

# THE RHETORIC ON ILLEGAL MIGRATION OF CENTRE-RIGHT PARTIES AND RIGHT-WING POPULIST PARTIES IN “OLD” AND “NEW” EU MEMBER STATES: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF LEADERS’ SPEECHES

---

Petar Kurecic, Petra Kuhar

University North, Croatia

# On-going migration crisis

- ❑ Since the beginning of the “Arabian Spring” and especially since 2015, migration to Europe has become one of the most important political, economic and security issues for Europe and the EU particularly.
- ❑ The issue has divided the EU (the line is geographically positioned in the center of Europe) to its **East** and **West**.
- ❑ Together with the legal, intra-EU migration, the issue played one of the key roles in the outcome of the referendum on Brexit, influencing the decision towards the Leave vote.

# The role of migration in the political discourse

- ❑ The ruling elites of some Central European states use the threat of “immigrant waves” to attack the independence of the media and the judiciary.
- ❑ Opposed to the common values embraced by the EU.
- ❑ The issue of non-EU migration to Europe has become a quintessential issue in the public and political discourse, concurrently clothing the issues of democratic deficits in some post-communist EU members.
- ❑ The non-EU immigration has made the social issues of inequality and overexposure to transnational capital of the workers in the EU less important.

# „Migration paradox” in CSEE

- ❑ Mostly the leaders of the countries which are mostly hit by the outmigration of their own citizens are the most paranoid about immigration: **THE CSEE MIGRATION PARADOX.**
- ❑ This issue is much more than numbers and economic indicators, which show only the countries that do not lose population, which in the case of European countries also means rapid demographic ageing, can sustain long-term sustainable economic growth.
- ❑ It is a „cultural” and “civilizational” issue (as declared).
- ❑ These are the terms that have diametrically different meaning for the supporters of immigration and its opponents.

# Immigration issue as an excuse

- ❑ The post-communist European countries are not ready or willing to cope with migrants from non-EU countries, use them to boost its economies, and try to integrate in their societies.
- ❑ The leaders are creating „the **immigration paranoia**”.
- ❑ The ruling political elites in most of the post-socialist EU member states are using the threat of immigration as an excuse to attack the accepted levels of human rights, freedom of media etc.
- ❑ The immigration issue as the key issue of disagreement with „Bruxelles” is used to reject the critique of the EU regarding the downgraded level of freedom and democratic standards that the EU insists on.

# The meaning and power of rhetoric

- ❑ **Rhetoric** has to be perceived as a powerful means of persuasion.
- ❑ It has the power to influence people's attitudes, emotions and actions, and that is why politicians use it in public speaking to get the public's favour.
- ❑ The aim of the rhetoric is to convince the interviewer and to encourage him to change his attitudes, use logical argumentation, put the listener in focus, and require the moral responsibility and sincerity of the speaker.
- ❑ Rhetoric does not exclusively educate people by speaking skills and verbalization of thoughts.
- ❑ It also educates how to think, how to logically connect and lock, how to be creative and original in designing ideas.
- ❑ And as such, rhetoric is **necessary**.

# The rhetoric analysis

- ❑ The study includes an analysis of rhetoric of Angela Merkel, Emmanuel Macron, Marine Le Pen, Alexander Gauland, Viktor Orban, and Matteo Salvini.
- ❑ The research includes a qualitative analysis of the speech content of the afore-mentioned leaders.
- ❑ **Aim:** Determine the presence of elements of populist rhetoric, and to confirm or reject the hypothesis that most of the "Old" EU member states are different than "New" (post-communist) EU member states in their willingness to accept asylum seekers and resolve to keep their national sovereignty, especially when it comes to immigration-related, "Bruxelles-imposed" quotas.

# The rhetoric analysis

- ❑ The **analytical matrix** includes the following indicators: referral to people, identification with people, referral to political elites, identification with political elites, presence of “dangerous Others”, and the use of “empty expressions”.
- ❑ The **sample** that we carried out the analysis of the content was speeches by the afore-mentioned leaders, published at various Croatian internet portals in the period from 13 November 2018 to 15 January 2019.
- ❑ Additionally, the statements on migrants of Matteo Salvini during the same period, published at various portals in the English language were analyzed.
- ❑ The **analysis unit** was an Internet article that included text content published within the political section.



# Angela Merkel

- ❑ The general presence of people in the discourse of Angela Merkel is analysed, where expressions like "citizens", "Europeans", "European people" have been analysed as referring to people.
- ❑ Merkel held a speech in the European Parliament in November 2018, in which, in addition to the vision of the future development of the EU, she also addressed the issue of refugees and migrations.
- ❑ In Merkel's speech, it is necessary to evaluate whether the referral to people is positive, negative or neutral.

# Merkel's rhetoric on migrants and people

- ❑ Merkel calls Europeans to fellowship and adds: "It is important for us Europeans to be together", explaining that this communion should be understood as "the respect for the other and its interests". "Tolerance is the soul of Europe, and the interests and needs of others must be understood as our own interests, leading us to the core of European solidarity based on tolerance. Solidarity is universal value."
- ❑ The following referral to people as one of the indicators in Merkel's rhetoric is mentioned in the negative context.
- ❑ Merkel speaks self-critically and adds: "Solidarity is overcoming the national egoisms." The Chancellor has self-criticized that even "Germany has not always been appropriate" because in 2015, "it took too long for Germany to put the refugee issue as a matter for all EU member states", although it is a "common European task".

# Angela Merkel's rhetoric on migrants and people

- ❑ Considering the indicators of referring to the political elite and the presence of "dangerous Others" – Merkel did not use them in her speeches, so we consider it important to emphasize that we do not find elements of populist discourse in Merkel's rhetoric.
- ❑ Apart from referring to people and various attempts to identify politicians with them, the "empty expression" indicator is one of the main characteristics of the populist communication style - in Merkel's speech is not quite represented.
- ❑ Some of the expressions used are: great power, the European soul, communion, tolerance, solidarity, progress, the foundation of our strength.
- ❑ There is no impression on something more meaningful use of "empty terms" and we do not find the terms that form the core of populist rhetoric.

# Emmanuel Macron

- ❑ "Europe must keep its values, including respect for human rights, in addressing migration issues," "Against illegal migration we should fight human and methodological way".
- ❑ "EU countries must find a solution based on the values they hold together. A European solution can only be built on co-operation between EU members – in co-operation between them 28 or between those who decide to go along together."
- ❑ From this speech, the only indicator of people's referral is seen through the terms "Europe" and "EU countries" in which Macron as well as Merkel invites the European people to fellowship in the fight against illegal migration.
- ❑ In this speech Macron refers to people **positively**.

# Emmanuel Macron

- ❑ Unlike referring to people, referring to political elites and the presence of "dangerous Others" is not represented in Macron's speech.
- ❑ The use empty terms in Macron's rhetoric is represented by the following terms: honesty, human rights, struggle, human, methodical way, solution, and co-operation.
- ❑ As in Merkel's rhetoric, Macron manifests in his rhetoric a combination of moderation and stability.
- ❑ As an advocate of further European reform and integration, he does not use the elements of populist discourse.

# Alexander Gauland

- ❑ We have analyzed the presence of people in the discourse of Gauland, where expressions such as "voters", "tolerant people", "the German people", are defined as indicators of reference to people.
- ❑ Given that Gauland is critical of the UN Global Migration Agreement and he also protests the Merkel's government of, we conclude that Gauland is referring to people in a **neutral** way.
- ❑ In contrast to referring to people, which in the Gauland's rhetoric of is neutral, reference to political elites such as "dear ladies and gentlemen on the ruling bench" and "left-wing dreamers and globalist elites want to secretly transform our country..." is **negative**, given that Gauland's ruling elite addresses a dose of irony.

# Alexander Gauland

- ❑ It is not surprising that in the Gauland's rhetoric, we find the presence of a "dangerous Other" indicator referring to "illegal migrants" and "millions of people from crisis regions". Such referrals to "dangerous Others" are perceived **negatively**.
- ❑ „Empty expressions" are represented by the terms: human rights, state benefits, sovereignty, and social security system.
- ❑ Given the analysis carried out, in Gauland's rhetoric we find the elements of populist discourse. Radical rhetoric against new immigrants differs greatly from the rhetoric of Merkel.

# Marine Le Pen: Rhetoric

- ❑ In her speech that was published also on the Croatian N1 television portal, Le Pen opposes the arrival of migrants to Europe and criticizes "government's obedience to Brussels and its crazy immigration policy".
- ❑ She adds, "Today, prefects deal with only one thing, migrating migrants. Never in history have we experienced that some people voluntarily organize the irretrievable subjugation of their territory, that some people deliberately work on the destruction of their social funds, plan to contest their culture and thus prepare the disappearance of its identity."
- ❑ Criticizing President Macron, she adds: "He does not want to admit the failure of globalization which he so heartily defended and praised." "He has no real vision, he taps in the dark. He does not symbolize the beginning of the cycle, he symbolizes his end".



# Marine Le Pen: Rhetoric

- ❑ Le Pen refers to the French people negatively as she calls them voluntarily to organize to stop the irreversible submerging of the territory, destroying social funds, contesting its culture, and the disappearance of their identity.
- ❑ Analysing Le Pen's speech apparently builds her own rhetoric on an attack on the political elite.
- ❑ In that context, Le Pen is **negatively** referring to the political elite by perceiving Macron's policy of "mad migration policy".
- ❑ She also accuses representatives of the local government that they deal with only one thing, migrating migrants.
- ❑ She thinks that Macron has no real vision of dealing with the migrant crisis.

# Marine Le Pen: Rhetoric

- ❑ In the communication of Le Pen, the populist rhetoric "empty expressions" category is represented by the terms: the irretrievable submerging of its territory, contesting its culture, disappearing identity, vision, darkness, end, blight.
- ❑ The "dangerous Other" indicator is not represented in the rhetoric of Le Pen analyzed here.
- ❑ Her rhetoric is faithfully accompanied by a recipe of political inactivity and disability in discourse in the spirit of democratic civility.
- ❑ Criticism of current government is a typical feature of populist discourse because it is characterized by non-constructivism and accusations of opponents that would undermine its trust and credibility.
- ❑ Also, Le Pen uses rhetoric by argumentum ad hominem strategy to highlight the bad characteristics of her opponent, Macron.

# Matteo Salvini

- ❑ Since the new anti-immigrant law was passed by the Italian Parliament at the beginning of December 2018, Italy's interior minister Matteo Salvini, in his defence of the law that eliminates the category of "humanitarian protection" for migrants, stated that the law will provide more protections to real refugees: "It's a law that gives greater rights to real refugees, who in the chaotic system that we had were often lumped in with pretend refugees."
- ❑ On December 23rd, 2018, Salvini reiterated, using Twitter as a channel, his tough stance on immigration, stating that migrant vessels are not welcome at the country's ports: "Italian ports are CLOSED", he tweeted in one of a series of posts on social media, reaffirming: "The traffickers of men and their accomplices know that our ports are closed, STOP!"

# Matteo Salvini

- ❑ Salvini addressed the issue of a deal including the distribution of 249 migrants, arranged by the EU, and accepted by the Italian Prime Minister Conte, and stated that he will refuse to authorise it. “**I won’t authorise migrant arrivals**”, said Salvini.
- ❑ On 24th January, 2019, as yet another ship with illegal migrants, carrying 47 people rescued at sea tried to embark Italian ports, Salvini emphasized, using Twitter, that the country's ports were closed to migrants: "Umpteenth provocation: having stayed for days in Maltese waters, Sea Watch 3 with 47 on board is heading for our shores. **No one will disembark in Italy.**", and added: "**Ready to send medicine, food and whatever are necessary, but Italian ports are and will remain closed.**"

# Salvini's rhetoric and targets

- ❑ It is clear that Salvini keeps the impression of a tough, untouchable politician that wants to implement the goals expected from the voters supporting the Lega.
- ❑ He treats all illegal migrants in the same way, not recognizing possible refugee category.
- ❑ He has recognized the pulse of a significant portion of the electorate and the ongoing crisis. His rhetoric is tough and unambiguous.
- ❑ He mainly targets smugglers and NGOs, referring to them both negatively. His stance regarding security and closing of the Italian ports is very firm. As the leader of the most powerful ruling party in the coalition government, Salvini has maneuvering space.

# Viktor Orban

- ❑ Addressing an international press conference, Orban said: "Hungary wants to see the anti-immigration majority in the future first in the European Parliament, then in the European Commission and ultimately through the national elections of the member states and the European Council. Migration is not just a question that will be at the heart of European parliamentary elections, but also an important issue that deeply transforms European politics."
- ❑ The traditional division of parties to the left and to the right is replaced by a new division based either on pro migration or anti-migration.
- ❑ Welcoming the new partnership between the Polish right-wing government and Salvini's Lega, Orban said: "The Polish-Italian Alliance is one of the biggest events with which this year could start." Orban described Salvini as "a hero that stops migrations on the coast of Italy".

# Viktor Orban: Rhetoric

- ❑ Further, criticizing the German government, Orban said, "it is not possible to compromise with Germany about migration because of constant pressure from Berlin on his government to accept migrants."
- ❑ The first step in defining the elements of populism in rhetoric by Orban is an analysis of the presence of people in the discourse. Expressions like "Hungarian-Hungarian people," "Europe," "civilizations" were analyzed as referring to people.
- ❑ From the above mentioned discourse, it is necessary to evaluate whether referral to people is positive, negative or neutral.
- ❑ Orban is critical of migration, and believes that migration brought significant changes for the future of Europe, and thus criticizes the German government.
- ❑ Therefore, we conclude that Orban refers to people **neutrally**.

# Viktor Orban: Rhetoric

- ❑ As in the rhetoric of Le Pen, it is obvious that Orban builds its rhetoric on an attack on the political elite.
- ❑ In this context, Orban is referring **negatively** to the political elite by referring to German politics "not respecting Hungary's decision not to become an immigrant country".
- ❑ Welcoming the new partnership between the Polish right-wing government and the Italian populist Salvini against migration, Orban is referring **positively** to these political elites in this context.
- ❑ Within the above, Orban called Salvini "the hero who stops migration on the coasts of Italy."
- ❑ In addition to referring to people and political elites, in the Orban's rhetoric, we recognize the "dangerous Others" indicator that refers to the "German media".