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"Europe for Europeans": Fortress Europe and its Applicability to the Contemporary EU

Bachelor's thesis in European Studies
Supervisor: Anna Brigevich
May 2022

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Abstract

Since 2015, the extent of exclusionary and hostile sentiments has been high in the European Union (EU). Crises and the rise of challenger far-right parties have coloured the conception of the EU and how its citizens categorize in- and out-groups. This study aims to explore the concept of Fortress Europe (FE) and why it correlates with the rising trend of exclusionary identities within the EU. In particular, the goal of this thesis is to research the connection between increasingly exclusionist identities and the rising support for a more fortified Europe.

Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Social Constructivism (SC) make up the foundations for this thesis, following their view on identity, in-and out-groups, and social categorization. As well as reviewing relevant research on the field, to substantiate claims on FE and European conceptions of the 'other'. The cross-national analysis takes matters further into consideration, as general tendencies, concerns, and beliefs are being highlighted through Eurobarometer numbers. These aspects are compared over time to illustrate the evolvement of European attitudes. With the assumption that far-right parties act as political entrepreneurs who shape the conception of the EU, a case study of Poland will illustrate why this country promotes FE sentients and to what extent their policies have affected public opinion.

The concept of Fortress Europe does apply to contemporary Europe to some extent. The cross-national analysis and the case study show evidence of more hostile sentiments circulating all over the EU. Moreover, the prospect of more diversity fuels the prevalence of hostile sentiments. In this case, FE symbolizes the trend of a more exclusionary Europe, challenging what we know as inclusionary European values.

Sammendrag

Siden 2015, har omfanget av ekskluderende og fiendtlige holdninger vært høyt i Den Europeiske Union (EU). Kriser og fremveksten av utfordrende høyreekstreme partier har farget forestillingen om EU og hvordan innbyggerne kategoriserer grupperinger basert på 'oss' og 'dem'. Denne oppgaven tar sikte på å utforske begrepet «Fortress Europe» (FE) og hvorfor det korrelerer med den økende trenden av ekskluderende identiteter i EU.

Sosial identitetsteori (SIT) og sosial konstruktivisme (SC) utgjør grunnlaget for denne oppgaven, i den grad disse teoriene kan forklare identitet, inn- og ut-grupper og sosial kategorisering. I tillegg, vil oppgaven gjennomgå relevant forskning på feltet for å underbygge påstander om FE og europeiske forestillinger om den 'andre' eller de 'utenforstående'. Den tverrnasjonale analysen tar disse aspektene videre, og ser nærmere på generelle tendenser, bekymringer og oppfatninger gjennom tall hentet fra Eurobarometer. Funnene sammenlignes over tid for å illustrere utviklingen av europeiske holdninger. Med antagelsen om at høyreekstreme partier opptrer som politiske entreprenører som former forestillingen om EU, vil en casestudie av Polen illustrere hvorfor dette landet fremmer FE-sentimenter og i hvilken grad deres politikk har påvirket opinionen.

Konseptet «Fortress Europe» gjelder til en viss grad det moderne Europa. Den tverrnasjonale analysen og casestudien inneholder tydelige tegn på at mer fiendtlige holdninger sirkulerer i EU. Utsiktene til mer mangfold gir dermed næring til utbredelsen av fiendtlige holdninger. I dette tilfellet symboliserer FE trenden med et mer ekskluderende Europa, og utfordrer det vi kjenner som inkluderende europeiske verdier.

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Abbreviations

EB	Eurobarometer
EU	European Union
FE	Fortress Europe
SIT	Social Identity Theory
SC	Social Constructivism

1 Introduction

The European Union (EU) is facing an increase in hostile attitudes towards non-European immigrants, which has been a common trait amongst many member states during and after the so-called 'migrant crisis' in 2015 (Vataman, 2016, p. 544). Currently, statistics indicate that this has become one of the main concerns on the European level. This is an issue which concerns both politicians and academics and is becoming problematic for both Europeans and non-Europeans. In this context, "Fortress Europe" (FE) is to be considered as a newer concept in the perception of the EU and has proven beneficial in examining the current state of group differentiation in the EU. Central to FE are exclusionary sentiments based on in- and out-group differentiation, which can be found in the political rhetoric of many far-right parties (Allen, 2017, p. 274). The perception of identity is here key to understanding the different aspects of how social actors shape their conception of Europe and how this impacts the concept of FE.

FE have been described by many academics, as Eilstrup-Sangiovanni is one of them; FE is "a citadel against immigration, watched over by hi-tech system of satellites and drones and protected by fences and warships" (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2021, p. 462). This is also a view known to Kofman and Sales, which in 1992 saw FE as the result of "the border controls are brought down between the EC states, they are being replaced by greatly strengthened external border controls, and by increasing internal surveillance" (Kofman & Sales, 1992, p. 29). Another take on FE is forwarded by Albrecht, which describes the concept as "a fortress that is made out of internal and soft controls (…) and a certain amount of hardware to detect and identify intruders at the borders (…). The fortress also consists of a mixture of normative concepts made out of laws and political programmes as well as factual concepts set up to prevent unwanted immigration" (Albrecht, 2002, p. 21). Celta and Coletti look back to John Galtung and his description of FE: "a powerful spatial critique of how internal consolidation within the EU is obtained at the expense of strengthening separation with the outside world" (Celata & Coletti, 2016, p. 19). Accordingly, I define Fortress Europe as an exclusionist and hostile environment, based on the notion of 'us' and 'them' and the outer border of the EU.

The goal of this thesis is to research the connection between increasingly exclusionist identities and how this can be linked to the rising support for a more closed Europe. In this I argue that radical right parties indeed act as political entrepreneurs in shaping both the discourse and conception of the EU. This is a part of the main question I seek to explain; how does the concept of 'Fortress Europe' apply to the contemporary Europe, and to what extent does diversity in Europe fuel the prevalence of more hostile and nationalistic sentiments on the

European level? This will be examined in detail using Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Social Constructivism (SC) as the base of understanding the core of identity and how we define in- and out-groups.

A cross-national analysis will be used to dive deeper into issues such as immigration, identity, and sociodemographic concerns at European level. The analysis will highlight important statistics using Eurobarometer survey data, as well as compare data from across the member states of the EU. After the cross-national analysis has shown the more general tendencies connected to FE and its relationship to identity, a case study will elaborate in closer detail how Poland can fit into our predictions of a FE country. By using these two forms of methodology the goal is to show general as well as specific facts and tendencies in Europe, which will substantiate why FE is such an important concept in the evolvement of the EU.

To properly present all information necessary and the following discussion, the thesis starts with SIT and SC as the theoretical framework, before current crisis and the notion of nationalism is taken into consideration. In the next section, we will dive deeper into attitudes of the EU and how identity affects the view on Europeans and non-Europeans. Especially immigration will be of essential character in this section. The following section is a case study of Poland and the PiS. This section is discussing at why Poland could be a probable example of a FE country, and what criteria it fulfils to be considered as such. Nearing the end of this thesis, I will use the analytical findings to highlight that FE sentiments are dependent upon sociodemographic features, as well as why the concept becomes increasingly more applicable to the EU. Furthermore, the role of prominent social actors or groups such as far-right parties[1] have proven essential in substantiating my claim that political parties indeed shape and alter the populations' conception of what it means to be European, and how categorization is used to distinguish between in- and out-groups of the EU.

2   Social Identity Theory and the Study of the EU

2.1   Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory (SIT) can simplify categorization of social groups and explain why some identify with one group instead of another (Sets & Burke, 2000, p. 244; Ashforth & Mael, 1989,

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[1] In this thesis the main focus in the cross-analysis section is not on radical parties, per se, given the fact that the EB data reports used in the analysis do not have information on party affiliation. However, radical right parties will be connected to right-wing ideology. Subsequently, the thesis will be focusing on the platform of the radical right in the Poland case study, to illustrate how political actors can affect society.

p. 20-21). Categorization is essential to understand and explain the emergence of the concept of FE, and why there has been an increase in negative sentiments towards non-Europeans and immigrants. Social classification is often built on comparative and rational views or expectations towards both in- and out-group members. This can be based on social groups standing in opposition to one another, like the notion of old and young, but also more normative aspects such as traditions and interests. When using classification as a tool, the individual might manage to find their own role in the social environment (Asforth & Mael, 1989, p. 21; Tajfel & Turner, 1985, p. 16; Brown, 2000, p. 746). Self-categorization is necessary in acquiring an identity, personal as well as public. Identification and how we differentiate from one group to another is therefore rooted in how social actors act (Sets & Burke, 2000, p. 244).

As identification is dependent on social interaction, so are in-groups and out-groups, which are essential in how individuals differentiate between 'us' and 'them' (Sets & Burke, 2000, p. 225). An in-group is based on the constant comparison done amongst social actors, as those with similar traits and identity recognise common culture and attitude. Out-groups, on the other hand, are considered as all social actors who differ from crucial identity-traits – such as the self – found in the in-group (Sets & Burke, 2000, p. 225). Group membership is essential to the function of the social actor, which in turn adds to aspects of the self, such as self-esteem, to maintain social identity (Brown, 2000, p. 746-747). This categorizes them as inherently or partly different. Consequently, by distinguishing who belongs to whom builds a structural framework based on social interaction (Brown, 2000, p. 746-747). Not only does the out-groups define the very boundaries between the social groups, but they also convey information to members and non-members what the other groups lack. Categorization is therefore a tool which is what most identities are founded upon, and as we explore later, might be something highly impacted by material and social surroundings, which foretells social interaction (Huddy, 2001, p. 145).

When social actors acquire identity, one usually refers to a certain social group or community (Sets & Burke, 2000, p. 226; Triandis, 2001, p. 155). The reason for this lies in the connection between individual and group. Because, as the individual evolves, so does its identity. By using the social group as a guiding line, the group's perceptions and inclinations gradually becomes more important to the individual. This adds a common trait between the individual and their fellow group members (Sets & Burke, 2000, p. 226; Triandis, 2001, p. 155). This might resemble the conception of collectivism, whereas the social actors strive in unison to achieve the greater good. This creates a collective identity grounded in common history, culture, and identity (Heywood, 2015, p. 37-38; Rhee, Uleman, & Lee, 1996, p. 1037; Triandis,

2001, p. 155). "Collective identities" refers to the idea that a group of people accept a fundamental and consequential similarity that causes them to feel solidarity amongst themselves. This sense of collective identity is socially constructed, which means it emerges as the intentional or unintentional consequence of social interactions" (Fligstein, Polyakova, & Sandholtz, 2012, p. 108; Kohli, 2000, p. 117). Collective identity is also based on the self-categorization inherent in all humans (Huddy, 2001, p. 132).

An interesting aspect of SIT is the process of depersonalization most individuals go through to adapt to their social in-group (Sets & Burke, 2000, p. 231). This is a cognitive process, which shifts the focus from seeing the individual self as the only entity, to be recognised as a part of the group. The shift exposes the individual to social norms and values of the in-group, something which forms group phenomena as ethnocentrism, stereotyping, and collective action (Sets & Burke, 2000, p. 231-232). The stronger these phenomena get, the more probable it is that the group members develop radical and more hostile attitudes towards outsiders. This will become more evident in the coming analysis. Structural framework which defining each social group, is therefore dependent upon the members' collective identification and that these also interact in accordance with what is expected by the social group (Sets & Burke, p. 232).

2.2   Social Constructivism

As a theoretical supplement to SIT, Social Constructivism (SC) might be a useful tool to further understand how identity is created, maintained, and used in contemporary times. SC is based on the notion that reality is something each individual shapes for themselves and the community (Saurugger, 2013, p. 146). Mudde explains this as group identification, as the process of identification concerns different groups and is based on the fact that all groups are social constructs (Mudde, 2007, p. 65). Both identities and social organization can be explained as constructed, which also applies to larger communities such as the EU (Mudde, 2007, p. 65). If all social groups and organisations are constructed by those who choose to identify with certain rules and norms, this also indicates that some social actors could construct totally new perceptions of social matters. Subsequently, following this line of thought, one would arrive at the possible explanation to why some states are totalitarian, or authoritarian, based on a certain group of social actors. However, this is not something this thesis will investigate.

In the case that smaller and larger communities are socially constructed, we can look at three core ideas that define SC: the first idea concerns the context in which individuals act. As social agents, people are affected by the framework given the social structures of their

environment. This shapes behaviour and how they pursue their preferences, as well as possibility to act in a rational manner (Wiener, Börzel & Risse, 2019, p. 185). When individuals act in accordance with self- or group interest, ideational and material aspects of reality help them contextualize their situation based on their surroundings. Ideational aspects might be norms and rules found within society and sets the frame for accepted behaviour. These are not variables dependent upon time and space but can help substantiate individual or collective actions and incentives (Saurugger, 2013, p. 146). The second idea constitutes the importance of how social structures are co-constituted with the social agents, which shape behavioural patterns inside the community. Hence, the norms of society are created. However, norms, social structures, and identities are being constantly altered to fit interaction among social actors and structures (Wiener, et al., 2019, p. 185; Saurugger, 2013, p. 146).

Going over to the third and last idea of constructivism, we look closer at material aspects. This idea concerns what effect and impact the economic, social, and political contexts have on the interest of the individual (Wiener, et al., 2019, p. 185). Interests are, in this case, endogenously constructed, and are in effect based upon the current structures surrounding social actors. Nonetheless, as these surroundings change, the understanding of reality and its correlation to personal and collective interests adapts to the evolution of society (Saurugger, 2013, p. 147). As a result, the creation of a common identity is constructed in a specific time and space, which poses a difficult challenge for the EU (Wiener, et al., 2019, p. 186). National and European identities are not mutually exclusive, however, as time has passed these two have entwined as they are currently something that the European population view as coexisting and overlapping. Thus, there seem not to be any clear single European identity which may affect the legitimacy of the EU and its effect on national governments (Wiener, et al., 2019, p. 186). As the EU is largely based upon the diversity of the nation-states, it is hard to come by a single European identity.

Even though it is hard to find one specific European identity, the concept of identity itself might be one of the key elements of understanding reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1996, p. 194). The construction of reality is founded on both material and normative aspects, which can explain why some people support the far-right in order to protect their nation and culture. As the construction of reality is a continuing process, the social actors affecting it – such as political parties, employers, heads of families – might determine how we shape and maintain both reality and identity. This we will explore further, as political parties can shape the conception of the society we reside in (Berger & Luckmann, 1996, p. 194). Subsequently, following the line of theory already mentioned, identity and society are equally entities of construction resulting

from social interaction. Identity is, therefore, dependent upon some sort of symbolic universe in which it belongs, so it can be given meaning and functionality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 195). This can be seen in the context of crisis when preservation of common history and traditions suddenly become a more pressing issue. This might lay the foundation of how different social groups differentiate between 'friend' and 'foe'.

In this task, however, we will look closer at what foundations there are which make social actors differentiate between in- and out-groups. Moreover, we will explore whether this can be considered as applicable when explaining the FE and the negative notions of non-Europeans in the EU. This will become more evident through the later cross-national analysis and the case study, which seeks to explore the connection and reason of how identity in Europe might explain the concept of FE and why it is a rising trend in the EU.

3   Crisis, nationalism, and social differentiation

3.1   The current state of Europe

The so-called 'migrant-crisis' escalated gradually since the 2000s and hit its highest and most pressing state in 2015 (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2021, p. 448). This put significant pressure on member states of the EU leading to stricter border controls, and a rising fear of terrorism and illegal immigration. In addition to this, the covid-19 pandemic washed over the world, which also strengthened the use of border controls and stricter measures to regulate the flow of people in and out of Europe (Bonotti & Zech, 2021, p. xiii). In combination, these crises have pooled together tensions regarding both free movement within and the function of the EU borders (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2021, p. 448). This we will look closer at in the cross-national analysis. As a result, there have been increasingly more common to differentiate between in- and out-groups as these international developments have led to a public demand of more fortified borders (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2021, p. 448). This we can see in how intwined national and European identity have become during the years of EU integration and lead back to the concept of Fortress Europe.

3.2   Dual identities and cultural differences

It is common to identify with different social groups, and Europeans are no different (Wiener, et al., 2019, p. 137). In addition, it is most common to identify with one's nation before identifying as European. When looking more closely at public opinion, however, there is a clear

divide between those who identify with both Europe and their nation, inclusive nationalists, and those who are exclusive nationalists and only identify with their nation (Wiener, et al., 2019, p. 137). Inclusive nationalists are more inclined to support the EU and its process of integration in contrast to the attitudes of the latter group. Many categorized as exclusive nationalists also bear xenophobic attitudes towards non-Europeans. In this case, non-Europeans are considered as people from outside the EU, often practicing a different religion than Christianity, and have inherently different cultural traits. This hostile attitude also applies to the degree of tolerance towards the flow of non-European immigrants. Furthermore, this have resulted in prejudice and negative perceptions of the 'other'. Fearing their traditions and cultures will suffer under the threat of outsiders, more and more Europeans seems to become exclusive (Wiener, et al., 2019, p. 137, 139; Mudde, 2007, p. 69).

Nationalism is something constructed out of imaginary boundaries. We limit and define the notion of 'us', based on cultural processes found in the in-group which one resides in (Polynczuk-Alenius, 2021, p. 770). When defining out-groups by the structural framework society is based on, it becomes easier to separate one nation from another. Such a view can explain why nationalism and racism can be related. In Poland we find examples of this, as their anti-immigrant discourse have caused many controversial discussions on the European level. In general, this discourse show how intwined nationalism and racism can be, as the Polish politics create both a social hierarchy and clear social boundaries between the different groups of society (Polynczuk-Alenius, 2021, p. 770). This can explain why some member states of the EU fits into the concept of FE, as the aspects above often represent key features of the concept. By looking at the extent of nationalism and racism used to distinguish one social group from another, the case of Poland will be explored further below in the case study.

4   Cross-National Analysis

4.1   Eurobarometer

To view the correlation between in- and out-groups in Europe and how the identification of its population categorizes non-Europeans in the EU, the Eurobarometer (EB) is a useful tool in our examination of the concept of FE. The EB is a public opinion survey commonly used by the European Parliament and the European Commission, amongst other EU institutions, in surveying different aspects of public opinion (European Union, n.d., a). Since the EB monitors public interests regularly, these data can provide us with crucial numbers to answer how the concept of FE can be applied to the conception of the EU. The EB provides data for the public

and are easily found in accordance with their goal of transparency (European Commission, n.d.). Since the project was started in 1974, the wide range of topics have offered an extended demographic coverage in public opinion all over Europe. The surveys from the EB are regularly published which enable the readers to get an overview of attitudes and tendencies ranging on social, political, and cultural issues (European Union, n.d., a).

In this thesis, EB surveys have proven essential in comparing and scaling different attitudes within the EU. When trying to find the connection between the concept of FE and how Europeans identify with the EU and its politics, the EB gives a wide range of probable answers (European Union, n.d., a). The Standard Eurobarometer, which is one of the survey types used in this thesis, shows the general opinion on most standard issues the member states face. Subsequently, themes such as identity and values were a bit harder to come by as these more abstract themes are not a part of ordinary surveys. Fortunately, the EB produce some special surveys, such as the Special Eurobarometer 508, which is a more in-depth thematic study (European Union, n.d., a). The downside of the Special Eurobarometer's are how often they are published, in contrast to the Standard Eurobarometer surveys. This gives less information on abstract themes and is one of the more visible shortcomings of the EB. In short, there are many benefits of using EB in theoretical works to substantiate claims using statistics. However, in studies such as this, its shortcomings must be taken into consideration when looking for a correlation between with the more abstract aspects of the human condition, such as identity, and the current function of society.

This analysis will take a closer look on tendencies in Europe. To do so, some common questions from the EB will be used to specify what results we are looking for. These are questions such as "what do you think is the most important issues facing the EU at the moment?", "to what extent do you identify with your nationality?", "to what extent do you identify as being European?", "do you identify with any political orientation/political conviction?" and "to extent do you identify with religion?". The questions listed will be used on the base of the research questions and will allow us to get closer to why Europeans identify as they do.

4.2   Individual concerns on European level

Turning first to what individuals view as the most pressing issues in the EU, Figure 1 indicates that there is a considerable difference in how the European population rates their main concerns. The surveys show that Europeans are more likely to view immigration as a top concern on

European level after 2015. In 2018, as seen in Figure 1, the European public still places immigration as a main concern. The interesting thing with this graph is that no other topic is rated nearly as high as immigration. There is so much as 20% difference between the former and other concerns, such as terrorism and the economic situation. So why is it that some topics, such as immigration, are much more prominent on the list of concern on EU level and not on national level? By using this as a springboard, it can be claimed that most Europeans view the EU as responsible for maintaining borders and control immigration.

Figure 1. Most important issues facing the EU.

QA5 What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment? (% - EU)
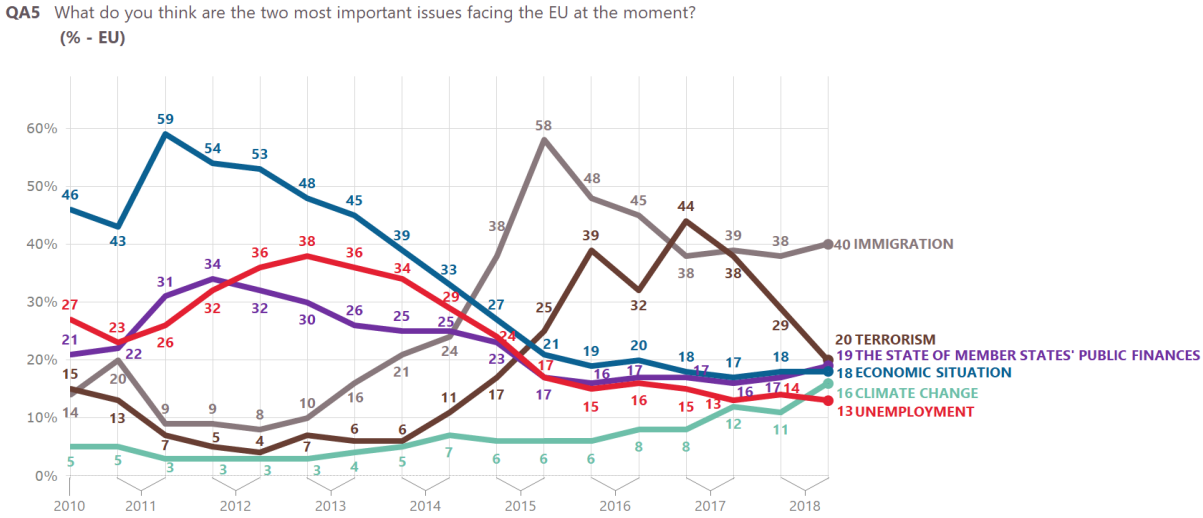
(European Commission, 2018a, p. 13).

When looking closer at the most important issues face the EU, the previous numbers listed in Figure 1 and the state of 2018, speaks of radical change on the issue of immigration. This is essential in how the perception of outsiders have changed over time, and especially why it has not gone down to its former levels, as before the 'migrant crisis' hit in 2015 (Vataman, 2016, p. 544). Since then, immigration has been a common feature in EU politics, as it long ranged as the number one concern. This is significant since attitudes towards immigrants seem to set root in many member states. As many of these states experienced colossal numbers of refugees and immigrants during this crisis, around 1 million refugees crossed the Mediterranean, many seem to have become tinted of more hostile attitudes towards non-Europeans (Vataman, 2016, p. 544).

4.3   Attitudes on immigration, intra-EU and by non-Europeans

The issue of immigration becomes the most telling of the EU population's attitude and apprehension towards outsiders. This can be supported by EB's after 2018, where the EB 90 from 2019 illustrates how Europeans see immigration from non-EU countries contra intra-EU immigration. 82% of all respondents in this survey wanted additional measures to be taken to control irregular immigration (European Commission, 2019, p. 41). Irregular immigration is here considered as numbers of immigrants exceeding the 'normal' amount of people wanting to enter the EU, especially evident during crises, where large numbers of immigrants suddenly seek admittance. It is also seen as unauthorized and unregulated immigration as situations with large numbers of immigrants can be hard to fully control (Orrenius & Zavodny, 2016, p. 2). As will be seen in Figure 2, 39% of the respondents saw the EU as responsible for taking the necessary measures to deal with this issue, 27% wanted it to be a national matter, and 20% of all respondents saw it as an equally national and European problem (European Commission, 2018a, p. 46). This majority is found in 22 out of 27 member states, as these would like to see action taken on European level (European Commission, 2018a, p. 47).

Table 1. Border control and irregular immigration, an EU responsibility?

Year	Yes, preferably at an EU level	Yes, preferably at a national level	Yes, at both levels	No, there is no need for additional measures
Autumn 2018	39%	27%	20%	11%
Spring 2019	44%	26%	12%	14%

(European Commission, EB 90 & 91).

This is seen in how most citizens view intra-EU migration as a positive feature of the EU, as opposed to outside immigration as negative (European Commission, 2018a, p. 38; European Commission, 2019, p. 33). Around 64% of Europeans view intra-EU migration as a positive feature of the EU (European Commission, 2018a, p. 38). This speaks of a general differentiation between in- and out-groups within and outside the EU. What numbers portrayed in Table 1 and 2, can illustrate the difference between what is considered as a European field of policy and the difference between non-European and European migrants. These exact views are not distinctively mentioned in later EB's, but the numbers found from 2018-2019 indicate typical trends in the EU.

Table 2. Views on migration from inside the EU.

Year	Intra-EU migration		Immigration from outside the EU	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Autumn 2018	64%	30%	40%	53%
Spring 2019	67%	26%	44%	48%

(European Commission, EB 90 & 91).

In several EB's there is a clear but also consistent way of viewing migration and immigration. The most prominent aspect here, is that smaller social groups within each nation, differ in opinion based on social status, welfare, and economy (European Commission, 2019, p. 37). Immigration was perceived most negatively by those aged 50 or older, have little or no education, and categorized as lower middleclass. In short, we have evidence showing that negative perceptions of immigration from outside the EU increases in line with respondents' age and decreases with their level of education (European Commission, 2019, p. 37). This leads us to question whether the growing hostility towards non-Europeans is based on a lack of information, which allows some to fall into xenophobic attitudes. Most base their attitudes towards immigrants on their probable attribution to society, either positively or negatively. In fact, 38% of Europeans saw immigration from outside the EU as a problem in 2018. In contrast, just under a third view this as both a problem and an opportunity, whereas 20% have a more positive view on immigration and see it as an opportunity (European Commission, 2018b, p. 7). Consequently, there is a clear difference in how the social groups view immigration and to what degree they are seen as a positive attribution to the EU community. This speaks of social boundaries dividing the social in- and out-groups, which to some extent can tie back to FE.

These views indicate how Europeans differentiate between in- and out-group and can case be witness of the populations' perception of FE. Checkel and Katzensten have proposed to call these negative attitudes as a sort of public explanation of the exclusionary Europe. Arguably, the EU is portrayed as the shining city perched on a hill, radically different from the surrounding states (Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009, p. 1-2). This demonstrates that sentiments strengthening the concept of FE have been present in Europe long before the 'migrant crisis' in 2015, as their work was published in 2009. Subsequently, we can ask whether this approach to the outside world, as threatening to the EU and its population, was strengthened in the wake of the 2015 crisis. Indeed, the repercussions of this event have caused the rise of challenger parties

which confront mainstream liberal parties (Hobolt & Tilley, 2016, p. 972). By basing most of their rhetoric on social groups and identity, the possibility for more contradicting views of the EU become increasingly probable each year, as these parties often push for more negative perceptions of the 'other' (Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009, p. 1-2). Using national ideology as their baseline, they also legitimize their arguments in questioning the current conception of what the EU should be. This takes us closer to the idea of 'Europe for Europeans'.

4.4 Main concerns at national and European level

From looking at attitudes towards non-Europeans, we will move over to more current numbers, as we view how main concerns have changed from the autumn of 2018 to the winter of 2021/2022. One of the findings notable in this table is how main concerns are rated in national contra European level. On the former we see that immigration is rated relatively low, especially as we near the winter of 2020/2021. If we compare the numbers more generally, there is a visible difference in how the issues are rated on the different levels. Consequently, Table 1 illustrates concern of immigration on national level as half the size of the same issue on European level. These numbers can indicate why the concept of FE is still present in the EU, but also say something about the place it has served in European politics together with two of the most important issues listed in the last four years.

Table 3. Main concerns at national and European level.

Year of survey	National level			European level		
	Economy	Health	Immigration	Economy	Health	Immigration
Autumn 2018	15%	20%	21%	18%	-	40%
Autumn 2019	16%	22%	16%	19%	-	36%
Summer 2020	33%	31%	11%	35%	22%	23%
Winter 2020/2021	33%	44%	7%	35%	38%	18%
Spring 2021	26%	28%	10%	27%	22%	25%

Winter 2021/2022	19%	32%	8%	21%	21%	22%

(European Commission, EB 90, 91, 92, 93, & 94).

The numbers found in this table are based on the general opinion on EU level, constructed on questions such as "what do you think are the most important issues facing OUR COUNTRY at the moment?" and "what do you think are the two most important issue facing the EU at the moment?". Whereas economy, health, and immigration have been chosen on the behalf of their relevance, as the two formers can be considered as essential for living standards all over Europe. The latter have been chosen because of its importance from 2015, but also since it has attracted different meaning on national level as opposed to how it is seen on European level.

The first column on both national and European levels, the economy, bears signs of its rising importance towards the winter 2020/2021. There is little difference between the percentages in the two levels, but as the spring of 2021 arrives, the numbers soon start to drop. We can assume that economy and health became some of the main concerns as a result of the corona virus, affecting all parts of the world and putting a strain on both health institutions and personnel. This also counts for all businesses, cultural activities, and societies which struggled economically as a consequence of covid (Bonotti & Zech, 2021, p. xiii). Looking at these two columns the numbers indicate that domestic concerns gradually evolve into being considered as European concerns.

Table 1 show clear evidence that immigration have become a generally important issue on European level. Even though there was a drop in its rating in winter 2020/2021, the numbers rose in spring of 2021. This tells of how immigration, in line with economy and health, remains one of the top concerns in the EU. Normally, one could suspect that after 2015 the numbers would gradually decline. However, as this is not the case, it can be suspected that immigration as an issue has become one of the core discourses in the EU. As it is, the table can be used to substantiate how new crises and turbulence in the EU strengthen the conception of FE. In fact, this might also show how the population of the EU sees the borders of the union as the definition of in- and out-group.
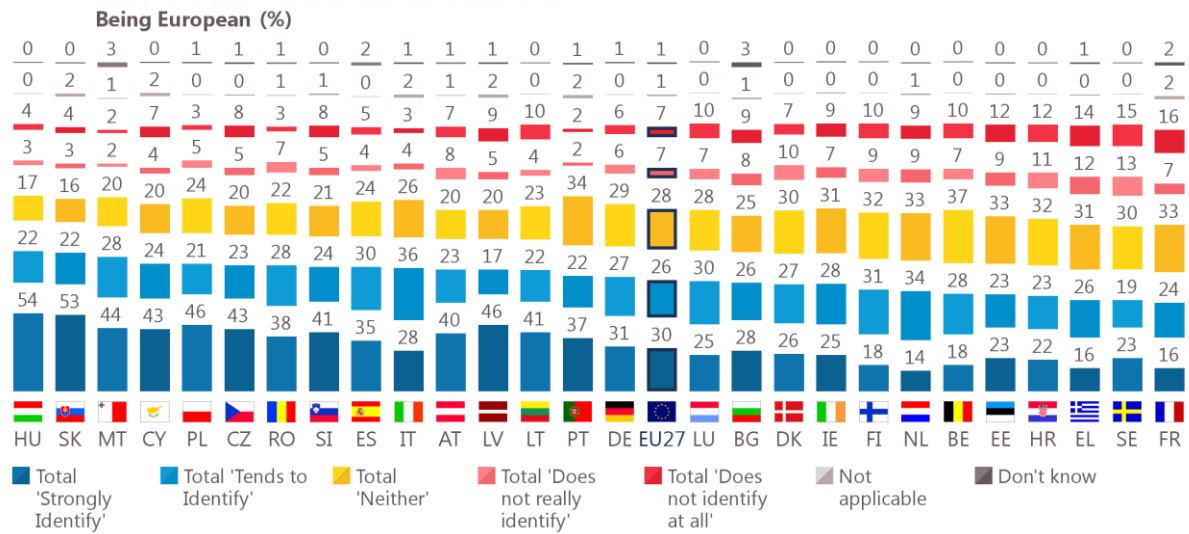
4.5   Sociodemographic findings

To further understand the tendency of more exclusionary identities in Europe, data on how social groups identify themselves show visible sociodemographic differences. As previously mentioned, age and education have a large impact on how people view their position in social groups. From the EB from 2021, we see that both young, aged 15-24, and older people, aged 65 or older, have high probabilities of identifying with their nation (approximately 67% and 76%) (European Commission, 2021b, p. 29). In contrast, those who are less likely to identify with their nationality, even though the difference is quite small, often have had many years of education. Compared with those who quitted school early, it is about 10% which divide these last groups (European Commission, 2021b, p. 29). In sum, this tells us that lack of education, the respondents age, and how strong their tie to the nation is, might result in more hostile attitudes towards outsiders.

The difference amongst social groups, as listed, affects how social actors identify with politics. The EB from 2021 illustrates that the political orientation has a profound impact on how individuals view political, social, and cultural issues (European Commission, 2021b, p. 29). An example of this is found in that 80% of supporters of the political right-wing are likely to identify with their nation. In contrast, left- and centrist supporters lie about 7%-13% as less likely to do the same. This could just be a tendency in all orientations, but seen through the concept of FE, this might illustrate why supporters of right-wing and far-right parties are more inclined to have exclusionary identities (European Commission, 2021b, p. 29). This can be seen in Figure 2, as respondents in the Special Eurobarometer 508 were rating their European identity (European Commission, 2021b, p. 30). Political orientation might also go hand in hand with religion. Among those who categorize religion as an important feature of their identity, around 80% identify with their nation. This is 20% higher than those who see religion as unimportant (European Commission, 2021b, p. 30). These numbers indicate that populations highly religious and with high political orientation are more likely to identify with their nation. This ties back to the differentiation between in- and out-group, which implies that those who fail to identify with the same religion or political orientation are probable of being assigned to the out-group.

Figure 2. Being European.

QC4.10 In general, how much do you identify yourself with each of the following? Please answer using a scale from "0" to "10", where "0" means "not at all" and "10" means "a lot".

Being European (%)

	HU	SK	MT	CY	PL	CZ	RO	SI	ES	IT	AT	LV	LT	PT	DE	EU27	LU	BG	DK	IE	FI	NL	BE	EE	HR	EL	SE	FR
(0)	0	0	3	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
(0)	0	2	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	2	1	2	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Does not identify at all	4	4	2	7	3	8	3	8	5	3	7	9	10	2	6	7	10	9	7	9	10	9	10	12	12	14	15	16
Does not really identify	3	3	2	4	5	5	7	5	4	4	8	5	4	2	6	7	7	8	10	7	9	9	7	9	11	12	13	7
Neither	17	16	20	20	24	20	22	21	24	26	20	20	23	34	29	28	28	25	30	31	32	33	37	33	32	31	30	33
Tends to Identify	22	22	28	24	21	23	28	24	30	36	23	17	22	22	27	26	30	26	27	28	31	34	28	23	23	26	19	24
Strongly Identify	54	53	44	43	46	43	38	41	35	28	40	46	41	37	31	30	25	28	26	25	18	14	18	23	22	16	23	16

Legend: Total 'Strongly Identify' — Total 'Tends to Identify' — Total 'Neither' — Total 'Does not really identify' — Total 'Does not identify at all' — Not applicable — Don't know

(European Commission, 2021b, p. 30).

As previously mentioned, education has proven an important variable in how the European population view the 'other'. Europeans who have attended school to the age of 20 or more, are more likely to identify as European (European Commission, 2021b, p. 30). This also applies to those who think their voice counts in the EU, as these are 15% more likely to see themselves as European in contrast to those who think their voice means nothing to the EU (European Commission, 2021b, p. 30). Nevertheless, we see through Figure 2, that about 16 out of 27 member states have a higher percentage of identify with being European. This supports the idea of a common Europe for Europeans. So, what is the average number of people identifying as being European? The numbers are slightly lower than compared to national identification, however, over 50% generally identify as being European. The interesting thing about this bar chart is that several of the countries negative to immigration, such as Hungary, Malta, and Poland have the most people identifying with being European (Pew Research, 2016, p. 4).

4.6 Political orientation and identification

Lastly, the extent of politics and how it affects social groups differently can explain why some groups are more hostile to outsiders than others. As seen in Figure 2, some of the member states most inclined to identify as European are also some of the more exclusionist ones (European Commission, 2021b, p. 74). Many of these countries have a higher probability of identifying with their political orientation. Poland and Hungary are typical examples of this,

as 69% of each population identify with their political orientation (European Commission, 2021b, p. 77). The policies of these two countries are known for their radical change in the last couple of years, as they gradually have turned towards the far-right (Minkenberg, 2013, p. 9). It is therefore a significant aspect, strengthening the concept of FE, as political orientation is becoming more common amongst ordinary people in specific member states. This speaks of a higher possibility for political parties to shape the conception of Europe and the many discourses within it.

This strengthen our suspicion that the concept of FE is on the rise in several member states, which also can be seen in how Europeans view the EU borders. This is seen in correlation between the differentiation of in- and out-group in the EU and the rising interest for more fortified borders. In the EB from summer 2020 and winter 2021, there is much emphasis on strengthening the capacity and number of coast- and border guards but also the reinforcement of the external borders of the Union (European Commission, 2020, p. 91; European Commission, 2021a, p. 21). This can be found in all 27 member states. The support for the strengthening of external borders has steadily gained ground in several member states since 2019, even though the numbers have both decreased and increased through the three years (European Commission, 2020, p. 91). This implies that the concept of FE has become a noticeable part of the populations' approach to foreigners and their impact on European societies.

5   Poland as the perfect example of a Fortress Europe country?

To further explore the findings in the cross-national analysis above, Poland will be used as an illustrative example of a FE state in the EU. This case study will investigate the current political state of Poland and how it, with its Law and Justice Party (PiS), have had an important impact on how Polish citizens view non-Europeans (Jaskulowski, 2019, p. 48). Poland's history with the EU, and its political shift towards the far-right, support the primary prediction that radical right parties act as political entrepreneurs who shape the European discourse. As a result, we should be able to tie this back to the concept of Fortress Europe and its connection to both identity and the far-right.

5.1   Modernization, government, and PiS' rise to power

Eager to partake in the modernization of Europe, the wealth accumulated from the cooperation of member states substantiate both economic and political incentives for Poland to be a part of

the EU (Freudenstein, 1998, p. 49). After the Cold War, the country strived to be part of a larger entity, as well as getting access to the Euro-Atlantic community which became driving forces towards Poland's accession to the Union. They declared their interest in more global affairs by becoming a member of NATO in 1999 (Freudenstein, 1998, p. 49). With 77% in favour of EU membership, Poland clearly favoured being a part of the EU, which culminated in their formal accession in 2004 (Charnysh, 2015, p. 1713; European Union, n.d., b). However, many Polish citizens experienced negative effects as globalization started to become more prominent in Poland. This made differences larger between the 'winners' and 'losers' of globalization, affecting their trust in the EU as a means to modernize Poland (Charnysh, 2015, p. 1714, 1717).

The Polish governments were long based on parliamentary groups of different parties unified in anti-communism and some sort of distain for the centrist Freedom Union. Subsequently, the parliament have long been affected by different political views (Freudenstein, 1998, p. 50). In recent times, the politics can be identified as two-folded. Prior to the 2015 election we see a profound focus on economic, civilizational, and social policies. In contrast we see a sudden shift towards a dismantling of the previously so liberal and democratic political system. This change came to be after the PiS came to power (Markowski, 2018, p. 111). Not only were there a shift in politics; the PiS was also the only victor in the 2015 election in October, which is interesting fact, as the party for the 8 previous years had been in opposition. Thus, PiS ended up forming a single-party government a historical happening never occurred in Poland before (Markowski, 2018, p. 111-112).

5.2   Far-right parties and PiS rhetoric

Radical right parties have gained ground in the European politics in the las 20 years and can be found in almost every corner of Europe. In Poland, such as in many other European countries, political preferences and identity based in national heritage and traditions have a higher probability of finding common grounds in far-right parties (Fligstein, et al., 2012, p. 114). These parties push forward conceptions of what it means to be European, stressing the importance of ethnicity on national as well as European level. Hence, the far-right's use of hostile rhetoric towards foreigners and the promise of taking care of national citizens appeals to many. This is especially based on the negative sides of globalisation and deep focus on the nation (Fligstein, et al., 2012, p. 114). The negative perception of the 'other' is here essential in how we understand the current politics and views of the PiS, as it is based on stereotyping, racism, and prejudice. This lays the foundations for inter-group conflict in communities experiencing

immigration from outside the EU, as the PiS shapes the prerequisites for social interaction. Polarisation and conflicts are therefore probable results of the far-right politics (Asforth & Mael p. 32; Polynczuk-Alenius, 2021, p. 775).

The party's differentiation between in- and outgroups is based upon the labelling immigrants as radically different than Polish and European citizens. As the PiS sees Poland as one of the upholders of the EU border, it also considers Poland as one of the more important caretakers of European civilization in terms of religion, democratic and liberal values, and common institutions:

> *We want the whole of Europe to be a sphere of freedom, equality, solidarity and justice, and we believe that a model of social life based on the values of our tradition, when put into practice, can have a significant impact by setting a good example. However, we reject any moves aimed at cultural unification* (Prawo i Sprawiedliwosc, n.d.).

It can be argued that this is one of the more striking views on Poland's role in Europe, and as more prominent evidence on Poland as a probable FE country. However, the use of cultural racism and xenophobia used to legitimize their policies strikes a clear line between in- and out-groups of the European society (Jaskulowski, 2019, p. 48).

The PiS's tendency to use out-groups as scapegoat to legitimise hostile politics can be traced way back in the politics of the EU and is a common trait amongst most far-right parties (Fligstein, et al., 2012, p. 115). This approach to outsiders and non-Europeans emphasises the concept of FE, which fits with the policies found with the PiS. Subsequently, such declarations ties back to how political parties act as entrepreneurs in how Europeans understand and perceive the boundaries of the EU, and how this affects how they identify with the Union (Fligstein, et al., 2012, p. 115).

5.3   Crisis and xenophobia

The citizenry of Poland is known to many as pro-European, however, external crises and internal twist have given PiS a political kick-off (Fomina & Kucharczyk, 2016, p. 62). The interesting aspect of their policies is their viewpoint on crises involving migrants and the European borders, in contrast to how little they comment on the euro crisis and Ukraine. In fact, Polish politicians rarely used the word crisis during the so-called migrant crisis in 2015, unless the word immigration was used in the same setting (Fomina & Kucharczyk, 2016, p. 62; Krzyzanowska & Krzyzanowski, 2018, p. 615). This supports their negative attitude towards

outsiders, as the PiS portrayed immigration as an issue to national and European security and categorised almost all immigrants as Muslim or Muslim adjacent (Jaskulowski, 2019, p. 38). It is not surprising that such a rhetoric, made 77% of the citizens previous positive to immigration in the spring of 2015, more inclined to reject the flow of immigration in the autumn (Jaskulowski, 2019, p. 38). This is also seen in how PiS uses pro-Christian rhetoric to portray Poland as one of the main victims of the so-called migration crisis (Jaskulowski, 2019, p. 41). As a prominent characteristic of the national identity, over 90% of the population are Christians, non-Christian immigrants are labelled as a threat (Jaskulowski, 2019, p. 41; Fligstein, et al., 2012, p. 114; Markowski, 2018, p. 113).

This differentiation made on the basis of religion and place of origin, has become even more evident in the latest crises facing the Polish border. First the twist between Belarus and Poland and the distribution of refugees, and now the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Regional Health, 2021; Witze, 2022). Even though Poland had, since the time of the Soviet Union, built a fence on the Polish-Belarusian border, the pressure of refugees proved problematic (Klaus, 2017, p. 526). According to *Schengen Visa Info News*, Poland took in around 15 000 refugees from Belarus in 2021 (Schengen Visa Info News, 2022). The *EU Observer* tells that Polish border patrols still roughly resist new waves of refugees and immigrants (Nielsen, 2022). *The Guardian* promotes these refugees and immigrants as families from Kurdistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, to name some places of origin (The Guardian, 2022).

It is interesting then, that when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022 there were close to no objections on taking in Ukrainian refugees. In fact, over two million refugees from Ukraine were let into Poland during the first weeks of the invasion according to UNHCR's numbers (UNHCR, 2022). This can be substantiated by the distinction between friend and foe, as the latter often categorize social groups related to prejudice and xenophobia (Mudde, 2007, p. 89). The in-group is recognized as the stark opposite, as those who fit into the in-group social frame are more honest, advanced, and hard-working (Mudde, 2007, p. 89).

6   Conclusion

Since 2015, there have been an increasing societal trend, as exclusive identities have become more common in the EU, challenging inclusive values inherent to the Union (Körtvélyesi & Majtényi, 2017, p. 1721). Immigration and current crises have fueled negative perceptions of non-European migrants, strengthening the notion of in- and out-groups in the EU. This have become evident through our research on how the concept of Fortress Europe apply to the

contemporary Europe, and to what extent the inherent diversity in the EU could be seen as responsible for the prevalence of more exclusionist sentiments. The cross-national analysis shows clear evidence of how Europeans rate their main concerns, as there is a distinct contrast between the national and European level. Instead of a gradually declining curve in the European conception of immigration, the issue is once again gaining grounds in the European discourse. Along with the impact of political orientation, right-wing and far-right parties are furthering exclusionary attitudes, based on nationalistic and xenophobic rhetoric. This is especially evident in the case of Poland, where the PiS have proven a driving force in altering the perception of out-groups. Consequently, the social structure of society, based on hierarchy, religion, and cultural boundaries, are key elements found in Poland distinguishing is as a FE country.

In conclusion, the concept of Fortress Europe does indeed apply to the contemporary Europe, however, this differs from each member state. The findings show evidence of more hostile and nationalistic sentiments circulating all over Europe. At the same time, the discourse of immigration has become one of the more pressing issues amongst European concerns. Diversity in Europe, or rather the prospect of more diversity, fuel the prevalence of hostile sentiments. This is a result of a rising fear of the 'other' threatening the European society and culture. Hence, FE symbolizes the trend of a more exclusionary Europe, which is challenging the current notion of 'Unity in Diversity' (European Union, n.d. c). From this point of view, the FE is a problematic trend because the rise of exclusionary identities in the EU might be a substantial threat to the inclusive values inherent to the European Union.

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