowski/files/bonikowski_-_three_lessons_of_contemporary_populism_in_the_united_states_and_europe.pdf.

Caiani, Manuela, and Paolo Graziano. 2022. "The Three Faces of Populism in Power: Polity, Policies and Politics." *Government and Opposition* 57 (4): 569–588. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2022.4>.

Cesari, Jocelyne. 2013. *Why the West Fears Islam: An Exploration of Muslims in Liberal Democracies*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Chatterje-Dooddy, Precious N., and Rhys Crilley. 2019. "Making Sense of Emotions and Affective Investments in War: RT and the Syrian Conflict on YouTube." *Media and Communication* 7 (3): 167–178. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v7i3.1911>.

Claeys, Gregory. 2020. "European Utopias and Dystopias: Past, Present, and Future." *Utopian Studies* 31 (2): 398–412. <https://doi.org/10.5325/utopianstudies.31.2.0398>.

Coenders, Marcel, Marcel Lubbers, and Peer Scheepers. 2020. "Nationalism in Europe: Trends and Cross-National Differences in Public Opinion." *European Review* 29 (4): 484–496. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798720000526>.

Couperus, Stefan, Lars Rensmann, and Pier Domenico Tortola. 2023. "Memory Politics of the Far Right in Europe." *European Politics and Society* 24 (4): 435–444. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23745118.2022.2058757>.

Eldora, Dezi. 2023. "The Spread of Islam in Europe: Historical Patterns and Contemporary Dynamics." *International Journal of Science and Society* 5 (4). <https://doi.org/10.54783/ijssoc.v5i4.781>.

Engesser, Sven, Nicole Ernst, Frank Esser, and Florin Büchel. 2017. "Populism and Social Media: How Politicians Spread a Fragmented Ideology." *Information, Communication & Society* 20 (8): 1109–1126. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1207697>.

Ernst, Nicole, Sven Engesser, Florin Büchel, Sina Blassnig, and Frank Esser. 2019. "Extreme Parties and Populism: An Analysis of Facebook and Twitter across Six Countries." *Information, Communication & Society* 22 (9): 1327–1346. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1329333>.

European Parliament. 2018. "Combating Anti-Muslim Hatred in the EU." Accessed July 20, 2025. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2018/630305/EPRS_ATA%282018%29630305_EN.pdf.

FRA (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights). 2017. "Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey: Muslims – Selected Findings." Accessed July 20, 2025. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/eumidis-ii-muslims-selected-findings>.

Frunză, Sandu, and Paula Rațiu. 2024. "Cultural Intelligence and the Populist Discourse Manifested through Social Media." *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 23 (67): 32–43.

Gozgor, Giray. 2021. "The Role of Economic Uncertainty in the Rise of EU Populism." *Public Choice* 190 (1–2): 229–246. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11127-021-00933-7>.

Gross, Samuel R. 2022. "Race and Wrongful Convictions in the United States 2022." University of Michigan Public Law Research Paper No. 22-051.

<https://ssrn.com/abstract=4245863>.

Gross, Stephen G. 2022. "Understanding Europe's Populist Right: The State of the Field." *Contemporary European History* 32 (3): 489–497.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777322000261>: 489 - 497

Gunton, Lyndelle. 2022. "Librarians as Drivers of Academic Integrity for Student Success at University." *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association* 71 (2): 156–170. <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/230451/>.

Hamid, Shadi. 2019. "The Role of Islam in European Populism: How Refugee Flows and Fear of Muslims Drive Right-Wing Support." Brookings Institution. Accessed July 20, 2025.

https://www.academia.edu/71004335/The_Role_of_Islam_in_European_Populism_How_Refugee_Flows_and_Fear_of_Muslims_Drive_Right-wing_Support.

Hesová, Zora. n.d. "Three Types of Culture Wars and the Populist Strategies in Central Europe." *Czech Journal of Political Science*. Accessed July 20, 2025. <https://czechpolsci.eu/article/view/34106>.

Inglehart, Ronald F., and Pippa Norris. 2016. *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jones, Erik. 2019. "Populism in Europe: What Scholarship Tells Us." *Survival* 61 (4): 7–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2019.1637125>.

Kriesi, Hanspeter. 2014. "The Populist Challenge." *West European Politics* 37 (2): 361–378. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2014.887879>.

Kübler, Daniel, Markus A. Strebel, and Frank Marcinkowski. 2024. "Populism and the Scales of Statehood: Localism and Populist Attitudes in Western Europe." *European Political Science Review* 16 (3): 431–447.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773923000395>.

Margalit, Yotam. 2019. "Economic Insecurity and the Causes of Populism, Reconsidered." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 33 (4): 152–170.

<https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.33.4.152>.

Marois, Guillaume, Michaela Potancokova, and Miguel Gonzalez-Leonardo. 2023. "Demographic and Labor Force Impacts of Future Immigration Flows into Europe: Does an Immigrant's Region of Origin Matter?" *Nature*.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-023-02482-4.pdf>.

Mauritti, Rosário, Susana C. Martins, Nuno Nunes, Ana L. Romão, and António F. Costa. 2016. "The Social Structure of European Inequality: A Multidimensional Perspective." *Sociologia, Problemas e Práticas* 81: 75–93.

<https://doi.org/10.7458/SPP2016818798>.

Meer, Nasar, and Tariq Modood. 2019. "The Racialization of Muslims." In *The Routledge International Handbook of Islamophobia*, edited by Irene Zempi and Imran Awan, 33–45. London: Routledge.

Morgan, Michael. 2020. "A Cultural Sociology of Populism." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 35 (2): 179–199.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10767-020-09366-4>.

Mudde, Cas, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. 2017. *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780190234873.001.0001>.

Mudde, Cas. 2004. "The Populist Zeitgeist." *Government and Opposition* 39 (4): 541–563. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x>.

Noury, Abdul, and Gérard Roland. 2020. "Identity Politics and Populism in Europe." *Annual Review of Political Science* 23: 421–439. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-050718-032502>.

Othering & Belonging Institute. 2023. "Islamophobia in Europe: A Reading Resource Pack." University of California, Berkeley. Accessed July 20, 2025. <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/2023-09/RRP%20Europe.pdf>.

Oztig, Lacin Idil, Turkan Ayda Gurkan, and Kenan Aydin. 2021. "The Strategic Logic of Islamophobic Populism." *Government and Opposition* 56 (3): 446–464. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2019.35>.

Peker, Emre. 2022. "Finding Religion: Immigration and the Populist (Re)Discovery of Christian Heritage in Western and Northern Europe." *Religions* 13 (2): 158. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13020158>.

Poole, Elizabeth. 2019. *Reporting Islam: Media Representations of British Muslims*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Rasmussen, Steen W. 2013. *Religion and Identity in Europe: The Makings of Religious Enemies in Antiquity and Today*. Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark. <https://www.universitypress.dk/images/pdf/2763.pdf>.

Roland, Gérard. 2019. "Cultural Change and Slow-Moving Institutions." *Annual Review of Economics* 11: 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-080218-030213>.

Rydgren, Jens. 2007. "The Sociology of the Radical Right." *Annual Review of Sociology* 33: 241–262. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.33.040406.131752>.

Saarinen, Risto, and Heikki J. Koskinen. 2022. "Recognition, Religious Identity, and Populism: Lessons from Finland." University of Helsinki. <http://hdl.handle.net/10138/352818>.

Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Scheiring, Gábor, Manuel Serrano-Alarcón, Andreea Moise, Claire McNamara, and David Stuckler. 2024. "The Populist Backlash Against Globalization: A Meta-Analysis of the Causal Evidence." *British Journal of Political Science* 54 (3): 892–916. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123424000024>.

Smith, Brian. 2017. "Utopia, Dystopia, and Dictatorship in Modern Europe." Scholars at Harvard. Accessed July 20, 2025. https://scholar.harvard.edu/sites/scholar.harvard.edu/files/brianasmith/files/b_smith-his-104-8-modern_europe_syllabus.pdf.

Stoica, Mihnea S. 2023. "Conceptualising 'Vulnerability to Populist Narratives'. The Messianic Claim of Populist Leaders." *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 22 (64): 3–19.

Sunstein, Cass R. 2007. *Republic.com 2.0*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Van Mol, Christof, and Helga de Valk. 2018. "Migration and Immigrants in Europe: A Historical and Demographic Perspective." In *Integration Processes and Policies*

in Europe, 31–55. Springer. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-21674-4_3.

Wodak, Ruth, Majid KhosraviNik, and Brigitte Mral. 2013. *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*. London: Bloomsbury Academic. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26301080>.

Wodak, Ruth. 2015. *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*. London: Sage.

Yanchenko, Kostiantyn. 2022. “Stories about ‘Us’ and ‘Them’: An Experimental Inquiry into the Relative Appeal of Populist Narratives.” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 34 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edac004>: 1-19