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Филипович Алекса

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**Позиции ведущих правых партий Восточной и Северной Европы
в отношении Европейского союза, НАТО и РФ**

**Position of major right-wing parties of Eastern Europe and Nordic
countries towards EU, NATO and Russia**

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Научный руководитель:

Доктор политических наук
Доцент кафедры европейских исследований
Еремина Наталья Валерьевна

Рецензент:

Кандидата исторических наук
Махова Александра Викторовна

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Abstract

During the last ten years, the tendency of rise of the right-wing parties in Europe have become a reality that is actively shaping the European political scene. In order to develop a strategy on how to deal with such governments that possibly include such parties, it is important to understand their motives and positions – especially for parties in countries that are of high importance to Russia, such as those from Central-Eastern Europe and Nordic countries. This dissertation examines six major right wing parties from Austria, Hungary, Estonia, Finland, Sweden and Norway that are either part of the government of their nation-states, or in the parliament opposition. Extensive and thorough analysis of the parties' political documents and mass-media communications of the parties' leaderships was conducted, in order to identify their ideologies and positions on the EU, NATO and Russia. The results show that the majority of these parties and their leaderships have a positive attitude towards the idea of cooperation with Russia, while at the same time are strongly anti-EU, and to a degree, anti-NATO oriented. This research compiles for the first time a detailed examination of the politically-relevant right-wing parties from the Eastern Europe and the Nordic countries, while giving answers on their political stances towards Russian Federation, EU and the NATO – questions of high relevance for Russia's security strategy.

Keywords: Right-wing parties, NATO, EU, Russia, Central-Eastern Europe, countries of Scandinavian Peninsula

Аннотация

В течение последних десяти лет тенденция роста правых партий в Европе значительно меняет Европейскую политическую арену. С целью разработать стратегию для таких правительств, в которых присутствуют представители правых взглядов, важно понять их мотивы и позиции - особенно для тех партий в странах Европы, имеющих для России большое значение, таких как страны Центральной и Восточной Европы, а также страны Северной Европы. В этой диссертации рассматриваются шесть основных партий правого крыла из Австрии, Венгрии, Эстонии, Финляндии, Швеции и Норвегии, которые являются, либо частью правительства своих национальных государств, либо в оппозиции парламента. Был проведен обширный и тщательный анализ политических документов партий и сообщений СМИ лидеров партий, чтобы определить их идеологию и позиции в отношении ЕС, НАТО и России. Результаты показывают, что большинство этих партий и их руководство позитивно относятся к идее сотрудничества с Россией и в то же время являются противниками Европейского Союза и, в определенной степени, являются противниками НАТО. В этом исследовании впервые дается подробное исследование политически значимых правых партий из Восточной Европы и стран Северной Европы, давая ответы на их политические позиции в отношении Российской Федерации, ЕС и НАТО - вопросы, имеющие большое значение для Российской стратегии безопасности.

Ключевые слова: правые партии, НАТО, ЕС, Россия, Центрально-Восточная Европа, страны Скандинавского полуострова

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
1. Right-wing parties and the National Identity theory.....	7
2 Eastern-Central Europe.....	13
2.1. Jobbik (Hungary).....	13
2.2. Freedom Party of Austria (Austria).....	27
2.3. Conservative People’s Party of Estonia (Estonia).....	43
3. Nordic region.....	57
3.1. The Finns Party (Finland).....	57
3.2. Swedish Democrats (Sweden).....	71
3.3. The Progress Party (Norway).....	83
4. Conclusion.....	96
Appendix	106
I Figures.....	106
II Interviews	109
List of Primary Sources and Literature.....	114

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EU – European Union

EKRE – Estonian Conservative People’s Party

FrP – Progress Party of Norway

FPÖ– Freedom Party of Austria

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

SD – Swedish Democrats

Introduction

The theme of this Master's dissertation is the position of major right-wing parties of Eastern Europe and Nordic countries towards the EU, NATO and Russian Federation.

The relevance of the topic can be seen in the fact that the right-wing parties are increasing in popularity throughout the Europe. Out of six examined parties in this research, two are in coalition governments (**The Progress Party of Norway** and the **Freedom Party of Austria**), one was in the coalition government until the June 2017 (**The Finns Party**), and two others (**Estonian Conservative People's Party** and the **Swedish Democrats**) although opposition parties, currently hold the support of voters in their countries above 15%. At the start of 2000, it was hardly conceivable that these right-wing political options can achieve good election results, and were often considered fringe parties of their national political systems.

After the economic crisis of 2008 and the migrant crisis of 2015, right-wing parties started to gain more popularity, with some even becoming partners in center-right government coalitions. That the right-wing parties in Europe are still in the expansion the results of the 2018 Italian parliament election clearly demonstrates, with the Five Star Movement (*Movimento 5 Stelle*) and the Northern League (*Lega Nord*) winning 32.68% and 17.37% of votes respectively.¹ These political parties have often different view on many topics and issues than their political opponents, which are usually centrist or leftist ruling parties. They often express their opposition towards the current state of European Union, enforced multiculturalism and liberal policies of their countries, as well as global alliances and anti-Russian rhetoric that is currently heavily present among the Western political elites and mass media. Therefore, it is important for Russian Federation to understand ideology and political stances of such parties towards the European Union, NATO and Russia itself, in order to successfully formulate policies and strategies towards the hypothetical or current governments that include examined parties.

The aim of this research is to define the position of the six major right-wing parties of Eastern Europe and Nordic countries towards the EU, NATO and Russia.

In order to achieve this aim, this research work sets following **objectives**:

1. To apply **the theory of national identity** in order to explain the current rise of popularity of right-wing parties among countries of Europe that have democratic governments, developed economy and high standard of living.
2. To conduct an analysis of examined parties' political documents, in order to reveal their stances on the topics of the research.

¹Home Dipartimento per gli Affari Interni e Territoriali, Archivio storico delle elezioni, Internet, <http://elezioni.interno.gov.it/camera/scrutini/20180304/scrutiniC> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

3. To conduct an analysis of the mass media, especially those that correspond to the examined parties' countries of origin, in order to reveal the statements of parties' political leadership towards the topics of the research.
4. To determine what kind of political course towards EU, NATO and Russia can Russian Federation expect from the potential coalition governments that include examined parties
5. To present all the results in a clear and concise way, along with showing the current favor that examined political parties' enjoy among their voters, in order to underline the importance and relevance of this research.

The object of this research work are six right-wing parties of Eastern Europe and Nordic countries, while **the subject** of the research are their stances towards the EU, NATO and Russia.

The geographical framework covers the three countries of the Nordic region (Finland, Sweden and Norway), as well as three countries of Eastern-Central Europe (Estonia, Hungary, Austria). **Scandinavia** is a region of high political, economic and geographical importance for Russia. Because of its proximity to the Arctic region, the Nordic countries can prove either partners or adversaries for the Russian ambitions in the Arctic. Russia needs to understand motives and policies of potential right-wing governments (or coalition governments) of Nordic countries in order to shape or adapt its policies for the Arctic.

Economically, this region is important for Russia, as the Nordic markets are attractive for both export and import, although the sanctions hampered economic exchange since 2015.² In addition, Nordic countries are source of industrial technology and IT know-how, and good relations with these countries would go a great length to modernize the Russian industry, R&D and IT sector.³ Politically, this region is of special interest for Russia. Although there were some difficulties and misunderstandings in modern history, the region shows signs of shifting political climate. Already in **Norway**, a Russian-friendly Progress Party is a member of coalition government. In Sweden and Finland, right-wing parties are not against establishing good relations with Russia. In addition, right wing parties from **Sweden** and **Finland** are opposed to NATO membership (while advocating establishment of local-regional ones), which means that there is a strong chance that NATO will not expand further towards the Russian North-West borders, if those parties attain higher degree of power.

Central-Eastern Europe hosts countries that are either a source of potential hostility towards Russia (such as degrading conditions of the ethnic-Russian minority in Estonia, despite the latter being the EU member), or potential allies inside the EU, such as Hungary and Austria. As mentioned, **Estonia** is a country where Russia will face a challenge sooner or later: on how to deal with the hostile attitude of the Estonian government towards the ethnic-Russian population living there. The right-wing party that is gaining popularity in Estonia has expressed even harder rhetoric

² Nilsen Thomas, "Trade with Russia; down, down, down", The Independent Barents Observer, 04.01.2016, Internet, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/industry/2016/01/trade-russia-down-down-down> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³ Mitzner Dennis, "Sweden Is A Tech Superstar From The North", TechnoCrunch, 27.01.2016, Internet, <https://techcrunch.com/2016/01/26/sweden-is-a-tech-superstar-from-the-north/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

against Russians living in Estonia (and Russia itself), and a government that could potentially host it could prove to be even more difficult to manage than the current one.

Hungary, under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, is trying to maintain somewhat independent course from the EU politics, as it was demonstrated during migrant crisis of 2015. In addition, Hungary is developing good economic and political ties with Russia, with Viktor Orbán criticizing openly the EU sanctions towards Russia and general anti-Russian stance of EU policies.⁴ Any potential political shifts in that country have to be closely followed, with interesting occurrence being that the largest right-wing party in Hungary is also advocating good relations with Russia, even to some higher degree than a ruling Fidszes party. **Austria** traditionally maintains good relations with Russia, and sees itself as a bridge between East and the West. Austria makes an interesting case, as the main right-wing party entered a coalition government in December 2017, and thus it is in position to influence the country's politics. Given that the party maintains close relations with Russia, it can serve as a model on which the effects of rule by the right-wing parties can be examined in practice, and especially whether they would hold true to their political program and/or statements of their leadership in media.

Chronological framework of the research mainly covers the period of the last 10 years (as that is in practice a timeframe of the last two national elections cycles in most of the countries), but in order to understand all the processes that shaped the parties history, ideology, successes and failures, it is necessary that sometimes we go further down the history.

The methodology applied in this research was mostly focused on chapters two and three. **Content analysis** was used during the research of the official documents of the examined political parties, such as manifestos, political programs, presidential/parliament election programs, etc., as well as during the research of examined parties' leadership statements in mass media. **System analysis** was applied in order for better understanding of the political positions of examined right-wing parties towards the political system of their national countries and the EU, as one of the aims of this research is to explain their position towards the European Union itself. In the fourth chapter, **comparative analysis** was used, in order for the final conclusions to be made based on previous individual examined parties stances on the EU, NATO and Russia. In addition, **interviews** with representatives of examined parties were conducted in order to clarify the position of their parties towards the researched question.

The primary sources that were analyzed and used for this research consist of examined parties' documents such as political programs, manifestos and declarations. They allow us to more clearly understand the political course of the party and their proclaimed positions towards the EU, NATO and Russia. Political programs are mostly released by the parties during the parliament elections in their countries, such as for example the programs of the Estonia's Conservative People's Party⁵,

⁴ "Orban joins Putin in attack on Russia sanctions", Financial Times, 02.02.2017, Internet, <https://www.ft.com/content/f1f4482a-e96b-11e6-893c-082c54a7f539> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵ EKRE political program (EKRE Programm – Konservatiivne Programm), Official Website of EKRE, Internet, <https://ekre.ee/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/EKRE-PROGRAMM-KONSERVATIIVNE-PROGRAMM.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

Norway's Progress Party's program for national parliament elections in 2015⁶, Hungary's Jobbik's program for national parliament elections in 2014⁷ or Freedom Party of Austria's program for national parliament elections in 2017⁸. Examples of political manifestos can be seen in Estonian People's Conservative Party's "*Conservative Manifesto*" or the Finns Party EU election program ("*Perussuomalaisten EU-vaaliohjelma*")⁹. Declarations can be in form of the Freedom Party of Austria's principle of five-points policy on EU¹⁰, or "*Bauska Declaration*"¹¹, signed by the right-wing parties of the Baltic states. Other primary sources that were analyzed include official election results for the examined parties released by the electoral commissions of national countries, and opinion polls for the examined parties conducted by various agencies.

In addition, for the states of the examined parties, analysis of mass media was extensively used in order to seek statements of the parties' leadership, towards the EU, NATO and Russia. Finally, the interviews were conducted with the representatives of several political parties with the goal of further clarifying the stance of their parties on the EU, NATO and Russia.

The political rise of the examined parties is quite a new phenomenon, and what is more, most of them come from countries that are not so interesting for the mainstream academic researches. For these reasons it is hard to find academic literature that explores this subject and conduct a proper **analysis of scientific literature**.

Prof. Dr. Natalia Eremina of School of International Relations at Saint-Petersburg State University and **Sergei Seredenko**, the Head of the Legal Research Department of the Institute of European Studies in Latvia, former Russian ombudsman in Estonia and a member of the Russian Academic Society and the International Institute of the Newly Established States, conducted a research on evolution of far-right parties and their influence on the contemporary European party and political system, the society and the state, as well as the issues of legal and judicial mechanisms of influencing extreme right parties.¹² The authors argue that the political, social and cultural problems are opening up opportunities for far-right parties in their national states, which are declaring the need for restoring the link between the state and the society.¹³ The success of far-right

⁶ "Tjømme FrP Valgprogram for kommunevalget 2015", Official Progress Party Website, p.2 Internet, https://www.frp.no/~media/images/vestfold/tjoeme/tj%C3%B8mefrp_valgprogram2015.pdf?la=nb-no Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁷ "Nemzetek Európája - A Jobbik programja a magyar önrendelkezésért és a társadalmi felemelkedésért", Jobbik, 2014, p.21, Internet, https://jobbik.hu/sites/default/files/cikkcsatolmany/ep_program_a5_jav.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁸ "Freiheitliches Wahlprogramm zur Nationalratswahl 2017", Official FPÖ Website, Internet, https://www.FPÖe.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Wahlprogramm_8_9_low.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁹ "Perussuomalaisten EU-vaaliohjelma", Official The Finns Party Website, Internet, <https://www.perussuomalaiset.fi/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/EU-vaaliohjelma.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁰ Grundsätzliche Positionen", Official FPÖ Website, <https://www.FPÖe.at/es/themen/leitantrag/grundsaeztliche-positionen/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹¹ Bauska Deklaratsioon, Official Website of EKRE, Internet, <https://www.ekre.ee/bauska-deklaratsioon/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹² Eremina Natalia, Seredenko Sergei, "*Right Radicalism in Party and Political Systems in Present-day European States*", Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, p. 3

¹³ Ibid, p.5

political parties can be seen as a sign of ongoing transformation of political systems of European states, becoming an integral part of political establishment, while abandoning the behavior of the fringe parties.¹⁴ After the thorough analysis of current right-wing movements and parties in Europe, their ideology, motivations and connections with each other, along with the detailed analysis of international and national law, the authors conclude that these political forces have been greatly underestimated by the general public, since they are more than capable of forming a political trend and attract support for the elections.¹⁵ Thus, the relevance of this topic is more than justified, and as mentioned before, especially since some of the examined parties were or at this moment are members of coalition governments.

Some Western scholars give thought to the rise of right-wing parties in Eastern Europe, such as the **Prof. Dr. Michael Minkenberg**, a professor of political science at European University Viadrina in Frankfurt. In his book “*Transforming the Transformation? The East European Radical Right in the Political Process*” he argues that right-wing parties persist even in the countries that ascended to the EU, and established democratic systems, and that they are continuing to play a significant role in the politics of democratic governance.¹⁶ The book examines influences of right-wing parties in Hungary and Estonia, which provided the basis for the research of ideology of said parties in this work.

Scientific approach of this research introduces a novelty for examination of right wing parties, as it concentrates on specific questions that are relevant for the Russian Federation. In addition, it is done from the point of view of potential Russian interests as the Russian Federation has to be prepared to deal with sudden political shifts in European governments. While the ideological position of the right-wing parties are examined in this research, more important was the analysis of the right-wing parties on specific questions – their position towards the EU, NATO and Russia, and what that could mean for the Russian Federation if it has to deal with the potential (or current) coalition governments that include those parties. Other novelty in the approach is that the parties which were not the focus of the previous research were grouped together in such a manner, as to give grounds for detailed comparison and evaluation of their positions on said questions. One more important element of the research was the analysis of examined parties’ national mass media, in search of party leadership statements which would support or potentially deny the parties’ positions that were declared in official parties’ documents, such as political programs, manifestos or declarations.

Practical application of this research work can be seen in a form of basis for further research on the relevant topics, parties or their political positions towards the EU, NATO and Russia. In addition, this research can serve as a guide to the examined right-wing parties’ policies that can be relevant

¹⁴ Eremina Natalia, Seredenko Sergei, “*Right Radicalism in Party and Political Systems in Present-day European States*”, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, p. 3

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 199

¹⁶ Ed. Minkenberg Michael, “*Transforming the transformation – The Eastern European radical right in the political process*”, Routledge, New York, 2015, p. 2, Internet, https://books.google.ru/books?id=DssqBwAAQBAJ&pg=PT139&lpg=PT139&dq=Mart+Helme+EU&source=bl&ots=O2NTdWQcTz&sig=SDByfATi0SzR5SfWnEM_9YglmBs&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewj8iYPN1aDaAhUEFCwKHX6fBWM4ChDoAQg4MAU#v=onepage&q=Mart%20Helme%20EU&f=false Accessed on: 25.05.2018

for the Russian Federation, as the countries of parties' origin are all quite important from the Russian perspective.

In the appendix, several tables, figures and transcripts of the interviews are presented, in order to further clarify the conclusions of the research work. Table 1 shows current state of support for researched political parties, their last election results and whether they are part of government coalition or not. Tables 2-4 show examined parties' positions on EU, NATO and Russia, while Table 5 provides summary of the main results. Figures 1-5 show the support for each party individually on the last several parliament elections in their respective countries, except the EKRE which only participated in the 2015 Estonian parliament elections. Interviews will present correspondence between the authors of this research and the representatives of Jobbik, Estonian's Conservative People's Party and The Finns Party which additionally shows their parties' stance on the EU, NATO and Russia.

The structure of the work will follow the set objectives. **Chapter one** will set the theoretical framework for the research, applying the theory of national identity in order to explain why people in developed countries give support to right-wing parties during the time of crisis, such as for example, economic crisis of 2008 or migrant crisis of 2015. **Chapter two** will explore the three major political parties of Central-Eastern Europe, and present answers on their positions towards the EU, NATO and Russia, along with the short examined parties' history, ideology and electoral success overview. **Chapter three** will repeat the process of previous chapter, but for the three major right-wing parties of the Nordic countries. **Chapter four** will present joint conclusions of chapters two and three, sorted out in tables and figures, in order for easier comparison and understanding of obtained results.

1. Right-wing parties and the National Identity theory

It is noticeable that many right-wing parties are using fear of immigrants and the failure of their national states to deal with the migration crisis as a platform for their political programs.¹⁷ The influx of immigrants into the European countries is in a steady increase since the beginning of 2000s, reaching its peak with the 2015 immigration crisis that enveloped the Europe on an unprecedented scale, and that was caused mostly by the civil wars and Western military interventions in Libya, Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.^{18,19,20} As the following chapters will demonstrate, the once fringe right-wing political options started to successfully challenge the mainstream political parties of their national states since they were willing to discuss the topics that ruling parties evaded, especially focusing on immigration and the rise of crime that is supposedly linked with it.

A question may be asked, why the citizens of the countries which enjoy high degree of economic and social security in the western-democracy type of governments are turning to the parties that are promoting anti-immigration and often a racist sentiments. By examining the role of the national identity in the society, along with the understanding of social and ethnic identity, we may find the answers to those questions.

Some authors define **identity** as a “*self-perception filled by a cultural formula*” that is organized in three main categories – Individual identity, Group identity and Intergroup identity.²¹ Iulian Chifu, Oana Popescu, and Bogdan Nedea argue that in the theoretical debate, one of the main points of the identity is to explain the reasons why humans need “*group belongingness, the perception of solidarity and of an identity of a superior agenda, shared with other humans that would complement the level of prestige and personal (individual) identity.*”²² One of the answers that they are offering is that a man is a social animal which is capable of self-awareness and therefore he develops language, verbalization, and construction of social relations based on that.

¹⁷ Van Spanje Joost, “Contagious Parties: Anti-Immigration Parties and Their Impact on Other Parties’ Immigration Stances in Contemporary Western Europe”, Party Politics, Vol 16, Issue 5, 2010, p.9, Internet, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1354068809346002> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁸ Ratković Milijana, “MIGRANT CRISIS AND STRENGTHENING OF THE RIGHT WING IN THE EUROPEAN UNION”, Megatrend Review, Vol. 14, № 3, 2017: 47-60, Internet, <http://scindeks-clanci.ceon.rs/data/pdf/1820-3159/2017/1820-31591703047R.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁹ Intini Dario, “NO MIGRANTS, NO SCHENGEN: HOW RIGHT-WING POLITICAL PARTIES ARE INCREASING THEIR POPULARITY IN EUROPE”, Institute of European Democrats, p.2, Internet, <https://www.iedonline.eu/download/2016/schengen/INTINI.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁰ Davis Lewis, Deole Sumit S., “Determinants of Populist Voting”, Ifo DICE Report 4 / 2017 December Volume 15, pp.11-15, Internet, <https://www.cesifo-group.de/DocDL/dice-report-2017-4-onlineversion-december.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²¹ Rothman Jay, Alberstein Michal, “Individuals, Groups and Intergroups: Theorizing About the Role of Identity in Conflict and its Creative Engagement”, Ohio State Journal on Dispute Resolution, Forthcoming, (May 2, 2013), p.3 Internet, http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2273330 Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²² Iulian Chifu, Oana Popescu, Bogdan Nedea, “Religion and conflict radicaliyation and violence in the wider Black Sea region”, Editura Ispri, București, 2012, pp. 10-11, Internet, <http://www.cpc-ew.ro/pdfs/religion%20and%20conflict%20radicalization.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

Identities are thus collective phenomena of expressing the similarities within the group in various ways and at levels that cover “*physical similarity, similarity of tastes and occupations, of culture and customs, common language and memory, elements that distinguish a group from another.*”²³ Affiliation to a group can be assumed by birth, geography, habit of blood relatives etc., and identity is thus manifestation of one’s desire to belong to a group, where he would feel solidarity and cohesion with the rest of the members.²⁴

In order to understand the **ethnic identity**, the term “*ethnicity*” has to be defined first. Ethnicity comes from the Greek word “*ethnos*”, which means company, people, nation or tribe, and according to the anthropologist scholars such as George de Vos, ethnicity itself could be defined as “*those who have in common a set of traditions that they do not share with others with whom they enter into contact*”.²⁵ George de Vos suggests that a common set of traditions can be defined as art, folklore, common place of origin/birth, religious beliefs and practices, shared history and experiences, language, common ancestors, as well as historical continuity – it often includes a myth “*derived from a blood, biological and genetic descent, unbroken for generations, which is considered to be the source of special traits and characteristics of the group*”.²⁶ Other anthropologists, such as Rishi Keshav Raj Regmi, argue that the formation of the ethnic identity is a combination of factors, such as a common descent, a socially relevant cultural or physical characteristics, and a set of attitude and behaviors, while the cultural attributes, such as distinctive beliefs, institutions, practices, religion, and language also form the bases of identity.²⁷ Physical attributes, such as pigmentation of the skin or shape of the body additionally play a role in the foundation of the ethnic identity, along with the sharing of the ideas, behavior patterns, feelings, and perception of common destiny among the members of the ethnic group, which helps them distinguish themselves (“*We*”) from others (“*They*”).²⁸

Professor Richard Jenkins of The University of Sheffield defines **social identity** as a process of identification – “*how we know who we are and who other people are*”^{29,30} In his view, society is structured categorically, and organized by inequalities of power and resources.³¹ Jenkins further argues that the social categorization generates social identity, which produces social comparisons,

²³ Iulan Chifu, Oana Popescu, Bogdan Nedea, “*Religion and conflict radicalization and violence in the wider Black Sea region*”, Editura Ispri, București, 2012, pp. 10-11, Internet, <http://www.cpc-ew.ro/pdfs/religion%20and%20conflict%20radicalization.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid, p.35

²⁶ Ibid, p. 36

²⁷ Rishikeshav Regmi, “*Ethnicity and identity*”, in: *Rishikeshav Raj Regmi, Kailash Nath Pyakuryal, Chaitanya Mishra, Padam Lal Devkota (eds), Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology, Vol.8, 2003, p. 3*, Internet, http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/opsa/pdf/OPSA_08_01.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Jenkins Richard, “*The limits of identity: ethnicity, conflict, and politics*”, Sheffield University, United Kingdom, p.6, Internet, https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.714471/file/2jenkins.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁰ Ibid, p. 7

³¹ Jenkins Richard, “*Social Identity*”, Routledge, London and New York, 2004, p.89, Internet, [http://www.ufg.uni-kiel.de/dateien/dateien_studium/Archiv/2015_HS_Furholt/Literatur/%5BRichard_Jenkins%5D_Social_Identity_2nd_edition_\(Ke\(BookZZ.org\).pdf](http://www.ufg.uni-kiel.de/dateien/dateien_studium/Archiv/2015_HS_Furholt/Literatur/%5BRichard_Jenkins%5D_Social_Identity_2nd_edition_(Ke(BookZZ.org).pdf) Accessed on: 25.05.2018

which produce positive (or negative) self-evaluation.³² Comparison and evaluation between groups is derived from establishment and maintenance of in-group distinctiveness – interplay of internal similarity and external difference.³³ Groups distinguish themselves from and discriminate against other groups in order to promote their own positive social evaluation and collective self-esteem.³⁴

Siân Herbert states that the identity is a “*relational concept*” which draws distinctions ‘*between us and them*’ and fulfills emotional functions, with each person holding a variety of identities, one of which is **national identity**.³⁵ Some scholars argue that the national identity is the manifestation of the simultaneous impact of ethnic identity and civic identity, with the ethnic identity being marked by the fixed cultural markers and bloodlines, while the civic identity emphasizes features such as political rights, duties, and values.³⁶ Noah Lewin-Epstein and Asaf Levanon suggest that the national identity represents a feeling of “*commonality*”, that is defined in “*opposition to the perceived identity of members of other social groups*”, and it is based on some “*perceived similarity to some people, and difference from others*”.³⁷ Other scholars name the elements of the national identity as a historic territory, collective historical myths and memories, a mass public culture, shared legal rights and duties and a common economy with territorial mobility for members.³⁸

The ethnic identity arguably provides the basic form of identification of “us” and “them” – from physical characteristic to the different pigmentation of the skin, eye pupils or even color of the hair. Social identity further develops “us” and “them” social comparison division, among the lines of a competitive groups. Finally, national identity is formed by both ethnic and social identities, providing evolved sense of the identity for the individual – no longer is he just a member of his family/clan/tribe, but he is also a member of one ethnic group that forms up a nation, and in most cases, a nation-state. Therefore, the label “Other” can be applied by Austrians/Hungarians/Swedes on members of whole groups (immigrants) that could be of certain ethnicity (Middle-Eastern or African ethnic groups), or even whole nations (Syrian/Libyan/Iraq without distinguishing between tribes and ethnic groups of these states). These groups are perceived as a danger to the state and especially its middle class (social group), which would have to pay via increased taxes for the governmental welfare program that would cover the expenses of refugee sheltering and adoption in the national system.

³² Jenkins Richard, "Social Identity", Routledge, London and New York, 2004, p.89, Internet, [http://www.ufg.uni-kiel.de/dateien/dateien_studium/Archiv/2015_HS_Furholt/Literatur/%5BRichard_Jenkins%5D_Social_Identity,_2nd_edition_\(Ke\(BookZZ.org\).pdf](http://www.ufg.uni-kiel.de/dateien/dateien_studium/Archiv/2015_HS_Furholt/Literatur/%5BRichard_Jenkins%5D_Social_Identity,_2nd_edition_(Ke(BookZZ.org).pdf) Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Herbert Siân, "Promoting national identities", GSDRC, University of Birmingham, Internet, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a089fced915d3cfd000518/hdq978.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁶ Ha Shang E, Jang Seung-Jin, "National Identity, National Pride, and Happiness: The Case of South Korea", Springer Netherlands, Social Indicators Research April 2015, Volume 121, Issue 2, pp. 471–482, Internet, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11205-014-0641-7> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁷ Koenig Matthias (ed.), "National Identity and Attitudes Towards Migrants", International Journal on Multicultural Societies (IJMS), Vol. 7, No. 2, 2005, p.96, Internet, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001425/142588E.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁸ Rick Fawn (ed.), *Ideology and national identity in post-communist foreign policies*, Frank Cass Publishers, London, 2004. p. 11

During the time of crisis, it is a natural instinct for individuals to seek comfort and support among family, neighbors and ethnic group they belong to, whether it is a dominant one in the society or not. It is also in nature for people to blame someone for negative situation that is impacting their lives, such as for example, an economic recession or a rise of criminal activities. It is not unusual that right-wing parties tend to single out one or more groups of ethnic minorities in the country and blame them for some issues, such as Jobbik's previous strong antagonisation of Hungarian Roma population, or Estonian's Conservative People's Party anti-Russian minority rhetoric.^{39,40} Other parties may not be so frank in their rhetoric against some singled out ethnic group, but they can point out "others" that are endangering the system of their nation states – for example, immigrants from the Middle East and Northern Africa, with culture, tradition and religion incompatible with host-nation's.⁴¹

In their crisis management manual, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines this occurrence as "stigmatization" which manifests during the event of crisis when "*the risk is not present in the stigmatized minority population but people associate the risk with that population group*".⁴² CDC further states in their manual that "*this stigmatization can occur without any scientific basis, it can come not only from individuals, but entire nations*".⁴³ In their political party programs some of the examined parties tend to blame immigrants as a needles drain on the social-welfare system, which instead of benefiting the native population goes to those who are ethnically, religiously and culturally not a part of Western-Christian society.^{44,45} The right-wing parties call for national unity, where "us" (Norwegians, Swedes, Hungarians, Austrians) must stand united against "them" (Federalization of the EU, immigrants, multicultural policies, ethnic minorities), drawing their legitimacy from perception of being "national defenders" against foreign threats in whichever shape they can be. That can also explain the general anti-globalization and anti-establishment tone of their rhetoric, as well as the tendency of the voters to support such political options in times of crisis were people herd together by natural instinct (feeling safe inside their ethnic/social group), while trying to resist the "other" via the ballot box during the elections.

One interesting development considering the right-wing parties and their perception among the voters and media comes from the successful re-imagining or re-branding of themselves, in order to

³⁹ "Jobbik leader calls on government to apologize to Roma community", Hungarian Free Press, 17.08.2017, Internet, <http://hungarianfreepress.com/2017/08/17/jobbik-leader-calls-on-government-to-apologize-to-roma-community/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁰ Lanko D., "ESTONIAN POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE MID-2010S", Saint-Petersburg State University, Baltic region. 2015. № 2 (24). p. 51., Internet, https://journals.kantiana.ru/upload/iblock/c2e/Lanko_50-57.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴¹ "Freiheitliches Wahlprogramm zur Nationalratswahl 2017 - FPÖ", Official FPÖ Website, pp.7- 8, Internet, https://www.fpoe.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Wahlprogramm_8_9_low.pdf

⁴² "Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication", Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014, p.30, Internet, https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/resources/pdf/cerc_2014edition.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ "Grundsätzliche Positionen", Official FPÖ Website, <https://www.FPÖe.at/es/themen/leittrag/grundsaeztliche-positionen/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁵ "Tjøme FrP Valgprogram for kommunevalget 2015", Official Progress Party Website, p.2 Internet, https://www.frp.no/~media/images/vestfold/tjoeme/tj%C3%B8mefrp_valgprogram2015.pdf?la=nb-no Accessed on: 25.05.2018

create a more pleasant image for themselves among the voting population of their national states. As following chapters will reveal, most of the examined right-wing parties had fascist or Nazi roots, where their founders and initial supporters embraced those ideologies. While that was one of the reasons why these parties were usually considered outcasts in the political systems of their national states, it also prevented any other political option to strike any kind of coalition deals with them, which could include them into mainstream politics.⁴⁶ The defining moment in the examined political parties was usually changing of the guard at the end of 90s or beginning of 2000, when young, tech-savvy and ambitious politicians obtained leadership position. Re-imaging touched everything – from abandoning the fascist-like logos for the more neutral ones (as is the case with the Finns or Swedish democrats) and re-visualization of their websites (which contained a lot of family or nature-like oriented pictures), to recruitment of young voters through the heavy presence of party leaderships on social media such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram – platforms that are among the most used ones by the millennials.^{47,48} In addition, their political programs tend to have a more social-welfare dimension - albeit concentrated mostly on the native population - with immigrants presented as a drain on the resources and social system of the country.⁴⁹ Parties themselves might be referred to more as “movements”, which is following the trend among the voters in which they are more likely to support “*movements*” than traditional political parties.⁵⁰ Thus, the re-branded party becomes a more acceptable choice for the positive “us” perception among the population that will stand against “them/other”, whoever that may be. Moreover, in a right wing party’s program, there is usually an emphasis on the threat to the cultural and ethnic identity of the nation state, with “liberal policies of the EU”, “mass migration”, “forced multiculturalism” or “liberal multicultural policies of the government” being responsible for endangering them.⁵¹ In that way, they are still capable to deliver anti-immigration message, and at the same time to appear moderate and concerned in their rhetoric as they only seek to preserve national welfare for native citizens.

Of course, each of the right-wing political parties derive its policy and approach towards the voters based on political traditions of the system, people and norms in society, and although there are some common themes that are prevailing in their rhetoric (anti-immigration, glorious past, anti-

⁴⁶ Polakow-Suransky Sasha, "The ruthlessly effective rebranding of Europe’s new far right", The Guardian, 01.11.2016, Internet, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/01/the-ruthlessly-effective-rebranding-of-europes-new-far-right> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁷ Fry Richard, "Millennials projected to overtake Baby Boomers as America’s largest generation", Pew Research Center, 01.03.2018, Internet, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/03/01/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁸ Chaffey Dave, "Global social media research summary 2018", Smart Insights, 28.03.2018, Internet, <https://www.smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/social-media-strategy/new-global-social-media-research/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁹ "Populist Rhetoric: Austrian Freedom Party", EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION BRIEFING: NO. 5, Counterpoint, p.3, Internet, <http://counterpoint.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Populist-Rhetoric-Austrian-Freedom-Party.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁰ Schultheis Emily, "A New Right-Wing Movement Rises in Austria", The Atlantic, 16.10.2017, Internet, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/10/austria-immigration-sebastian-kurz/542964/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵¹ Parteiprogramm der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs (FPÖ), Official FPÖ website, Internet, <https://www.FPÖe.at/es/themen/parteiprogramm/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

globalization etc.)⁵², the case for each party's success should be examined independently, as each nation is differently shaped by the history, socio-economical surroundings and politics. That is why for example, Progress Party of Norway is seen as a right-wing party in the Nordic political context, where in rest of the Europe, it could be seen more as a centrist one.

Nevertheless, national identity, along with the social and ethnic ones, plays an important role in explaining both the success and the foundation of ideology of right-wing parties. As stated before, the need for people to belong to certain group (family, tribe, ethnic group, nation) is a strong one, and if the members of the dominant ethnic group in one state feel threatened by the major influx of another culture in a short time span, and furthermore if that arriving culture fails to adopt elements of the dominant one (in this case, Western-Judeo-Christian norms and traditions), it is expected that a conflict will arise. For now, the conflict is present only on the political scene, but as the history shows, even armed conflicts between ethnic groups in a country can unfortunately become a reality.

⁵² Ding Iza, Hlavac Marek, "*Right*" Choice: Restorative Nationalism and Right Wing Populism in Central and Eastern Europe", Chin. Polit. Sci. Rev. (2017) 2:427–444, Internet, <http://www.polisci.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/Publications-%20Ding%20Hlavac%202017-Right%20Choice.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

2 EASTERN-CENTRAL EUROPE

2.1. Jobbik (Hungary)

Predecessor of Jobbik, Right Youth Movement (*Jobboldali Ifjúsági Közösség*), was founded in 1999 as a college student organization, and by 2003 became a political party under the name “Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary” (*Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom*).⁵³ Jobbik has clear fascist and Nazi roots, with xenophobic and racist messages disseminated by the party members, especially directed against Hungarian Roma population.⁵⁴ Jobbik also boasted its paramilitary wing called Hungarian Guard Movement (*Magyar Gárda Mozgalom* – led by Gábor Vona and dissolved in 2009), which used pro-Nazi iconography and symbols of the Hungarian fascist government during the WWII.⁵⁵ In January of 2017, in a move to distance itself from fascist roots and in effort to appeal to the more moderate voters, Jobbik president Gábor Vona started a charm offensive towards Hungarian minorities, by officially congratulating Hannukah to the Jewish population, stating that his party “has a lot to atone for”.⁵⁶ That is also a tone of the official Jobbik website where greeting message states, among other things, that “while preserving our national traditions and passing on our cultural heritage to the next generations, we (Jobbik) also wish to represent universal humane values that are common in all cultures and religions”⁵⁷

Ideologically, Jobbik started as a party with the radical Christian and anti-globalist stances, along with the anti-Roma, anti-EU and fierce anti-establishment rhetoric that was attributing to the rise of the party’s profile in the Hungary.⁵⁸ In recent years, Jobbik was pushing for re-branding, distancing itself from the more radical voters, and trying to win over dissatisfied voters of the ruling conservative Fidesz, presenting itself as a credible governing alternative.⁵⁹

In their manifesto titled "On Jobbik's fundamental principles for government", Jobbik presents itself as a former national radical party that transformed into a “people’s party”, with the goal of “*to rise above the fault lines characterizing the political left and right, thus committing to a*

⁵³ Official website of Jobbik, Internet, http://www.jobbik.com/short_summary_about_jobbik Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁴ Eremina Natalia, Seredenko Sergei, “*Right Radicalism in Party and Political Systems in Present-day European States*”, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, p.74

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Dunai Marton, “Hungary's Jobbik ditches far-right past to challenge Orban in 2018”, Reuters, 11.01.2017, Internet, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-jobbik/hungarys-jobbik-ditches-far-right-past-to-challenge-orban-in-2018-idUSKBN14V1PW> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁷ Official website of Jobbik, Internet, <http://jobbik.com/welcome> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁸ L. P. Pirro Andrea, “The rise of Jobbik poses a credible threat to Fidesz’s dominance in Hungary”, The London School of Economics and Political Science Blog, 17.04.2015, Internet, <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/71313/1/blogs.lse.ac.uk-The%20rise%20of%20Jobbik%20poses%20a%20credible%20threat%20to%20Fidesz%20dominance%20in%20Hungary.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁹ Ibid

21st-century agenda of building bridges between the groups of the society.”⁶⁰ The party believes in the “unity of the people’s soul and the nation’s identity” and that it represents “a human-centred political approach where people are individuals with freedom, rights and dignity as well as members of a community with responsibilities, duties and solidarity at the same time.”⁶¹ This manifesto shows that Jobbik is trying to evolve into the more moderate approach, as the founding manifesto from 2003 states that the “Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary is a value-centred, conservative, patriotic Christian party with radical methodology.”

In their political program from 2014, Jobbik focused on questions of economy, law, and security as the main topics of its political campaign.⁶² Already in the 2018 political program, Jobbik shifted its attention to the question of “democratic development of Hungary”, change of the voting system, improvement of the economy and healthcare as the first topics relevant for their voters.⁶³ In their political pamphlet titled “15 + 1 points for the successful and happy XXI. century architecture of Hungary”, party proudly states that they achieved renewal of the “party, membership and leadership”, thus becoming the “only moderate national party (in Hungary)”.⁶⁴ One of the more interesting parts of their political views come from the statement that there are more important issues in country to be solved than immigration, in addition to the support for domestic animal and wildlife well-being and fair treatment.⁶⁵

In 2010 Hungarian Parliament elections, Jobbik secured 47 out of 386 seats in the parliament, with 16.67% of the vote, becoming the 3rd largest political party in Hungary.⁶⁶ In December 2011, a new electoral law was passed with two main changes – a single round of voting instead of two, and the reduction of number of MPs from 386 to 199. In addition, 106 seats are obtained in single-member constituencies, while remaining 93 seats are allocated by proportional representation from national lists, and the turnout itself is not needed to be higher than 50% in order for elections to be considered valid.⁶⁷ This law was first applied in 2014 elections, where Jobbik secured 20.54% of the votes and 23 seats in the Parliament, becoming the 3rd largest political party in Hungary.⁶⁸ In the same year, Jobbik secured 3 mandates in European Parliament, with 14.67% of votes, becoming 2nd largest Hungarian political option in European Parliament, after Fidesz- KDNP

⁶⁰ "MANIFESTO ON THE GUIDELINES FOR A FUTURE JOBBIK-LED GOVERNMENT", Official Jobbik Website, Internet, https://www.jobbik.com/manifesto_on_the_guidelines_for_a_future_jobbik_led_government Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² "Kimondjuk. Megoldjuk. A Jobbik országgyűlési választási programja a nemzet felemelkedéséért", Official Jobbik Website, p.7, Internet, https://www.jobbik.hu/sites/default/files/cikkcsatolmany/kimondjukmegoldjuk2014_netre.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁶³ "Magyar szívvel, józan ésszel, tiszta kézzel A Jobbik 2018-as választási programja", Official Jobbik Website, pp.7-16, Internet, <https://www.jobbik.hu/magyar-szivvel-jozan-esszel-tiszta-kezzel> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁶⁴ "15+1 pont a sikeres és boldog XXI. századi Magyarország felépítéséért", Official Jobbik Website, Internet, <https://www.jobbik.hu/151-pont-sikeres-es-boldog-xxi-szazadi-magyarorszag-felepiteseert-0> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ The European Election and Referendum Database, Internet, http://www.nsd.uib.no/european_election_database/country/hungary/ Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁶⁷ "How do Hungary's elections work?", Euronews, 25.03.2014, Internet, <http://www.euronews.com/2014/03/25/how-do-hungary-s-elections-work> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁶⁸ 2014 Hungarian parliamentary election results, The Budapest Beacon, Internet, <https://budapestbeacon.com/2014-hungarian-parliamentary-election-results/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

(*Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt* – Christian Democratic People’s Party) coalition.⁶⁹ In 2018 Hungarian parliament elections, Jobbik won 19.81% of votes and 26 mandates in the parliament (**Figure 1**).^{70,71}

In 2009, Jobbik was founding member of The Alliance of European National Movements (AENM), an European political party that consist of mixture of right-wing/nationalistic parties and individuals, such as British National Party, National Democratic Party (Bulgaria), Tricolour Flame Social Movement (Italy), National Democrats (Sweden), Republican Social Movement (Spain) and National Renovator Party (Portugal).^{72,73}

The two members of Jobbik that are prominent in media are Jobbik’s president Gábor Vona, and Jobbik’s Parliament member Márton Gyöngyösi.

Gábor Vona (born 1978, Gyöngyös) started his political carrer in 1999 by becoming a founding member of Right Wing Youth Community. In 2001 he was founding member of the Christian Intelligence Association, and in 2003, Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom (A Movement for Better Hungary), where he became the chairman in 2006. He is noted for his osciliation between right-extremism and moderate approach in branding Jobbik, as well as charisma and good personal looks which aid Jobbik in promoting itself as a popular party among the Hungarian youth.^{74,75}

Márton Gyöngyösi is the vice president of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament, one of Jobbik’s members of the parliament. In the party since 2006, he quickly became a member of Gábor’s Vona close circle, and a shaper of Jobbik’s foreign policy.⁷⁶ He is thought of as a supporter of “the new Eastern foreign policy” that would break ties with Euro-Atlancism and be more close to the countries such as China, Russia, Khazastan, Turkey and Arab states.⁷⁷ In 2014, Márton Gyöngyösi and his Jobbik colleague Adrienn Szaniszló attended elections in Donetsk and Lugansk

⁶⁹ Overall Result of the European Parliament Elections, National Election Office, <http://www.valasztas.hu/dyn/ep14/szavossz/hu/eredm.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁷⁰ 2018 Hungarian Election Results, Valasztasz, Internet, <http://portal.valasztas.hu/dyn/pv18/szavossz/hu/l50.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁷¹ Шишелина Любовь, "Парламентские выборы в Венгрии 2018 г.", Институт Европы РАН, p.4, Internet, <http://www.instituteofeurope.ru/images/uploads/analitika/2018/an117.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁷² Alliance of European National Movements, Global Security, Internet, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/eu-party-aemn.htm> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁷³ Official website of Alliance of European National Movements, Internet, <http://aemn.info/2009/10/24/alliance-of-european-national-movements/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁷⁴ Vona Gábor biography, official Jobbik website, Internet, <https://jobbik.hu/kepviseleink/vona-gabor> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁷⁵ Kébel Nóra, Delaforge Marianne, “Young and beautiful: the new Hungarian far-right”, Café Babel, 04.06.2015, Internet, <http://www.cafebabel.co.uk/politics/article/young-and-beautiful-the-new-hungarian-far-right.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁷⁶ “Senki sem tudja, honnan érkezett Gyöngyösi a Jobbikba”, ATV, 02.12.2012, Internet, http://www.atv.hu/belfold/20120211_senki_sem_tudja_honnan_erkezett_gyongyosi_a_jobbikba Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁷⁷ “Volt adószakértő lett a Jobbik külügyminiszter-jelöltje”, Origo, 05.03.2010, Internet, <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/valasztas2010/kampanynaplo/20100305-bemutakozott-gyongyosi-marton-a-jobbik-kulugyminiszterjeloltje.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

People's Republics in a role of observers, for which they were banned from Ukraine by the Kiev regime.⁷⁸

Jobbik's popularity during first half of 2017 was oscillating between 24% (January 2017) and 14% (February 2017), while reaching 23% in August 2017.^{79,80,81} By September 2017, Jobbik's support was at 16%.⁸² The fluctuation in the support rating may come from the party's search for the new identity, as switching to more moderate views may have detracted some of the "old guard", but at the same time, attracted new moderate voters. In January 2018, few months before the 2018 elections, support for Jobbik was at 18% (**Table 1**).⁸³ Jobbik campaign for the 2018 elections were obviously toned-down with ideology rhetoric, with the party itself going through the re-branding phase same as other similar right-wing political options in other European nations, aiming not to be branded "radical-right" or "far-right", but a "moderate nationalist" party that would be more appealing for the voters. An additional similarity with the other re-branded right-wing parties is shown with the Jobbik's presence on the social media, where it was the most active party during the campaign.⁸⁴ Their result at the 2018 elections created division within Jobbik's ranks, with hard-liners demanding for party to return to its far-right roots, while at the end of May 2018, there is an active pressure from the same hardliners on Gábor Vona to resign from his party post, due to the not satisfactory election results.^{85,86} It remains to be seen will the Jobbik split into the two new parties or movements between the moderates and hard-liners, or the party would overcome this crisis and find some compromise for the 2022 Hungarian parliament elections.

⁷⁸ Gyöngyösi Márton is kitiltják Ukrajnából, Index, 03.11.2014, Internet,

http://index.hu/kulfold/2014/11/03/gyongyosi_martont_is_kitiltjak_ukrajnabol/ Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁷⁹ A BALOLDALIAK ÉS A JOBBIK-TÁBOR FELE IS TÁMOGATJA ÁDER JÁNOS ÚJRAVÁLASZTÁSÁT, Nézőpont Intézet, 01.07.2017, Internet,

<http://nezopointintezet.hu/analysis/baloldaliak-es-jobbik-tabor-fele-tamogatja-ader-janos-ujravalasztasat/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁸⁰ Public opinion for February 2017, Republikon Intézet, Internet,

<http://republikon.hu/elemlzesek-kutatasok/170228-kozhangulat.aspx> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁸¹ Mariann Katona, "A teljes népességen belül esett a Fidesz szavazótábor", Magyar Nemzet, 05.09.2017, Internet, <https://mno.hu/belfold/a-teljes-nepessegen-belul-esett-a-fidesz-szavazotabora-2415641> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁸² "Medián: Mélyponton az MSZP, a Jobbik közel kétszer olyan erős", HVG, 27.09.2017, Internet, http://hvg.hu/itthon/20170927_Median_Melyponton_az_MSZP_a_Jobbik_kozel_ketszer_olyan_eros Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁸³ "Republikon: Gyengült a Fidesz, erősödött az ellenzék", HVG, 09.02.2018, Internet, http://hvg.hu/itthon/20180209_republikon_gyengult_a_fidesz_erosodott_az_ellenzek Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁸⁴ Kondor Katherine, "Jobbik: A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing?", Fair Observer, 03.04.2018, Internet, <https://www.fairobserver.com/region/europe/jobbik-fidesz-viktor-orban-hungary-far-right-news-europe-51482/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁸⁵ Dunai Marton, "Hardliners in Hungary's Jobbik demand return to far-right roots", Euro News, 22.05.2018, Internet, <http://www.euronews.com/2018/05/22/hardliners-in-hungarys-jobbik-demand-return-to-far-right-roots> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁸⁶ "Szakad a Jobbik? Vona nem is vonult vissza?", 24.HU, 21.05.2018, Internet, <https://24.hu/belfold/2018/05/21/jobbik-partszakadas-toroczkai-sneider-vona/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

Jobbik's stance on Russia

It wouldn't be surprising to expect from a strongly nationalistic Hungarian party such as Jobbik a clear anti-Russian sentiment, but surprisingly, the reality is opposite. Overall, Jobbik disseminates positive message towards Russia, while making a clear distinction between current political system in Russian Federation and the one in the times of Soviet Union, for which it harbours deep resentment. Today's Russia is seen by Jobbik as a model country with strong national identity, expressed patriotism, a guardian of traditional Christian and family values, and a champion of multi-polar world.

In 2013, The Voice of Russia published an interview with Gábor Vona, in which an interesting question was what would Mr. Vona's relations with Russia be if he were a prime minister. On that he replied that, together with Turkey, he sees Russia as a country of key importance and that "*Russia is the other Eurasian power that could spearhead a real political, economic and cultural resistance against the Euro-Atlantic block*".⁸⁷ Gábor Vona visited Moscow the same year at the invitation of Prof. Alexander Dugin, where he gave a lecture at Lomonosov Moscow State University titled "Russia and Europe", while later meeting several high-ranking politicians.^{88,89}

In summer of 2014, Jobbik vocalized support for Russia in Ukrainian crisis, calling upon the Hungarian government and diplomatic corps to "*stop serving American interests unconditionally*" and "*finally stand for Hungary's(...)real interests*", while urging government further to continue the dialogue that began in Minsk in order to solve the Ukrainian conflict.⁹⁰ The VP of the International Relations Committee in Hungary's parliament and a member of Jobbik, Mr. Marton Gyongysi stated in an interview that "*Russia correctly resorted to diplomatic methods of protecting the Russian-speaking Donbass population, which had been subjected to military oppression by Kiev*".⁹¹

In their 2014 parliamentary election program, Jobbik argued for the establishment of closer ties with Russia, as a way for negotiating better gas prices with Gazprom⁹² and tighter technological

⁸⁷ "The Voice of Russia - Exclusive interview with Gábor Vona", official Jobbik website, 04.09.2013, Internet, http://www.jobbik.com/voice_russia_-_exclusive_interview_g%C3%A1bor_vona Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁸⁸ "Ungarns Jobbik: Russland soll Europa vor US-Kolonisierung retten", 23.10.2015, Internet, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rI3BZy02kmU> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁸⁹ "Jobbik President Gábor Vona delivered a lecture at Lomonosov Moscow State University", Hungarian Ambiance, 21.05.2013, Internet, <http://www.hungarianambiance.com/2013/05/jobbik-president-gabor-vona-delivered.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁹⁰ "The provocation against Russia is not in the interests of Hungary and Europe", official Jobbik website, 30.08.2014, Internet, http://www.jobbik.com/provocation_against_russia_not_interests_hungary_and_europe Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁹¹ West to blame for refugee crisis, anti-Russian warmongering – Hungarian MP, official Jobbik website, 15.10.2015, Internet, http://www.jobbik.com/west_to_blame_for_refugee_crisis_anti_russian_warmongering_hungarian_mp Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁹² "The Jobbik Parliamentary Election Program for the rise of the nation (in Hungarian)", official Jobbik website, 2014, p.52, Internet, https://jobbik.hu/sites/default/files/cikkcsatolmany/kimondjukmegoldjuk2014_netre.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

cooperation concerning Paks Nuclear Power Plant⁹³. They also stated that they see Russia as an excellent market for Hungarian products, such as food and agricultural technologies.⁹⁴ This stance is reinforced by their official policy which sees Russia as the important player in global politics and a key to Hungary's energy security.⁹⁵

In 2015, a Jobbik member of parliament Istvan Szavay wrote an open letter to Colleen Bradley Bell, Ambassador of the US to Hungary, expressing concern that US has failed to condemn multiple and prolonged violations of minority rights of Hungarians in Ukraine, while noting that Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, expressed Russia's concern and support in this issue.⁹⁶ Jobbik news feed is overwhelmingly positive towards Russia, though there are examples where such friendly tone is absent, as in the statement made in May 2017 regarding Russian motorcycle club "Night Wolves's" visit to Hungary. In the view of Jobbik, such a visit was provocative, since this club sports Communist symbols which are forbidden in Hungary and are deemed authoritarian.⁹⁷

The media's position on Jobbik in the West, as well as in some Hungarian media, is that it is financed by Russia as a part of the larger network of Russian intelligence operation of support towards right-wing parties across the Europe.^{98,99,100,101} In May 2017, a German television ZDF published claims that Belorussian oligarch Alyksandar Usovsky, under the orders of Kremlin, distributed 3,000 euros to Magyar Gárda in October 2014 for an anti-NATO protest, as well as 10,000 euros to Jobbik, based on a supposed cache of Usovsky's emails that was leaked in February 2017 and published by a Ukrainian website.^{102,103} In an article published in 2015, Stratfor called

⁹³ The Jobbik Parliamentary Election Program for the rise of the nation (in Hungarian)", official Jobbik website, 2014, p.53, Internet, https://jobbik.hu/sites/default/files/cikkcsatolmany/kimondjukmegoldjuk2014_netre.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁹⁴ Ibid p. 84

⁹⁵ Jobbik policies, official Jobbik website, Internet, <http://jobbik.com/policies> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁹⁶ "Open letter to the US ambassador", official Jobbik website, 12.02.2015, Internet, http://www.jobbik.com/open_letter_to_the_us_ambassador Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁹⁷ "We should demand respect from the East as well as the West!", official Jobbik website, 05.05.2017, Internet, http://www.jobbik.com/we_should_demand_respect_from_the_east_as_well_as_the_west Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁹⁸ Paterson Tony, "Putin's far-right ambition: Think-tank reveals how Russian President is wooing – and funding – populist parties across Europe to gain influence in the EU", The Independent, 25.11.2017, Internet, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/putin-s-far-right-ambition-think-tank-reveals-how-russian-president-is-wooing-and-funding-populist-9883052.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁹⁹ Polyakova Alina, Laruelle Marlene, Meister Stefan, and Barnett Neil, "The Kremlin's Trojan Horses", Atlantic Council, 2016, Internet, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/The_Kremlins_Trojan_Horses_web_0228_third_edition.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁰⁰ Brownstein Ronald, "Putin and the Populists", The Atlantic, 06.01.2017, Internet, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/01/putin-trump-le-pen-hungary-france-populist-bannon/512303/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁰¹ Is the Hungarian far-right Jobbik party financed by Russia?", Hungarian Spectrum, 20.01.2016, Internet, <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2016/01/20/is-the-hungarian-far-right-jobbik-party-financed-by-russia/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

Jobbik a “tool of the informational warfare and secret service machinery of the Kremlin”, while stating that “along the several other far-right forces in EU such as Front Nationale in France, Golden Dawn in Greece or the Freedom Party in Austria, Jobbik(...)helps in the division, destabilization and de-legitimization of the EU and its member states”.¹⁰⁴ The trend of accusation of alleged Russian ties with Jobbik is seen in articles of major Western media, such as New York Times¹⁰⁵, The Telegraph¹⁰⁶, NBC News¹⁰⁷, BBC¹⁰⁸ and EU Observer¹⁰⁹ among others. Therefore, positive stance of Jobbik towards Russia is negatively perceived by Western media and more liberal-inclined Hungarian news outlets.

Following conclusions can be reached:

- Jobbik sees Russia as a defender of Christian and traditional values in Europe, opposing Euro-Atlantic “liberalism”
- It also considers that Russia is needed for revival of European continent and liberation from Euro-Atlantism and American domination that is prevailing in the current EU
- Jobbik sees Russia as a natural ally of the European nations, which need to stand together against multiple challenges such as international terrorism, immigration, negative birth rate, stagnating economy and American subjection of European continent.

¹⁰² Bayer Lili “Belarusian oligarch allegedly passed Russian funds to Hungarian far-right”, 24.05.2017, Budapest Beacon, Internet,

<http://budapestbeacon.com/news-in-brief/belarusian-oligarch-allegedly-passed-russian-funds-hungarian-far-right/47090> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁰³ Frontal 21 News Report, 23.05.2017, Internet, <https://www.zdf.de/politik/frontal-21/frontal-21-vom-23-mai-2017-100.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁰⁴ The Kremlin Connections of the Hungarian Far-Right, Stratfor World View, 20.04.2015, Internet, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/the-hub/kremlin-connections-hungarian-far-right> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁰⁵ Higgins Andrew, “Intent on Unsettling E.U., Russia Taps Foot Soldiers From the Fringe”, The New York Times, 24.12.2016, Internet,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/24/world/europe/intent-on-unsettling-eu-russia-taps-foot-soldiers-from-the-fringe.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁰⁶ Foster Peter, “Russia accused of clandestine funding of European parties as US conducts major review of Vladimir Putin’s strategy”, The Telegraph, 16.01.2016, Internet,

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/12103602/America-to-investigate-Russian-meddling-in-EU.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁰⁷ Bradley Matt, Europe’s Far-Right Enjoys Backing from Russia’s Putin, NBC News, 13.02.2017, Internet, <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/europe-s-far-right-enjoys-backing-russia-s-putin-n718926> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁰⁸ Thorpe Nick, “Far right holds secret congress in Hungary”, BBC, 07.10.2014, Internet,

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29503378> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁰⁹ Zalan Eszter, Nielsen Nikolaj, “Jobbik MEP accused of working for Russia”, EU Observer, 15.05.2014, Internet, <https://euobserver.com/eu-elections/124156> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

Jobbik seems as an unlikely supporter of Russia, given the history between Hungary and Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the message towards the Russian Federation is overwhelmingly positive, and in case of Jobbik's political takeover of the government it may pave the way towards increased cooperation with Russia. Though the issue may come up with revisionist policy towards Hungarian neighbors that Jobbik propagates, perhaps Russian influence can be enough to contain any irredentist tendencies of the hypothetical Jobbik-lead Hungarian government. Finally, by securing the full support of Hungary, Russia can open a path towards increased influence in the Balkans and central Europe, and contest US/EU influence there from a much better position than it currently has.

Jobbik's stance on NATO

During the years, Jobbik expressed negative opinion towards NATO and Hungarian involvement in it, while opting more for development of domestic defense capabilities.^{110,111}

At the beginning of 2014, Gábor Vona called for a revision of Hungary's membership in NATO, a statement that was reiterated the same year during the NATO summit in Welsh.¹¹² To this official Jobbik statement, a line was added that said that "*Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is making a serious mistake in history*" with entrusting NATO with the defense of Hungary.^{113, 114}

In September 2015, Jobbik spokesman Ádám Mirkóczki stated that NATO behaved like "*an aggressor whose fronts are the most recently joined states, including Hungary*"¹¹⁵ The following month, Jobbik publicly condemned formation of the NATO headquarters in Székesfehérvár as a command & control node for NATO's rapid reaction forces in the region, stressing that such forces

¹¹⁰ "Jobbik urges money for developing Hungary's own defence instead of NATO missions", Daily News Hungary, 04.03.2014, Internet, <https://dailynewshungary.com/jobbik-urges-money-for-developing-hungarys-own-defence-instead-of-nato-missions/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹¹¹ "JOBBIK CONDEMNS HUNGARY'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE US' SHOW OF FORCE", official Jobbik website, 01.09.2015, Internet,

http://jobbik.com/jobbik_condemns_hungarys_contribution_to_the_us_show_of_force Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹¹² "Jobbik: NATO membership is rather a security risk for Hungary", official Jobbik Website, 07.09.2014, Internet, http://www.jobbik.com/jobbik_nato_membership_rather_security_risk_hungary Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹¹³ "NATO-CSÚCS – JOBBIK: MAGYARORSZÁG BIZTONSÁGÁT NEM NÖVELI, HANEM VESZÉLYEZTETI A NATO-TAGSÁG", Szébb Jövő, 06.09.2014, Internet,

<https://szebbjobbo.hu/nato-csucs-jobbik-magyarorszag-biztonsagat-nem-noveli-hanem-veszelyezteti-a-nato-tagsag/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹¹⁴ Vona: "Magyarországnak inkább a semlegesség irányába kellene elindulnia", Info Radio, 01.04.2014, Internet, <http://inforadio.hu/belfold/2014/04/01/vona-magyarorszag-nak-inkabb-a-semlegesseg-iranyaba-kellene-elindulnia-626635/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹¹⁵ "A Jobbik tiltakozik a NATO parancsnoksági egységei ellen", Origo, 16.11.2016, Internet, <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20150919-a-jobbik-tiltakozik-a-nato-parancsnoksagi-egyseg-ellen.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

and their coordination centers are prime targets for an armed strike.¹¹⁶ Same month, Márton Gyöngyösi called NATO “*a cover organization for the USA's geopolitical efforts...working on creating a monopolar, West-centred world order, which is primarily against Russia*”.¹¹⁷

An article from “Politico” published in July 2017 drew attention of Hungarian public, as it was stated there that NATO was worried about rising activity of Russia’s intelligence officers in Hungary, and that in general, NATO looked upon Hungary as a liability in the alliance, regardless of Hungarian contributions so far.¹¹⁸ Shortly after this article was published, a National Security Committee of National Assembly was conveyed, where Ádám Mirkóczki, a Jobbik board member, was put in the spotlight over the apparent lack of trust of NATO towards Hungary, and the supposed Jobbik’s ties to Russia.¹¹⁹ This meeting of National Security Committee was boycotted by the ruling Fidesz party.¹²⁰

The official Jobbik policy that can be seen at their website follows the previous trend of denouncing the NATO and its role in Hungary: “In terms of strategic and military policy, we have voiced harsh criticism of NATO. We firmly believe that the organization can only guarantee Hungary’s and the world’s security if it observes its original mission and remains a defence alliance. We support the forces that urge and ease of tensions between NATO and Russia.”¹²¹

Jobbik sees the role of Hungary in NATO not as one as an equal partner, but as a NATO’s base of operation close to the unstable Balkan region and Russia itself.¹²² In their 2014 parliament election program, under the chapter “Defense program”, it is stated that “...The full defense system must be rebuilt and military capabilities based on the Hungarian industry. Planning must be carried out independently of federal systems (NATO, EU)”¹²³. In addition “...Jobbik would therefore review(...)the existing treaties defining a unilateral Euro-Atlantic foreign policy as the first step in

¹¹⁶ “Jobbik: az amerikai érdek kiszolgálását koordinálják Székesfehérváron”, Hidfo, 09.10.2015, Internet, <http://www.hidfo.ru/2015/10/jobbik-az-amerikai-erdek-kiszolgalasat-koordinaljak-szekesfehervaron/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹¹⁷ “We may become a target – anti-Russia power demonstration in Hungary”, official Jobbik website, 20.10.2015, Internet, http://www.jobbik.com/we_may_become_a_target_anti_russia_power_demonstration_in_hungary_0 Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹¹⁸ Bayer Lili, “Moscow spooks return to Hungary, raising NATO hackles”, Politico, 20.07.2017, Internet, <http://www.politico.eu/article/moscow-spooks-return-to-hungary-raising-nato-hackles/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹¹⁹ “Több ügy, például a NATO-bizalom miatt kell összehívni a nemzetbiztonsági bizottságot”, Info Radio, 20.07.2017, Internet, http://inforadio.hu/belfold/2017/07/20/tobb_ugy_peldaual_a_nato-bizalom_miatt_kell_osszehivni_a_nemzetbiztonsagi_bizottsagot/ Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹²⁰ “Bojkottálta a nemzetbiztonsági bizottságot a kormánypárt”, HírTv, 31.07.2017, Internet, <http://hirtv.hu/ahirtvhirei/bojkottalta-a-nemzetbiztonsagi-bizottsagot-a-kormanypart-1400470> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹²¹ Jobbik policies, official Jobbik website, Internet, <http://www.jobbik.com/policies> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹²² “NATO has become an offensive alliance but there is no real alternative now”, official Jobbik website, 17.03.2017, Internet, http://www.jobbik.com/nato_has_become_an_offensive_alliance_but_there_is_no_real_alternative_now Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹²³ “The Jobbik Parliamentary Election Program for the rise of the nation (in Hungarian)”, official Jobbik website, 2014, p.76, Internet, https://jobbik.hu/sites/default/files/cikkcsatolmany/kimondjukmegoldjuk2014_netre.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

the change of foreign policy paradigm. We will re-negotiate economic, trade, politics and multilateral contracts that violate our national sovereignty and interests. Jobbik classifies these contracts with the EU, the agreements with the International Monetary Fund, and the Hungarian involvement in various international military missions that are difficult to interpret for our national interests arising from our NATO membership.”¹²⁴

Therefore, it can be concluded that:

- Jobbik sees the NATO as an offensive alliance, damaging to the Hungarian national interests and international relations,
- Will re-negotiate Hungarian NATO membership if it manages to obtain power, and possibly threat to leave the alliance as whole,
- Jobbik denounces the NATO’s effort to escalate the conflict with Russia, as it threatens both Hungary’s and world security.

Jobbik is adamant in its negative sentiment towards NATO, and it would be possible to expect a more limited role of Hungary, if not a total withdraw from the alliance, if this party seizes power. If Hungary leaves NATO, that would be a serious blow to this alliance, since it would lose a strategic position in the central Europe. Even if Jobbik doesn’t manage to pull Hungary out of the NATO, it can lead the country towards a more cooperative path with Russia, and in that way hamper NATO’s efforts to contain Russian influence in Central Europe and the Balkans. In addition, potential anti-NATO campaign of Jobbik’s can enhance support for other similar parties across Europe to push forward with similar policies, as they often share the sentiment to this organisation. Russia will have to devise a smart and careful approach in order to reap maximum benefits if this hypothetical scenario does happen, as it would give her more maneuvering space, and perhaps ease-off the pressure of heavy NATO military presence so close to its borders.

Jobbik’s stance on EU

An openly Eurosceptic party, Jobbik takes an uncompromising view on Euro-atlanticism, seeing it as an enemy to Hungary’s people and their future. Therefore it is not surprising that this party disseminates anti-EU messages, although at the same time it has a presence in the European Parliament and is willing to work towards the reformation of the European Union.

Jobbik stance on the future of EU, as based on their press releases, is that of the replacement of the concept of “federal Europe” with the one of the Europe based on the sovereignty of nations,

¹²⁴ “The Jobbik Parliamentary Election Program for the rise of the nation (in Hungarian)”, official Jobbik website, 2014, p.83, Internet, https://jobbik.hu/sites/default/files/cikkcsatolmany/kimondjukmegoldjuk2014_netre.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

especially after Brexit.¹²⁵ This was stated also by Gábor Vona during a Jobbik rally in November 2015, where he expressed that “...*the leaders of the European Union won't be this set of people for much longer, but people who think within the scope of a Europe of nations.*” and that Jobbik is “*party for Europe*”, while “*we (Jobbik) consider the European Union to be very bad*”.¹²⁶ In Jobbik's view, the EU's institutional structure has failed, since it cannot meet social, economic, financial or demographic challenges it faces, while the Hungary itself is a victim of a Euro-Atlantism for the last twenty-five years, and federalization of the EU is further damaging Hungary's interests.^{127,128}

This stance was officially present in their 2014 election program under the title of “A better future - Instead of the Brussels-based Empire, the Europe of Nations”. There, Jobbik proposed creation of new structures and systems based on the flexible cooperation between individual Member States, in which each country would participate to different degrees, in accordance with their interests, without aims “at some kind of homogeneity”.¹²⁹

In addition, reforms are proposed for institutions of the European Union, such as The Council of Ministers, European Parliament and European Commission.¹³⁰ After the reforms, their future roles will be limited to the decision and policy making process of Member States, but only in the area of mandatory basic co-operation that each Member State agrees to. The idea is that the reformed institutions serve more as platforms for discussion and cooperation between Member States in their new role. The Council of Ministers would be an operative body that will promote various optional projects, with participation in them being on volunteer basis by Member States. European Parliament would also face changes, losing its legislation role and becoming a forum to discuss and understand problems of countries of the Union, making policy recommendations for European Council along the way. The European Commission, with participation of each country in the Union, would hold the governing role, and it would not produce or draft laws, but take upon itself to monitor and co-ordinate cooperation of Member States in different areas. Finally, Jobbik would argue for reviewing currently unrestricted flow of people, goods, services and capital across countries, and it would demand different cross-border agreements in this new system¹³¹

¹²⁵ We must grab this historic opportunity to create a Europe of Nations”, official Jobbik website, 11.07.2016, Internet,http://www.jobbik.com/we_must_grab_this_historic_opportunity_to_create_a_europe_of_nations Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹²⁶ “Gábor Vona, leader of Jobbik: “Hungary is for Hungarians Until our Final Breath!” 2015. 11. 18”, Youtube, 21.11.2015, Internet, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqlraNaGipo> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹²⁷ We must grab this historic opportunity to create a Europe of Nations”, official Jobbik website, 11.07.2016, Internet, http://www.jobbik.com/we_must_grab_this_historic_opportunity_to_create_a_europe_of_nations Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹²⁸ “Hungary is a victim of Euro-Atlantism”, official Jobbik website, 19.01.2015, Internet, http://www.jobbik.com/hungary_victim_euro-atlantism Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹²⁹ “Nemzetek Európája - A Jobbik programja a magyar önrendelkezésért és a társadalmi felemelkedésért”, Jobbik, 2014, p.21, Internet, https://jobbik.hu/sites/default/files/cikkcsatolmany/ep_program_a5_jav.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹³⁰ Ibid

¹³¹ Ibid, p.22

Jobbik's Resistance towards the official EU policies was also noticeable during the ongoing migration crisis. The party issued a strong statement against the decision of Hungarian government to take in migrants between age 14-18, (after they undergo a mandatory DNA test), going so far as to say that "Orban kneeled before Brussels".¹³² The migration crisis prompted Jobbik president Gábor Vona to declare that "we were witnessing the collapse of the European Union", and that "all it needed for such a failure was the appearance of a couple of hundred thousand unarmed migrants".¹³³

In their view, European Union is a conglomerate serving Washington's interests, working relentlessly on depriving the continent from all the values that shaped it into what is now. Europe suffers from Americanisation and it is deteriorating from a community of national states into a "pasteless and futureless consumers disowning their own nations", while the Russia's "historic duty" is to set Europe back on the track of traditions.¹³⁴

Jobbik started off as a staunch anti-EU party, expressing the wish for Hungary to break off from the EU.¹³⁵ They demonstrated such stance in 2012 during anti-EU rally in front of the European Commission offices in Budapest, by setting the EU flag on fire. In 2014, a Jobbik MEP threw out the EU flag from the window of the parliament during session, proclaiming "*Long live freedom, long live our fatherland, we'll put away this symbol of high treason...and colonization*".^{136,137} Migrant crisis provided a new direction for Jobbik's EU stance. Instead of the desire for Hungary to leave EU, Gábor Vona stated in June 2016 that this crisis is offering populist parties across the continent an opportunity to "transform" the block.^{138,139} True to these word, Jobbik showed this kind of behavior with the launch of the European Citizens' Initiative for eliminating

¹³² "Orbán Government kneels before Brussels", official Jobbik website, 30.04.2017, Internet, http://www.jobbik.com/orban_government_kneels_before_brussels Accessed on: 25.05.2018:

¹³³ Gábor Vona: What we are witnessing is the collapse of the European Union, official Jobbik website, 24.09.2015, Internet, http://www.jobbik.com/gabor_vona_what_we_are_witnessing_is_the_collapse_of_the_european_union Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹³⁴ "We must grab this historic opportunity to create a Europe of Nations", official Jobbik website, 11.07.2016, Internet, http://www.jobbik.com/we_must_grab_this_historic_opportunity_to_create_a_europe_of_nations Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹³⁵ Boros Tamás, "Hungary: The country of the pro-European people and a Eurosceptic government", Das Progressive Zentrum, 26.09.2016, <http://www.progressives-zentrum.org/hungary-the-country-of-the-pro-european-people-and-a-eurosceptic-government/?lang=en> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹³⁶ "LiveLeak - Hungarian Jobbik member of parliament throws away EU flag", Youtbue, 18.02.2014, Internet, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0t_yxC2_JcQ Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹³⁷ "A Jobbik kilépne az EU-ból. És te?", Youtube, 17.05.2014, Internet, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouLgGybdRxg> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹³⁸ Hungarian far-right no longer anti-EU: Jobbik wants to transform it", Euractive, 03.06.2016, Internet, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/elections/news/hungarian-far-right-no-longer-anti-eu-it-wants-to-transform-it/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹³⁹ Kroet Cynthia, "Hungary's far-right Jobbik says leaving EU no longer on the agenda", Politico, 03.06.2016, Internet, <http://www.politico.eu/article/hungarys-far-right-jobbik-leader-gabor-vonasays-leaving-eu-no-longer-on-the-agenda/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

European wage inequalities.¹⁴⁰ Gábor Vona emphasized that “*the initiative was reaching far beyond the issue of European wages: it aimed for competitive domestic enterprises, a new cohesion policy and a new European Union with more solidarity where Eastern Central member states could feel at home, too.*”¹⁴¹ This initiative is seen by Jobbik as the first cause that could trigger cooperation among the nations of the “historically exhausted Eastern European region.”¹⁴²

As a member of Alliance of European National Movements EU Parliament group, Jobbik, as one of the group founders, had a clear ideological influence and vision of the “New European Order”. Their ideas can be seen on the official website of AENM. Also present on the website are messages that Jobbik published in its 2014 parliament program, such as “The creation of a Europe of free, independent and equal nations in the framework of a confederation of sovereign nation states”, “The rejection of any attempt to create a centralized European Super State.” and “The primacy of direct votes by the people or their elected representatives over any administrative or bureaucratic body.”¹⁴³ Current president of the AENM is Béla Kovács of Jobbik.

To summarize:

- Though Jobbik started as an anti-EU party, it now seeks reforms from within the EU itself
- It is of the opinion that the “transformation” of the EU can be achieved with other nation-minded populist parties across the Europe
- Their final vision of the “New Europe” will be the “Europe of Nations”, based on the cooperation of sovereign states tied in the loose confederation, while breaking up with Euro-atlantism and federal policies of Brusell.

Jobbik is one of the political parties that gives clear idea how new Europe should look like, publishing them in an official program, and supporting them through the membership in the Eurosceptical Alliance of European National Movements EU Parliament group. Notion of some kind of “Hungexit” in the future cannot be dismissed, though Hungary is a landlocked country almost totally surrounded by EU members, and without an alternative will have to stay inside the European Union in order for its economy to survive. Nevertheless, increased presence of Jobbik in both government and EU Parliament could influence a lot changes within the EU itself, a situation

¹⁴⁰ “Let us reduce the wage and economic differences that tear the EU apart!”, European Commission - European Citizens' Initiative, Internet,

<http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/initiatives/open/details/2017/000006> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁴¹ European Wage Union: Eastern Central Europe asks fair treatment and equality, official Jobbik website, 22.03.2017, Internet, <http://jobbik.com/european-wage-union-eastern-central-europe-asks-for-fair-treatment-and-equality> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁴² “We take first steps to change EU, says Jobbik”, Daily News Hungary, 18.05.2017, Internet, <https://dailynewshungary.com/jobbik-takes-first-step-change-eu/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁴³ AEMN Party, official AEMN Party website, Internet, <http://aemn.info/aemn-party/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

that can be beneficial for Russia, since their voice could provide a counterpoint to USA's influence over Brussels.

Although Jobbik's rating dropped by some degree following parliamentary elections (with the spike in rise around peak of migration crisis and Hungarian-EU row), it is still among 3 strongest Hungarian parties, and the main challenger of the ruling Fidesz. This is also based on the view that Fidesz share many similarities with Jobbik in domestic/foreign policies (though Fidesz is at least publicly much less extremist in its view), and therefore Jobbik can always count on disgruntled voters of Fidesz to vote for them in the coming parliamentary elections in 2018. Also encouraging is the current tendency of Jobbik to slowly back away from the extremist (and borderline fascist) ideology and political views, positioning itself more to the center compared to the previous years, though radical positions still serve as a cornerstone voter recruitment policy.

Nevertheless, despite all the negative PR in domestic and international media, Jobbik will still be a political force in Hungary in the following decade, especially if EU bureaucrats continue their crackdown on Hungary due to their stance on migration crisis and foreign policy. Therefore, Russia must not dismiss a possible future influence of this party on the Hungarian foreign policy. The re-branding which party leadership undertook (as it often happens with far-right parties once they achieve a moderate degree of success) may help improve its image among voters and beyond. Therefore, possible Russian cooperation with Jobbik-led government must not be dismissed, as Jobbik views on NATO, EU and Russia are quite along the lines of close cooperation with the Russian Federation. Since Russia is facing a much smaller maneuvering space in Europe, it would be prudent to choose pragmatism of cooperation with such right-wing party in case of their ascendance into government. As mentioned before, one of the more serious issues that Russia can have with Jobbik is their view on people and territory of some neighboring countries, but here Russia will need to exercise diplomacy and wisdom in order to protect interests of possible future allies among Central European and Balkan Slavic countries, and not to alienate another possible ally in the form of Jobbik-led Hungary.

2.2. Freedom Party of Austria (Austria)

FPÖ (*Freedom party of Austria - Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*) can be considered one of the more interesting right wing parties of Central-Eastern Europe. Not only is it on the political scene of Austria for a long time, but it was also a part of coalition government three times during the last three decades. Currently, it is in the coalition government with the Austrian People's Party (*Österreichische Volkspartei, ÖVP*) since December 2017 and it yet has to show the impact of its political ideology and designated course on the politics of Austria.

FPÖ was founded in 1956, as a party with liberal and National-German tendencies, even though it had connections to Nazi sympathizers as the founder was Anton Reinthaller - a former SS officer and a Nazi functionary.^{144,145} Thanks to its perceived Nazi roots the party was largely isolated on the Austrian political scene until the 1979, when FPÖ was first accepted into Liberal International (and thus publicly being re-branded as a liberal party) and later in 1983, when it entered the coalition with the SPÖ (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs*) party.¹⁴⁶ In 1986 Jörg Haider became party chairman with the FPÖ becoming the most vocal opponent of Austria's accession to the EU while Haider himself was a voice against Austrian system's weaknesses, scandals, favoritism and inequalities, ensuring a succession of electoral victories for FPÖ.^{147,148} In the next decade, Haider tried to introduce "Austria first" ideology in order to oppose the appeal of Nazism and Nazi Germany expressed among some of the members, thus becoming the party of both German nationalism and Austrian patriotism.¹⁴⁹ In Austrian general elections of 1999 FPÖ managed to secure 26.91% of votes, forming the coalition government with the ÖVP

¹⁴⁴ Stone Jon, "Austria's far-right party FPÖ says some criticism of its Nazi links is 'justified'", *Independent*, 16.02.2018, Internet, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/FPÖ-far-right-nazi-links-justified-heinz-christian-strache-austria-a8214086.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁴⁵ Moreau Patrick, "The state of the right: Austria", *The Fondation pour l'innovation politique*, 2011, p. 19, Internet, <http://www.fondapol.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/The-state-of-the-right-Austria1.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁴⁶ Art David, "Inside the Radical Right: The Development of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe", *Cambridge University Press*, New York, 2011, p.119, Internet, <https://books.google.ru/books?id=9dUTXJakqLoC&pg=PA119&lpg=PA119&dq=fp%C3%96+++Liberal+International+1979&source=bl&ots=nn1KM7aDHj&sig=eusZdqB8scyTusT6ITy2H1SCjwk&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewjigM762PXaAhVnEpoKHSQeApYQ6AEIPTAB#v=onepage&q=fp%C3%96%20%20Liberal%20International%201979&f=false> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁴⁷ Pelinka Anton, "The Haider Phenomenon in Austria: Examining the FPÖ in European Context", *The Journal of the International Institute*, Volume 9, Issue 1, Fall 2001, Internet, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jii/4750978.0009.102/--haider-phenomenon-in-austria-examining-the-FPÖ-in-european?rgn=main;view=fulltext> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁴⁸ Moreau Patrick, "The state of the right: Austria", *The Fondation pour l'innovation politique*, 2011, pp. 19-23, Internet, <http://www.fondapol.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/The-state-of-the-right-Austria1.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁴⁹ Pelinka Anton, "The Haider Phenomenon in Austria: Examining the FPÖ in European Context", *The Journal of the International Institute*, Volume 9, Issue 1, Fall 2001, Internet, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jii/4750978.0009.102/--haider-phenomenon-in-austria-examining-the-FPÖ-in-european?rgn=main;view=fulltext> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

(*Österreichische Volkspartei*) four months later in 2000, which provoked an outrage in the 14 EU members states who decided to ostracize the country diplomatically.¹⁵⁰

The EU briefly imposed sanctions on Austria, with the reasoning that this coalition was legitimizing extreme right in Europe, but lifted them after understanding that they may be counterproductive as they were actually encouraging anti-EU feelings.¹⁵¹ But already during the parliament elections of 2002, FPÖ experienced sharp decline in support, winning only 10% of the votes.¹⁵² This was the cause of the party split in 2005 (along with the internal disputes), when Haider created Alliance for the Future of Austria (*Bündnis Zukunft Österreich*, BZÖ), which proved as a popular alternative for the FPÖ, winning 10.7% of the votes on 2008 parliament elections, with FPÖ winning 17.54%). Nevertheless, BZÖ lost much of its support after Haider's death just days after 2008 parliament elections.^{153,154} With Hans-Christian Strache as a new party leader from 2006, FPÖ once again started to be more successful party on the Austrian political scene, winning 20.5% of votes on 2013 parliament elections, and 26% on 2017 Austrian parliament elections, which led to the formation of the governmental coalition with the ÖVP in December 2017.^{155,156} Currently, ministers that hail from the ranks of the FPÖ in the Austrian government are Minister of Civil Service and Sports, Federal Minister of the Interior, Minister of Defence, Minister of Labor, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection and Minister of Transport, Innovation and Technology, while Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs was independent candidate nominated by the FPÖ.¹⁵⁷

The FPÖ ideology under Strache's leadership is said to resonate with that of the Haider's during the early years of his leadership, meaning that it is concentrated on protection of Austria, Austrian national identity and autonomy, as well as Austrian natural livelihood, while advocating restrictive policies on immigration and Islam.¹⁵⁸ In addition, it bases its beliefs that the core

¹⁵⁰ Historical Archive Of Parliamentary Election Results - Austria, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1999 Austrian Parliament Elections, Internet, http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2017_99.htm Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁵¹ "Austria's right-wing parties could form coalition". Reuters, 18.11.2012, Internet, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-austria-politics-right-idUKBRE8AH0D420121118> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁵² Historical Archive Of Parliamentary Election Results - Austria, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2002 Austrian Parliament Elections, Internet, http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2017_02.htm Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁵³ Austria: Parliamentary Election 2008, European Election Database, Internet, http://eed.nsd.uib.no/webview/index.jsp?study=http://129.177.90.166:80/obj/fStudy/ATPA2008_Display&node=0&m ode=cube&v=2&cube=http://129.177.90.166:80/obj/fCube/ATPA2008_Display_C1&top=yes Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁵⁴ Aichholzer Julian, Kritzinger Sylvia, Wagner Markus, Zeglovits Eva, "How has Radical Right Support Transformed Established Political Conflicts? The Case of Austria", West Eur Polit. 2014 Jan 2; 37(1): 113–137, Internet, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4695981/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁵⁵ Results of Austrian Parliamentary Election 2017, Austrian Embassy in Washington, Internet, <http://www.austria.org/the-latest/2017/10/30/austrian-parliamentary-election-2017> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁵⁶ "Austria's conservative-far right cabinet likely sworn in Dec. 20: source", Reuters, 01.12.2017, Internet, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-austria-government/austrias-conservative-far-right-cabinet-likely-sworn-in-dec-20-source-idUSKBN1DV4FA> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁵⁷ The Austrian Federal Chancellery, Ministers and State Secretaries, Internet, <https://www.federal-chancellery.gv.at/ministers-and-state-secretaries> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁵⁸ "Populist Rhetoric: Austrian Freedom Party", EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION BRIEFING: NO. 5, Counterpoint, p.3, Internet, <http://counterpoint.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Populist-Rhetoric-Austrian-Freedom-Party.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

institutions of state are at risk and that they need to be defended, such as family which is under threat from the people who do not follow the traditional family model, welfare system which is placed under strain by the resource-draining immigrants, and the nation itself where the EU and immigration are to blame.¹⁵⁹

The success of the FPÖ comes in addition from Strache's charismatic personality and ability to reach out to the youth – from performing nationalistic rap-songs to PR campaign of his healthy and active lifestyle, connecting with the Vienna's party-going youth in night clubs, to his tech-savvy skills at using social media and the Internet.¹⁶⁰ In their 2008 parliament elections campaign FPÖ branded themselves as “social homeland party”, concentrating on populist themes such as anti-immigration policies, EU-skepticism, crime and Austrian nationalism, while stressing the interventionist economic and social policies targeted at blue-collar voters and welfare state recipients.¹⁶¹ This proved to be a success formula, as little is changed by the 2017 parliament elections in their program, since during the FPÖ electoral campaign, Strache warned about “undifferentiated mass immigration” and “the threatening and mistaken Islamification” of Austria, as the most pressing issues for the new government.¹⁶²

Although accused of being a Nazi and an anti-semitite, Strache tried to reconcile with Israel, announcing his support for recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and supporting Israel's construction of Jewish-only settlements in the disputed territory of West Bank.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, in April 2018, the representatives of the FPÖ were not invited to participate in the ceremony commemorating the 1945 liberation of concentration camp Mauthausen, as the Austrian Mauthausen Committee stated that the presence of the FPÖ politicians at the event “*would mean further humiliation of Holocaust survivors*”.¹⁶⁴

Interestingly, FPÖ as an anti-immigration party drives support from the immigrants from the former Yugoslavia, mainly ethnic-Serbian population (with their population of around 300.000 in

¹⁵⁹ *Populist Rhetoric: Austrian Freedom Party*, EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION BRIEFING: NO. 5, Counterpoint, p.3, Internet, <http://counterpoint.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Populist-Rhetoric-Austrian-Freedom-Party.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁶⁰ Turner-Graham Emily, ““Austria First”: H.C. Strache, Austrian identity and the current politics of Austria's Freedom Party”, *Studies in Language & Capitalism* 3/4, 2008: 181 – 198, pp. 185-187, Internet, http://www.languageandcapitalism.info/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/slc3-4_turner-graham.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁶¹ Luther Kurt Richard, “The Revival of the Radical Right: The Austrian Parliamentary Election of 2008”, *Keele European Parties Research Unit, Keele University, 2009*, pp. 8-9, Internet, <https://www.keele.ac.uk/media/keeleuniversity/group/kepru/KEPRU%20WP%2029.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁶² Atkins Ralph, “Right leader warns against ‘Islamification’ of Austria - Strache hits out at mass immigration as Freedom party eyes gains in Sunday's election”, *Financial Times*, 13.10.2017, Internet, <https://www.ft.com/content/b707d840-affd-11e7-beba-5521c713abf4> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁶³ Strickland Patrick, “Israel to maintain ties with Austria's far-right FPÖ”, *Al Jazeera*, 22.12.2017, Internet, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/12/israel-maintain-ties-austria-FPÖ-171222130016063.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁶⁴ “Opětovné ponižení” přeživších? Rakouská FPÖ zuří, nebyla pozvána na akci v Mauthausenu, *EuroZprávy*, 30.04.2018, Internet, <http://zahranicni.eurozpravy.cz/eu/222627-opetovne-ponizeni-prezivsich-rakouska-FPÖ-zuri-nebyla-pozvana-na-akci-v-mauthausenu/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

Austria).¹⁶⁵ From 2008 onwards, Strache and FPÖ established excellent relations with not only Serbian immigrants and first-generation born Serbo-Austrians, but also with political elite from Serbia and Republic of Srpska (*Република Српска*), a Bosnian-Serb entity within Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁶⁶ To show the gratitude for excellent cooperation and relations between FPÖ and Serbian community, President of Republic of Srpska Milorad Dodik (*Милорад Додик*) awarded medals to Strache and Johan Gudenus on the National Day of the Republic of Srpska in Banja Luka in January 2018.^{167,168} In addition, during his visit to Belgrade on February 2018, Strache strongly criticized the Austrian decision to recognize the self-proclaimed independence of Serbia's southern province of Kosovo and Metohija, with Serbian government thanking him for the support on important questions for Serbia over the years.¹⁶⁹ This reinforced the image of Strache and FPÖ not only as a "defenders of Christian values" in Europe, but Orthodox Christian as well, which in turn could open more ground for cooperation with Slavic Orthodox countries, such as Russia. Whether those are honest feelings towards Orthodox Slavic population or not, certainly it was a pragmatic decision made by FPÖ leadership in the bid to increase the support of the party for the elections.

The FPÖ sees itself as a party committed to the Austria, the freedom and responsibility of the individual and the community, democracy, the sovereign state, the principles of the market economy and social justice, as well as to the Austria's right to the self-determination and preservation of its tradition and culture.^{170,171} This is repeated in their political program, where FPÖ states that freedom is considered the highest good, and thus, Austria's neutrality, national identity and independence should be defended at all costs. FPÖ claims to stand for the rule of law, the family as a community of a man and a woman with their children as a natural nucleus and staple for a functioning society, market economy with social responsibility and welfare state.¹⁷² Furthermore, FPÖ states that it is a patriotic party which places the protection and needs of its own people at the center of its political action and policy shaping, thus presenting itself as the people-champion political option.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁵ Петровић Александра, "Шта раде Срби у Бечу", Политика, 12.02.2015, Internet,

<http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/318943/Sta-rade-Srbi-u-Becu> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁶⁶"5 GRÜNDE, WIESO STRACHE IN DER EX-YU COMMUNITY MEHR PUNKTET ALS DIE SPÖ". 09.01.2018, Kosmo,

Internet, <https://www.kosmo.at/5-gruende-wieso-strache-in-der-ex-yu-community-mehr-punktet-als-die-spo/>

Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁶⁷Höller Herwig G., "Zeig mir deine Freunde", Zeit Online, 23.02.2018, Internet, <https://www.zeit.de/2018/09/FPÖe-oesterreich-serbien-russland-beziehungen-wladimir-putin>

Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁶⁸ "Natürlich nimmt Strache Orden der Republika Srpska an", Die Presse, 10.01.2018, Internet,

<https://diepresse.com/home/ausland/aussenpolitik/5351346/Natuerlich-nimmt-Strache-Orden-der-Republika-Srpska-an>

Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁶⁹"Štrahe: Imam razumevanje za položaj Srba", PTC, 12.02.2018, Internet,

<http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/politika/3035728/strahe-imam-razumavanje-za-polozaj-srba-dacic-svaka-ti-cast.html>

Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁷⁰"Freiheitliches Wahlprogramm zur Nationalratswahl 2017 - FPÖ", Official FPÖ Website, p.5, Internet,

https://www.FPÖe.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Wahlprogramm_8_9_low.pdf

¹⁷¹"INFO – KOMPAKT DIE FREIHEITLICHE PARTEI ÖSTERREICHS (FPÖ)", Official FPÖ Website, p.16, Internet,

<https://www.FPÖe.at/themen/info-kompakt/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁷²"Parteiprogramm der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs (FPÖ)", Official FP Website, p.3, Internet,

<https://www.FPÖe.at/es/themen/parteiprogramm/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁷³"Einleitung", Official FPÖ Website, Internet, <https://www.FPÖe.at/es/themen/leitantrag/einleitung/> Accessed on:

25.05.2018

Although it can be argued that FPÖ managed to successfully re-brand itself as a center-right conservative party which broke its links to the Nazi-origin past, from time to time scandals appear in media. FPÖ members are often accused of racism and hate speech, especially the one directed towards immigrants coming from Middle East and Africa.¹⁷⁴ In September 2017, just weeks before the elections, a local FPÖ official was expelled for hoarding Nazi memorabilia, including SS division insignia and a plaque commemorating Hitler's 1938 annexation of Austria.¹⁷⁵ In March 2018, Austrian police in the city of Suben raided homes of six people, among them two local councilors from FPÖ, that were suspected of breaking laws against glorifying the Nazis. as the consequence of this, the councilors were expelled from the party, after it became clear that they were sharing photos and quotes of Hitler on WhatsApp (social media platform).¹⁷⁶ In response to all these incidents, FPÖ leadership vowed that it will "clean-up its pro-Nazi image" while stating that "FPÖ recognizes without reserve the Republic of Austria, democracy, parliamentarianism and the rule of law."¹⁷⁷ Despite this negative image in the media, FPÖ still managed to secure its place in the coalition government without any major backlash from the EU, as it was case with the 2002 ÖVP-FPÖ coalition. Not only that, but in May 2018 a survey was conducted which placed the support for FPÖ at historical 31%, which was increase of 5% from January's 26% of support (**Table 1**),^{178,179} The oscillations of support for the FPÖ during the cycle of six Austrian parliament elections show that the party successfully managed the process of re-branding, as the percentage of won votes from the 2017 parliament election is higher than during the previous four parliament elections (**Figure 2**).^{180,181,182,183,184,185}

¹⁷⁴ Von Glösel Kathrin, "Rassistische „Einzelfälle“ aus den Reihen der FPÖ", Kontrast, 26.04.2018, Internet, <https://kontrast.at/rassistische-einzelfaelle-aus-den-reihen-der-fpo/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁷⁵ "Weeks before elections, Nazi memorabilia embarrasses Austrian far-right", The Times of Israel, 27.09.2017, Internet, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/weeks-before-elections-nazi-memorabilia-embarrasses-austrian-far-right/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁷⁶ "Another day, another Nazi scandal for Austria's co-governing Freedom Party", The Local, 23.03.2018, Internet, <https://www.thelocal.at/20180323/another-day-another-nazi-scandal-for-austrias-co-governing-freedom-party> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁷⁷ "Austrian far-right party says criticism of Nazi ties is partly justified and pledges to clean up its act", The Local, 14.02.2018, Internet, <https://www.thelocal.at/20180214/fp-admits-criticism-of-nazi-ties-is-partly-justified-and-pledges-to-clean-ups-its-act> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁷⁸ "Umfrage: Leichtes blaues Minus", OE-24, 27.01.2018, Internet, <http://www.oe24.at/oesterreich/politik/Umfrage-Leichtes-blaues-Minus/319229382> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁷⁹ "FPÖ zieht im Windschatten der ÖVP an SPÖ vorbei", Heute, 11.05.2018, Internet, <http://www.heute.at/politik/news/story/FP--zieht-im-Windschatten-der--VP-an-SP--vorbei-52603161> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁸⁰ Austrian Parliament Elections 1999 Result, IPU, Internet, http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2017_99.htm Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁸¹ Austrian Parliament Elections 2002 Result, IPU, Internet, http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2017_02.htm Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁸² Austrian Parliament Elections 2006 Result, IPU, Internet, http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2017_06.htm Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁸³ Austrian Parliament Elections 2008 Result, IPU, Internet, http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2017_08.htm Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁸⁴ Austrian Parliament Elections 2013 Result, Bundesministerium Für Inneres, Internet, <http://wahl13.bmi.gv.at/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

The FPÖ member who is most exposed to the media is certainly its leader, Hans-Christian Strache (born in Vienna, 1969). By profession a dental technician, Strache became involved in local Viennese politics in 1991, becoming a leader of the Viennese FPÖ in 2004 and national leader of the FPÖ in 2005. Leading FPÖ in the next 13 years, his biggest success came with his party forming up coalition with ÖVP and Strache becoming Vice-Chancellor of Austria in December 2017.¹⁸⁶

Another important member of FPÖ's younger guard is Johann Gudenus (born in Vienna, 1976) - a vice chairman of the FPÖ and since 2017 the chairman of the FPÖ club in the National Council (*Der Nationalrat* – lower house of Austrian Parliament). He is active on the international stage, providing links with the political parties and politicians for the FPÖ, such as Jobbik in Hungary.¹⁸⁷ In addition, the media branded Johann Gudenus as a driving force in the intensification of the FPÖ- Russia relations.^{188,189}

FPÖ's Stance on Russia

Although FPÖ is an openly Russia-friendly political party, it does not exhibit that in their official documents beside a call for removal of sanctions that are damaging for Austrian economy and agricultural sector, in their program for 2017 parliament elections.¹⁹⁰ In addition, in Austrian governmental program ÖVP-FPÖ states that the neutrality of Austria is an important factor in international relations due to its historical position as a meeting point between the East and the West, and so it can serve as an active place of dialogue and policy of détente between Russia and the Western world.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ Austrian Parliament Elections 2017 Result, Bundesministerium Für Inneres, Internet <https://wahl17.bmi.gv.at/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁸⁶ Turner-Graham Emily, "'Austria First": H.C. Strache, Austrian identity and the current politics of Austria's Freedom Party", *Studies in Language & Capitalism* 3/4, 2008: 181 – 198, Internet, http://www.languageandcapitalism.info/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/slc3-4_turner-graham.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁸⁷ Zöchling Christa, "FPÖ: Johann Gudenus, die unheimliche Nummer zwei", *Profil*, 07.08.2015, Internet, <https://www.profil.at/oesterreich/FPÖe-johann-gudenus-die-unheimliche-nummer-zwei-5790699> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁸⁸ Ibid

¹⁸⁹ Goncharenko Roman, "'Putins Freunde" in FPÖ vor Machtrückkehr", *Deutsche Welle*, 14.10.2017, Internet, <http://www.dw.com/de/putins-freunde-in-fp%C3%B6-vor-machtr%C3%BCckkehr/a-40945913> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁹⁰ "Freiheitliches Wahlprogramm zur Nationalratswahl 2017 - FPÖ", Official FPÖ Website, p. 27, Internet, https://www.FPÖe.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Wahlprogramm_8_9_low.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁹¹ "Zusammen. Für unser Österreich. Regierungsprogramm 2017–2022", p.22, Internet, <https://www.oevp.at/download/Regierungsprogramm.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

The real support for Russia can be seen in the statements of the party leadership in the mass media during the last two years.

In March 2016, The FPÖ parliamentarians Axel Kassegger and Barbara Rosenkranz were among the participants of the "International Yalta Economic Forum", with Kassegger stating that "*it is necessary to restore the lost trust*" between Austria and Russia as the sanctions were hurting the Austrian economy.¹⁹² In December the same year, FPÖ signed agreement on cooperation with Russia's ruling party United Russia, with Strache leading the FPÖ delegation personally to Moscow.¹⁹³ The FPÖ and the United Russia declared to work together in the spheres of youth, education, disaster relief and other social organizations, with the aim of "*strengthening friendship and educating the young generation in the spirit of patriotism and enjoyment of work*".^{194,195} Facing the critics from the German Chancellor Angela Merkel for his friendly relations with the United Russia, Strache stated that the cooperation agreement which was signed between the two parties was the basis for an exchange of ideas in order to counteract the negative Cold War trend in the spirit of peaceful development, while criticizing Angela Merkel for trying to isolate the German-dominant EU with a confrontational policy on all sides.¹⁹⁶

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung reported in January 2018 that the German Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed her concerns that government participation of the FPÖ in Vienna could complicate the intelligence cooperation of the Western states as the FPÖ, "*which seeks proximity to Russia*", could gain insights into Moscow that would allow the Russian intelligence services to draw information about the activities of Western intelligence services.¹⁹⁷ Therefore, the report stated, Vienna must be prepared for the fact that Western intelligence services would no longer share information to the same extent – although this report was later denied by both Angela Merkel and Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz.^{198,199}

¹⁹² "FPÖ-Politiker als Promigäste auf annektierter Krim", VOL, 15.04.2016, Internet, <http://www.vol.at/FPÖe-politiker-als-promigaeste-auf-annektierter-krim/apa-1429268622> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁹³ Odehnal Bernhard, "Selfie in Moskau – FPÖ-Delegation grüsst aus Russland", Tages Anzeiger, 20.12.2016, Internet, <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/ausland/europa/FPÖe-Delegation-gruesst-aus-Moskau/story/18236522> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁹⁴ "FPÖ und Putin-Partei unterzeichneten Kooperations-Vertrag", Salzburg 24, 19.12.2016, Internet, <http://www.salzburg24.at/FPÖe-und-putin-partei-unterzeichneten-kooperations-vertrag/4927039> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁹⁵ Odehnal Bernhard, "Selfie in Moskau – FPÖ-Delegation grüsst aus Russland", Tages Anzeiger, 20.12.2016, Internet, <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/ausland/europa/FPÖe-Delegation-gruesst-aus-Moskau/story/18236522> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁹⁶ "FPÖ-Chef Strache greift Merkel an: "Mit wem steht die Merkel-EU eigentlich nicht im Konflikt?", RT News, 15.03.2017, Internet, <https://deutsch.rt.com/europa/47717-strache-eu-merkel-konflikt-mit-allen/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁹⁷ Von Sattar Majid, Lowenstein Stephan, "Berlin besorgt über Einfluss der FPÖ auf Geheimdienste", Frankfurter Allgemeine, 19.01.2018, Internet, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/berlin-besorgt-ueber-einfluss-der-FPÖe-auf-geheimdienste-15407328.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

¹⁹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹⁹ "Merkel in Sorge über FPÖ-Russland-Kontakte? Berlin dementiert", Salzburger Nachrichten, 23.05.2018, Internet, <https://www.sn.at/politik/weltpolitik/merkel-in-sorge-ueber-FPÖe-russland-kontakte-berlin-dementiert-23240866> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

In February 2018, Johann Gudenus hailed the visit of Sebastian Kurz to Moscow and his meeting with the Russian president Vladimir Putin as a “*very good signal*” which shows that “*Russia is part of Europe and that stability in Europe is only possible with Russia*“.²⁰⁰ In addition, he stressed that “*we (FPÖ) clearly stated in the government program that we are working towards a phased reduction of sanctions, of course with several European partners*” and that he was personally in favor of sanction reduction as they also harm Austrian economy.²⁰¹

In March 2018, FPÖ organized an event to commemorate the Jewish Red Army soldier Alexander Pechersky, which was attended by the Russian ambassador in Austria Dmitri Ljubinski (*Дмитрий Евгеньевич Любинский*) and the Israeli politician Michael Kleiner of the Likud party. While both of them criticized the destruction of Soviet war memorials in Eastern European countries and warned that fascism should never be repeated, Michael Kleiner praised FPÖ and the activities Strache that are leading to the good relations between the party and the Israel.²⁰²

The following month Austria’s Foreign Minister Karin Kneissl visited Moscow, emphasizing the bridge builder function “*of Austria between EU and Russia*.”²⁰³ The Austrian neutrality and unwillingness of Austrian government to expel Russian diplomats during the Salisbury case, calls for taking down sanctions towards Russia, as well as cordial relationship of FPÖ leadership towards Russian Federation have all prompted some media to call FPÖ “*Putin’s Trojan horse*” in Austria.^{204,205} The FPÖ also drew negative critic from the pro-Western media when Detlef Wimmer visited Yalta Economic Forum in 2018, along with a few other FPÖ politicians, which was seen as opposition to official anti-Russian EU stance on the Crimea’s rejoining to Russian Federation.^{206,207}

²⁰⁰ Linke Paul, "Österreich plant „diplomatische Offensiven“ für Russland – FPÖ-Vize Gudenus", Sputnik News, 28.02.2018, Internet, <https://de.sputniknews.com/politik/20180228319753529-kurz-besuch-FPÖe-oevp/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁰¹ Ibid

²⁰² Sulzbacher Markus, "Ursula Stenzel, "sadistische SS-Männer" und "Schandflecke", Der Standard, 23.03.2018, Internet, <https://derstandard.at/2000076682558/Ursula-Stenzel-sadistische-SS-Maenner-und-Schandflecke> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁰³ "Außenministerin Kneissl begann Russland-Besuch", Volks Blatt, 19.04.2018, Internet, <https://volksblatt.at/aussenministerin-kneissl-beginnt-russland-besuch/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁰⁴ Nilsen Kjell Arild, "Østerrikes FPÖ blir Putins trojanske hest?", Agenda Magasin, 10.04.2018, Internet, <https://agendamagasin.no/kommentarer/osterrikes-fpo-putins-trojanske-hest/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁰⁵ Gressel Gustav, "Austria: Russia’s Trojan Horse?", European Council on Foreign Relations, 21.12.2017, Internet, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_austria_russias_trojan_horse Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁰⁶ Sommerbauer Jutta, "FPÖ-Funktionär Wimmer bei umstrittenem Krim-Kongress", Die Presse, 19.04.2018, Internet, <https://diepresse.com/home/ausland/5408005/FPÖeFunktionaer-Wimmer-bei-umstrittenem-KrimKongress> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁰⁷ "European politicians visit economic forum in occupied Crimea – media", Unian, 19.04.2018, Internet, <https://www.unian.info/politics/10087403-european-politicians-visit-economic-forum-in-occupied-crimea-media.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

It can be concluded that:

- FPÖ is an openly Russian-friendly political option in Austria
- Its presence in the new Austrian government provides a large boost to Austrian-Russian relations
- FPÖ might be the crucial actor in Austrian politics that will help with taking down Austrian economic sanctions towards Russia

It is without any doubt that FPÖ is Russia's major ally in the Austrian government, and to a degree in the EU, as the party not only understands Russian economic and political position but also wishes to expand the cooperation between the two countries. Of course, it is yet to be seen what level of cooperation can be established between Russia and Austria on the international level now that the FPÖ is in the government, but the signals are encouraging as Vladimir Putin is set to visit Vienna at the end of the June this year.²⁰⁸ Hopefully, the ÖVP-FPÖ government can serve as a role model of the future good relations between European countries and the Russian Federation.

FPÖ's Stance on NATO

With the FPÖ being a staunch supporter of Austria's neutrality, it is not surprising that they are against Austria's NATO membership, or any military alliance that is non-European at its core.

Based on their political program, it can be observed that FPÖ stands for the military neutrality of Austria and compulsory military service, and it is naturally for the increased military budget that would provide foundation for the strong military, conscription and "defense of everlasting neutrality".²⁰⁹ In their 2016 political program, FPÖ states again their support for the mandatory military service in order for Austrian neutrality to be successfully defended. In addition, FPÖ is clear that any foreign missions that can be conducted by the Austrian military should be voluntary and only for disaster relief, humanitarian tasks, peacekeeping and under UN mandate.²¹⁰ In the government program, defense of Austrian neutrality is a shared goal between ÖVP and FPÖ. The program states that since the Austria is closer to the crisis regions (such as the Balkans) than

²⁰⁸"Russia's Putin to visit Austria on June 24", Reuters, 06.06.2014, Internet, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-austria-russia/russias-putin-to-visit-austria-on-june-24-idUSKBNOEH0RD20140606> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁰⁹ "Freiheitliches Wahlprogramm zur Nationalratswahl 2017 - FPÖ", Official FPÖ Website, p. 8, Internet, https://www.FPÖe.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Wahlprogramm_8_9_low.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²¹⁰ "Parteiprogramm der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs (FPÖ)", Official FP Website, p.13, Internet, <https://www.FPÖe.at/es/themen/parteiprogramm/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

other EU members, it needs to have a strong military and territorial defense, and to contribute to the EU missions in the Balkan region. No support for any military alliance is given in the program.²¹¹

During his visit to Moscow in September 2014, Johann Gudenus criticized EU and NATO, stating that the *“policy of the European Union is the policy of NATO and United States”*, and that the *“Austrian people and the people of the European Union...are friends of Russia”*.²¹² In March 2015, Strache was saying how most of the member-states of the EU are part of NATO at the same time, and therefore, EU is geostrategically guided by the US interests instead of European ones, while the NATO expanded itself towards the borders of Russia.²¹³ In September same year, Strache blamed the United States and the NATO for triggering the refugee crisis that has overwhelmed Europe stating that the *“The USA and NATO have destroyed Iraq and Libya with their military intervention, bombs and missiles; provided financial, logistical and military support to the opposition against President Assad in Syria, and thus made possible the destruction, chaos, suffering and radical Islamism (ISIS²¹⁴) in the region”*.²¹⁵

In October 2016, then-presidential candidate of the FPÖ for the Austrian Presidential elections Norbert Hofer stated that *“Austria is not a member of NATO, nor do I want Austria to become a member of NATO. “ and that “we can not take part in a European army in terms of military action, but Austria could take part in tasks that are humanitarian in nature and relate to infrastructure and security”*.²¹⁶ The following month, Strache said that he believed that NATO was a burden for Europe *“which causes conflict and confusion over its (European) identity”*.²¹⁷

In February 2017, Heinz-Christian Strache further campaigned for the establishment of the EU army that would be independent from the US-dominated NATO, stating that it would be good for Europe to *“exit the NATO”* and have its own defensive army, since the alternative would be to *“finance the US military industry under American geostrategic command, whatever its interests”*.²¹⁸

²¹¹ "Zusammen. Für unser Österreich. Regierungsprogramm 2017–2022", pp.51-54, Internet, <https://www.oevp.at/download/Regierungsprogramm.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²¹² "FPÖ in Moskau: Gudenus kritisiert EU, USA, NATO und "Homosexuellenlobby"", Profil, 13.09.2014, Internet, <https://www.profil.at/oesterreich/FPÖe-moskau-gudenus-eu-usa-nato-homosexuellenlobby-377959> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²¹³ "Strache kritisiert NATO und EU", OE 24, 24.03.2015, Internet, <http://www.oe24.at/oesterreich/politik/Strache-kritisiert-NATO-und-EU/181815252> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²¹⁴ Radical terrorist organization, forbidden on the territory of the Russian Federation.

²¹⁵ "Austrian far-right leader blames U.S., NATO for migrant crisis", Reuters, 05.09.2015, Internet, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-austria-strache-idUSKCNOR50HP20150905> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²¹⁶ "TTIP, Nato und Hitler-Geburtshaus: Interview mit FPÖ-Präsidentschaftskandidat Hofer", Sputnik News, 06.10.2016, Internet, <https://de.sputniknews.com/politik/20161006312847534-oesterreich-norbert-hofer/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²¹⁷ "Austrian Freedom Party Leader Reveals Europe's Rescue Plan in Sputnik Exclusive", Sputnik News, 02.11.2016, Internet, <https://sputniknews.com/europe/201611021046992993-austria-freedom-party-europe/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²¹⁸ "Strache: Atomwaffen sollten Teil einer EU-Armee sein", Die Presse, 26.02.2017, Internet, https://diepresse.com/home/innenpolitik/5175411/Strache_Atomwaffen-sollten-Teil-einer-EUArmee-sein Accessed on: 25.05.2018

In addition, he supported the idea that any future European defense army should have nuclear weapons, in order to guarantee European independence and security.²¹⁹

In June 2017, Strache protested against NATO troops movement through Austria for the exercises “Saber-Guardian 17” and “Noble Jump 17” that were held in Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania, questioning how it was possible that “NATO forces are rolling through our country as if they were at home” and that these exercises were neither “*a humanitarian nor a UN mission, it is a provocation of Russia and leads our neutrality ad absurdum*”²²⁰ The same month, Strache again called for the Austrian withdrawal from NATO’s Partnership for Peace Program, stressing that Austria has to remain neutral and not part of any military alliance.²²¹ Two months later, Strache repeated again stance of FPÖ that the party will guarantee Austrian people that they will never again be involved in the armed conflicts, which means clear “no” to NATO membership. In May 2018 Strache once again repeated the commitment of FPÖ against Austria’s NATO membership.²²²

To summarize:

- FPÖ is against Austria’s membership in NATO
- FPÖ will continue to support Austria’s neutrality, although it may consider membership in the indigenous European defensive force
- It remains to be seen how FPÖ will handle the ministry of defense

It is absolutely clear that Austria will remain a neutral country in the near future, even more so with the FPÖ in government. Any increase in the military budget or in the capacity of the armed forces should not be of any concern towards Russia, as the FPÖ clearly states that strong military is needed in order to guarantee sovereignty and neutrality of Austria (especially from US-dominated military alliances), and in case of foreign involvement, the army capacity will be mobilized for peacekeeping or disaster-relief missions, sanctioned by the UN. How will this look in practice remains to be seen, but it is encouraging that the current minister of defense hails from the ranks of FPÖ.

²¹⁹ "Strache für eigene EU-Armee mit Atomwaffen", Kurier, 26.02.2017, Internet, <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/strache-fuer-eigene-eu-armee-mit-atomwaffen/248.673.720> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²²⁰ "FPÖ: Nato-Panzer rollen durch „neutrales“ Österreich", Extrem News, 08.06.2017, Internet, <https://www.extremnews.com/nachrichten/weltgeschehen/b14c164e70718fa> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²²¹ "FPÖ-Chef Strache fordert Ende von NATO-Partnerschaft", Kurier, 09.06.2017, Internet, <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/FPÖe-chef-heinz-christian-strache-fordert-einschraenkung-der-menschenrechte-zur-terrorbekaempfung-und-will-aus-dem-nato-partnerschaftsprogramm-aussteigen/268.854.488> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²²² "Strache hoffte bei FPÖ-Kundgebung auf 2. Regierungsperiode", Salzburger Nachrichten, 01.05.2018, Internet, <https://www.sn.at/politik/innenpolitik/strache-hoffte-bei-FPÖe-kundgebung-auf-2-regierungsperiode-27388678> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

FPÖ's Stance on EU

As stated before, FPÖ was the most vocal critic against Austrian ascension to the EU in 1995. In the present, they continued with anti-EU/pro-reform stances and declarations, as it can be seen from their program and leader statements.

In its political program, FPÖ states that it is committed to the Europe of “*historically evolved people and autochthonous ethnic groups*” and not the “*artificial coexistence of diverse European languages and cultures through forced multiculturalism, globalization and mass immigration*”, while at the same time “*Europe cannot be reduced to the political project of the European Union.*”²²³ Party further states that it is committed to the Europe of self-determined nations and countries with the Europe’s future fate to be shaped by the freedom of its states. FPÖ sees the European integrations not as a federalization process but as the “*fellowship of those states which, geographically, spiritually and culturally, make up Europe and which have committed themselves to the Western values, the heritage of cultures and the traditions of the European nations*”.²²⁴ FPÖ is adamant that while they are committed to the European contract with a list of rights and obligations for the Union and Member States, the constitutional principles of sovereign member states must take absolute precedence over EU laws. FPÖ will maintain Austrian neutrality in the face of non-European powers and non-European military alliances, although it will be committed to a common foreign and security policy of sovereign European nation-states.²²⁵

The FPÖ styles itself as the “*Europe friendly, EU-critical*” party, and rejects that existing EU regulations and mechanisms “*have no alternative*”, stating that the proponents of the EU centralization distinguish two basic types of Europeans – the “*good Europeans*” and the “*bad Europeans*”, who are unwilling to follow the path of further centralisation.²²⁶ In the party’s view, a “*good European*” can only be the one who “*recognizes the cultural pluralism of this continent, seeks to preserve the identities of the nations of Europe, would like to build a prosperous future of coexistence and that it also has in mind a strengthening of democracy in Europe*”.²²⁷ It praises the European Economic Community (EEC) as a model community of the sovereign nation states, while criticizing the Maastricht Treaty of 1993 which created European Union, and which was in their view, the first and significant step towards the “*United States of Europe*”.²²⁸

²²³ "Europa der Vielfalt", Official FPÖ Website, Internet, <https://www.FPÖe.at/es/themen/partieprogramm/europa-der-vielfalt/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²²⁴ Ibid

²²⁵ Ibid

²²⁶ "Einleitung", Official FPÖ Website, Internet, <https://www.FPÖe.at/es/themen/leit Antrag/einleitung/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²²⁷ Ibid

²²⁸ Ibid

The FPÖ states its five principles for the future of the European Union:²²⁹

1. Preservation of national sovereignty, against “*Brussels centralism and escalating EU bureaucracy*”. FPÖ is against centralized federation along the lines of the United States of America, but for the European confederation of sovereign nation states.
2. Preservation of the cultural identity of European nations and resistance towards the mass immigration, islamisation, Turkey’s EU accession and creation of multicultural societies in Europe. FPÖ stands for preservation and development of the European civilizations on the cultural basis of the “*West and the values of Christianity*”.
3. Preservation of nation-state economies, against the “*dictates of multinational corporations and the misconstruction of the euro currency*”. FPÖ strives for a reconstructing of the euro area and the possibility of an independent economic and monetary policy.
4. Preservation of national solidarity system and Austrian social networks, and against the escalating globalization as well as against “*wage dumping*” and “*the dictates of the international financial markets*”.
5. Preservation of traditional family, and against “*gender mania, decadence and hedonism*”, with pro-natality family policy for both Austria and European nations.

For guidelines for the FPÖ members of the parliament in Austria and at the European level the party suggests that “*every effort must be made to reverse the course of centralization in Brussels*” and to “*to shift the legislative power back to national parliaments by amending the EU Treaties*”.²³⁰ The FPÖ further argues for halving of the EU budget as well as Austrian EU contributions, while at the same time calls for the full stop of EU integrations towards the “*geographically, culturally, religiously and ethnically non-European regions of Asia and Africa*”.²³¹ Moreover, the FPÖ has an issue with the Schengen treaty, as in its view it hurts the Austrians with the increase of organized crime, trafficking and crime tourism which started to thrive with the lack of control in the internal borders of the EU.²³²

The other issues FPÖ has with the EU are the following:²³³

1. FPÖ states that the Austrian participation in the ESM (“European Stability Mechanism”) and EFSF (“European Financial Stability Facility”) is an unnecessary strain on Austria’s budget, and that there should be referendum on Austria’s further membership.

²²⁹ “Grundsätzliche Positionen”, Official FPÖ Website, Internet, <https://www.FPÖe.at/es/themen/leit Antrag/grundsatzliche-positionen/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²³⁰ “Antrag”, Official FPÖ Website, Internet, <https://www.FPÖe.at/es/themen/leit Antrag/antrag/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²³¹ Ibid

²³² Ibid

²³³ Ibid

2. FPÖ is against data-gathering “*monitoring instruments*” such as SWIFT agreement, Passenger data storage, INDECT etc., which they see as espionage measures by foreign states, and suggest dismantling of them, which would also signal independence of Europe from “*Brussels’ centralism and US hegemony*”

3. FPÖ is strongly against regulations of “*curvature of the cucumber, standardized tractor seat, regulating the flow rate of shower heads and the suction power of vacuum cleaners*” which are proclaimed by the EU, for which FPÖ believes that they have to be decided at the regional and national levels.

4. FPÖ argues for greater priority for the domestic workers, as the freedom of movement and work inside the EU brings “*commuters from the East*” and thus “*enormous displacement*” of Austrian workers. Therefore, these kinds of EU laws have to be re-negotiated.

5. FPÖ believes that a complete break-up of the Eurozone and a return to national currencies could be considered, as the current system divides the Europe into “*creditors and debtors*”, as the nations of Europe are not equal economic-wise.

6. FPÖ sees potential exit from the EU not “*as a taboo, but an ‘ultima ratio’*”, in the sense of “*protecting the Republic of Austria and its autochthonous population*” against the further centralization of the EU.

In their 2011 political party program, FPÖ clarifies again its position towards the support of Europe of free nations and self-determined countries, rejection of diversification of European nations and languages through forced multiculturalism, globalization and mass immigrations.²³⁴ The sovereignty of nation-states has to take absolute precedence over EU laws, and while the party is in support of common foreign and security policy of Europe, it must be free of influence from non-European powers and non-European dominated military alliances.²³⁵

In the political brochure titled “INFO – KOMPAKT DIE FREIHEITLICHE PARTEI ÖSTERREICHS (FPÖ)” from 2016, FPÖ confirms its position that it stands for a Europe as a federation of self-determined nations and states, formed in the Western Judeo-Christian traditions, in addition to the reduction of Austrian EU contributions, no EU accession for the Turkey, rapid reconstruction of the Eurozone, etc.²³⁶

In their political program for Austrian Parliament Elections in 2017, under the chapter “Our identity”, the FPÖ states that it supports Europe as an alliance of self-determined nations and fatherlands, which will stand against the centralized and bureaucratic EU of today.²³⁷ The FPÖ

²³⁴ "Parteiprogramm der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs (FPÖ)", Official FP Website, p.17, Internet, <https://www.FPÖe.at/es/themen/parteiprogramm/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²³⁵ Ibid

²³⁶ INFO – KOMPAKT DIE FREIHEITLICHE PARTEI ÖSTERREICHS (FPÖ)", Official FPÖ Website, p.36, Internet, <https://www.FPÖe.at/themen/info-kompakt/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²³⁷ "Freiheitliches Wahlprogramm zur Nationalratswahl 2017 - FPÖ", Official FPÖ Website, p. 27, Internet, https://www.FPÖe.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Wahlprogramm_8_9_low.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

repeats that the goal of European integration must be a Community of those states that are “geographically, mentally and culturally” part of the Europe and Western values, and it calls for reorganization and reformation of the European Union.²³⁸ Moreover, FPÖ is stating again that it is against “uncontrolled mass immigration and Turkey’s EU membership”, while in addition advocates for exit from ESM-EFSF in order to protect Austrian tax payers.²³⁹

In Austrian governmental program for 2017-2022, created jointly with its coalition partner ÖVP, some of the FPÖ influences are visible in the chapters dedicated to the EU, such as “less but more efficient” EU, reduction of EU bureaucracy, comprehensive European debate on the reform and future of the EU, no approval for EU accession of Turkey, Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2018, etc.²⁴⁰ Nevertheless, there are still strong pro-EU statements in the program, which is not surprising given that FPÖ is coalition partner of pro-EU ÖVP only since December 2017.²⁴¹

Given the extensively laid-out stances of FPÖ towards the EU, it will be enough just to see few recent statements of the party leadership, in order to recognize that FPÖ is still following the course they laid out in their political program, EU-wise.

Commenting on the Commission Regulation (EU) 2017/2158 of 20 November 2017, popularly known as the “French Fry Regulation”, FPÖ once again stated that this reveals the “EU regulatory nonsense” and that “the EU should focus on the essential core tasks and decisions, while everything else should be left to the nation states.”^{242,243} In May 2018, Marie Le Pen, leader of the French Front National stated that she is gathering likely-minded EU-critical political parties from around the Europe for her alliance called “Europe of Nations and Freedom - *Europe des nations et des libertés*” (among which are the FPÖ and Italian League National), in order to achieve good results for the upcoming European Parliament elections.²⁴⁴ Joint statement by the gathered parties was released, which said that “the huge victories that have recently won in Austria or Italy (the Free Party of Austria) The FPÖ and the League (the MENL members) are in fact a success for all who have committed themselves to defending a real Europe, our common civilization, against the European Union that has usurped her name and her principles.”²⁴⁵ The same month, Strache

²³⁸ "Freiheitliches Wahlprogramm zur Nationalratswahl 2017 - FPÖ", Official FPÖ Website, p. 27, Internet, https://www.FPÖe.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Wahlprogramm_8_9_low.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²³⁹ Ibid

²⁴⁰ "Zusammen. Für unser Österreich. Regierungsprogramm 2017–2022", p.136, Internet, <https://www.oevp.at/download/Regierungsprogramm.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁴¹ Ibid, p. 22

²⁴² "FPÖ-Steger/Wurm: „Pommes frites-Verordnung offenbart erneut Regulierungswahn der EU", APA-OTS, 23.02.2018, Internet, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20180412_OTS0163/FPÖe-stegerwurm-pommes-frites-verordnung-offenbart-erneut-regulierungswahn-der-eu Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁴³ "Commission Regulation (EU) 2017/2158 of 20 November 2017 establishing mitigation measures and benchmark levels for the reduction of the presence of acrylamide in food (Text with EEA relevance.)", Eur-Lex, Internet, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2017/2158/oj> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁴⁴ "Le Pen und europäische Verbündete laufen sich für Europawahlen warm", Watson, 01.05.2018, Internet, <https://www.watson.ch/l281176340> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁴⁵ "Vůdci protiimigračních stran tepali EU. Na sraz do Nice přijel i Okamura", Info, 01.05.2018, Internet, <https://www.info.cz/evropska-unie/vudci-protiimigracnich-stran-tepali-eu-na-sraz-do-nice-prijel-i-okamura-29237.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

criticized the EU in failing to deal with the “*big problem (the migration crisis), and that citizens have loss of confidence in the EU because of its inefficiency.*”²⁴⁶ Besides criticizing the EU for not being close to the European citizens, Strache also compared EU Commissioners with “*Soviet commissioners*”, and that the EU is a “*taboo that you have to break,*” and “*an abolished construct*”.²⁴⁷

It can be concluded that the:

- FPÖ is anti-federalist, Eurosceptic, pro-“Europe of nation states” party
- It will continue to be a staunch anti-EU political force in Austria in the future
- It remains to be seen how much influence it will have on EU policies of Austrian coalition government

The anti-EU federalization orientation of the FPÖ is more than clear, and it would be quite surprising if the party changes its stance anytime in the future. Therefore, it can be expected that the FPÖ will maintain its current rhetoric, and seek to profit on general discontent from the EU from the population in the form of new voters. As its support already risen to more than which they won on last parliament elections, FPÖ will continue with the anti-EU stances and policies while seeking alliance with emerging likely-minded political options in Europe (such as Northern League) and already well-established Eurosceptic parties. Additionally, the time will play a crucial factor in observation of FPÖ’s influence on the Austrian government, and whether they will be able to radicalize the stances of the EU-friendly ÖVP in the future.

The FPÖ is certainly a party with a long history of political successes and failures. It can be argued that it is currently experiencing its highest moment, as the party gave not only the vice chancellor to the current government of Austria, but it managed to secure the most important ministries. Russia is clearly having a major ally in Europe within FPÖ, and it should do its best to maintain cordial relationships with the party and the FPÖ ministers within Austrian government. As said before, FPÖ can become a role-model for any future potential coalition government that is including Russian-friendly political options. In addition, this will be a perfect test to see if such kind of party on this position can actually influence policies of a country hard enough, that for example, the EU member state starts to be very vocal and supportive towards the idea of lifting the sanctions imposed towards the Russia. In addition, once the normal economic relations resume between the EU and Russia, governments that had supportive stance towards the Russian Federation should have preferential treatment for investments and business ventures, in order to show that countries can gain a lot from cooperation with Russia, instead of economic and political confrontation.

²⁴⁶“Strache: “Ich kümmere mich um Österreich””, OE 24, 09.05.2018, Internet, <http://www.oe24.at/oesterreich/politik/Strache-Ich-kuemmere-mich-um-Oesterreich/332889896> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁴⁷ “So spottete Strache über EU-Ratsvorsitz”, Oberösterreichische Nachrichten, 09.05.2018, Internet, <http://www.nachrichten.at/nachrichten/politik/innenpolitik/So-spottete-Strache-ueber-EU-Ratsvorsitz;art385,2892222> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

2.3. Conservative People's Party of Estonia (Estonia)

A relatively new party on the Estonian political scene, Conservative People's Party of Estonia (*Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond*) or EKRE is actually an extension of Estonian conservative and right-wing ideology, since the party was created by a merger of previous conservative, agrarian and right-wing parties and movements that were present on the Estonian political scene since early 1990s. Although described as nationalistic, radical right-wing party, EKRE is not un-democratic per its political program, nor has it a militant wing as some right-wing parties of Eastern and Central Europe have.^{248,249,250}

In 2012, Estonian Nationalist Movement merged with the Estonian People's Union, and formed the Conservative People's Party of Estonia. The chairman of the party became Margo Miljand, while honorary chairman was Arnold Ruutel, president of Estonia from 2001 to 2006, and the last Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic.^{251,252} The Estonian People's Union itself was established also as a merger of four smaller agrarian and rural parties in 2000, winning the 13% of the vote in 2003 elections.²⁵³ It was a part of two government coalitions that ruled Estonia from 2003 to 2007, but due to the political scandals of the party leader Villu Reiljan (then Minister of Environment) and some other ministers that were members of this party, it lost many supporters by 2007 elections, winning only 6% of the vote.²⁵⁴

After the party split in spring 2010 and disastrous 2011 election results which saw only 2% of votes in favor of the Estonian People's Union, a decision to form a new party was made, and thus EKRE was created.²⁵⁵ EKRE also includes members from parties that preceded the People's Union

²⁴⁸ Wierenga Louis, "RUSSIANS, REFUGEES AND EUROPEANS: WHAT SHAPES THE DISCOURSE OF THE CONSERVATIVE PEOPLE'S PARTY OF ESTONIA?", Uptake, Working Paper No. 6/2017, p. 4-6, Internet, http://www.uptake.ut.ee/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/06_wierenga.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁴⁹ Käsper Kari "The danger posed by the far right in Estonian Parliament", Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 04.06.2015, Internet, <https://news.err.ee/116002/kari-kasper-the-danger-posed-by-the-far-right-in-estonian-parliament> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁵⁰ Mudde Cass, "The Study of Populist Radical Right Parties: Towards a Fourth Wave", Center for Research on Extremism, NO. 1 / 2016, p.10, Internet, <https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/publications/c-rex-working-paper-series/Cas%20Mudde:%20The%20Study%20of%20Populist%20Radical%20Right%20Parties.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁵¹ Sulbi Raul, "Rahvaliid muutub Eesti Konservatiivseks Rahvaerakonnaks", Postimees, 24.03.2014, Internet, <https://www.postimees.ee/785788/rahvaliid-muutub-estei-konservatiivseks-rahvaerakonnaks> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁵² Ed. Minkenberg Michael, "Transforming the transformation – The Eastern European radical right in the political process", Routledge, New York, 2015, pp. 137-155, Internet, https://books.google.ru/books?id=DssqBwAAQBAJ&pg=PT139&lpg=PT139&dq=Mart+Helme+EU&source=bl&ots=O2NTdWQcTz&sig=SDByfATiOSzR5SfWnEM_9YgImBs&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewj8iYPN1aDaAhUEFCwKHX6fBWM4ChDoAQg4MAU#v=onepage&q=Mart%20Helme%20EU&f=false Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁵³ Saarts Tõnis, "Persistence and decline of political parties: the case of Estonia", East European Politics Vol. 31, No. 2, 208–228, 2015, p. 214, Internet, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21599165.2015.1036035?journalCode=fjcs21> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁵⁴ Ibid

²⁵⁵ Ibid

such as The Estonian Country People's Party (founded in 1994), Estonian Rural Union (founded in 1917, re-founded in 1991), Estonian Pensioners' and Families' Party (founded in 1991) and Farmers' Assembly (founded in 1921, re-founded in 1992).²⁵⁶ EKRE tried to capitalize on popular resentment of "poor Estonian taxpayer" having to bail-out wealthier Eurozone members in Southern Europe through the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), in addition to opposing the same-sex marriages, and the signing of the new border treaty with Russia.²⁵⁷

EKRE states its goal as "securing Estonia's independence and sovereignty in both internal and external policy", with the rule of laws "based on the democracy and the separation of powers, in which the law applies equally to all the people" is set as the political base of the party.²⁵⁸ In addition, EKRE lists three core values, which are:^{259, 260}

1. endurance of the Estonian values, based on support for the language, culture, education, family, traditions and national economy;
2. participation society of equal opportunities, where "open, honest and democratic governance" allows all citizens to reach fulfillment and get involved in politics;
3. socially and regionally balanced development and wellbeing that are guaranteed by a "fair and strong state" by implementing caring and knowledge-based policies and by developing an ecologically sustainable living environment.;

In their 2015 Riigikogu (national parliament of Estonia) program, EKRE declares that their goal is to preserve Estonians, the development of the state and the real increase of welfare for its citizens, while the Estonian state must be "caring, prosperous, respectful of traditions and safe."²⁶¹ Besides economic and social program that favors the ordinary citizen, EKRE stands for stopping the mass migration, forbidding sale of land to the foreigners, increasing the military forces of Estonia, militarizing the border with Russia and closing of the information channels that spread "anti-Estonian propaganda".²⁶²

In March 2012, EKRE adopted the so-called "Conservative Manifesto" (*Konservatiivne Manifest*). In the first paragraph, EKRE clearly states that "*in the re-independent Estonia, the*

²⁵⁶ Conservative People's Party of Estonia Faction, Parliament of Estonia, Internet, <https://www.riigikogu.ee/en/parliament-of-estonia/factions/conservative-peoples-party-estonia-faction/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁵⁷ Ibid

²⁵⁸ Konservatiivne Programm, Official website of EKRE, Internet, <https://www.ekre.ee/konservatiivne-programm/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁵⁹ Ibid

²⁶⁰ Conservative People's Party of Estonia Faction, Parliament of Estonia, Internet, <https://www.riigikogu.ee/en/parliament-of-estonia/factions/conservative-peoples-party-estonia-faction/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁶¹ Riigikogu 2015, Official website of EKRE, Internet, <https://www.ekre.ee/riigikogu-2015/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁶² Ibid

*survival of the Estonian people has been under greater pressure than in the past decades.*²⁶³ Because of the lack of vision from the previous governments, and in EKRE's view, disastrous economic and social policies, *“there is a real danger that there is no sensible future for any segment of society - workers, entrepreneurs, intellectuals, rural people, fellow citizens, children-adolescents and the elderly”*.²⁶⁴ EKRE believes that such future “must and will be avoided” by joint efforts of responsible political forces and the people, and that the Estonian Conservative People's Party “as a national progressive party” wants to actively contribute to the *“emergence of new positive developments that can make life better everywhere in Estonia”*²⁶⁵ EKRE concludes this manifesto with the rallying cry – *“People first!”*.²⁶⁶

EKRE cooperate with other nationalistic political parties in the Baltics, which is visible in its adoption of so-called “Bauska Declaration” in August 2013. Signed jointly by the EKRE, Nationalist Union (Tautininkų Sąjunga) from Lithuania and National Alliance “All For Latvia!” (Nacionālā apvienība Visu Latvijai!), Bauska Declaration states that *“we (signatory parties) affirm the supremacy of our national sovereignty over the supranational institutions and we stand against any attempt to absorb our independent nation states by any kind of European Super State.”*²⁶⁷ In addition, the signatory parties are fully against any immigration and immigration policies of Western Europe, and that they hold values of family and patriotism to be fundamental. They are opposed to the *“cultural Marxism, post-modernistic multiculturalism and destructive liberalism”*.²⁶⁸ Further into declaration, the parties jointly state their opposition to the foreign financial influence in their respective countries, *“Russian imperialistic policies”* – which are a threat to their *“national languages, borders and glory of our heroes (that) are sacred and cannot be subjects to negotiation”*, as well as *“any violation of our sovereignty and any intrusion to our internal affairs”*.²⁶⁹

In addition to demanding from Russia to pay up for what they see as *“compensations for occupation by Soviet communist regime”*, parties state that they *“believe...that a fight against external dangers and global challenges would be in vain until our national pride, spiritual unity and faith into ourselves have been restored”* and that they will *“heed the call of nationalism, convey its positive meaning, and spread it within our living nations, within national education and creative culture, in particular.”*²⁷⁰ Based on the language used and messages that were disseminated with this declaration, nationalistic, populist and right-wing nature of EKRE is more than visible, along with the open hostility towards both EU and Russia.

In 2018, EKRE organized a torchlight procession for Estonia's Independence Day for the fifth time in a row, an event which is seen as gathering for ultra-nationalists and Nazi

²⁶³ Konservatiivne Manifest, Official website of EKRE, Internet, <https://ekre.ee/konservatiivne-manifest/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁶⁴ Ibid

²⁶⁵ Ibid

²⁶⁶ Ibid

²⁶⁷ Bauska Deklaratsioon, Official Website of EKRE, Internet, <https://www.ekre.ee/bauska-deklaratsioon/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁶⁸ Ibid

²⁶⁹ Ibid

²⁷⁰ Bauska Deklaratsioon, Official Website of EKRE, Internet, <https://www.ekre.ee/bauska-deklaratsioon/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

sympatisizers.^{271,272} In addition, EKRE's youth organization, Blue Awakening (*Sinine Äratus*), actively participates in such events. Founded and lead by Ruuben Kaalep, Tartu city councilor and EKRE board member, Blue Awakening is not only concerned with question of Estonian nationalism, but it also tries to reach out to other nationalist movements in Europe thus establishing the idea of "ethnofuturism" – a nationalist concept for a Europe which is based on identity and roots.²⁷³ EKRE and Blue Awakening follow the trend of re-branded and new nationalist parties, and are extremely tech savvy – EKRE with its youth wing leads all Estonian parties in Facebook "likes", creating a large gap between them and other Estonian political options.²⁷⁴ In June 2016, the European Young Conservatives (EYC), a group of youth wings of Europe's conservative and center-right political parties, expelled Blue Awakening from their organization.²⁷⁵ The Blue Awakening demanded from EYC to expel the youth wing of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), to which EYC responded that they are "*the youth organization of the Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe, which means that (our) primary goal is to propagare the free market and classical liberal values in Europe... but we are not a nationalist organization and we do not aim to preserve Europe's ethnic identity*".²⁷⁶

The three EKRE members that are the most often present in the media with statements, are the Mart Helme, Jaak Madison, and Mart Helme's son, Martin Helme.

Mart Helme (born in 1949, Pärnu) comes from the Estonian Legion veteran family (a military unit within the Combat Support Forces of the *Waffen SS-Verfügungstruppe*)²⁷⁷, as stated on the official website of the EKRE. From 1995 to 1999, he was Estonia's ambassador to Russia, taking part in the negotiation of the border deal between two countries. Currently, he is EKRE's chairman (re-elected in April 2018) and vice chairman of the Riigikogu Defense Committee.^{278,279}

Jaak Madison (born in 1991, Järvamaa), is a younger-generation EKRE politician, currently holding a posts in parliament of Estonia as a Vice Chairman of the European Union Affairs

²⁷¹ "Gallery: EKRE holds torchlight procession dedicated to Independence Day", Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 24.02.2018, Internet, <https://news.err.ee/685734/gallery-ekre-holds-torchlight-procession-dedicated-to-independence-day> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁷² Zuroff Efraim, "An alarm bell in Estonia", The Jerusalem Post, 08.03.2015, Internet, <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/An-alarm-bell-in-Estonia-393319> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁷³ Wierenga Louis, "Blue Awakening: The next generation of Estonian nationalists", Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 15.01.2018, Internet, <https://news.err.ee/654174/blue-awakening-the-next-generation-of-estonian-nationalists> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁷⁴ Ibid

²⁷⁵ "EKRE's youth organization thrown out of European Young Conservatives", Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 19.06.2017, Internet, <https://news.err.ee/602871/ekre-s-youth-organization-thrown-out-of-european-young-conservatives> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁷⁶ Ibid

²⁷⁷ "Estonia keeps anti-fascists away from SS veterans' meeting", RT News, 30.07.2011, Internet, <https://www.rt.com/news/ss-division-celebration-activists/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁷⁸ Biography of Mart Helme, Official website of EKRE, Internet, <https://ekre.ee/esimees/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁷⁹ Михайлов Сергей, "Март Хельме переизбран председателем EKRE", Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 22.04.2018, Internet, <https://rus.err.ee/824456/mart-helme-pereizbran-predsedatelem-ekre> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

Committee and as a vice-chairman in the EKRE.^{280,281} In 2015, he got into spotlight with the scandal around his defense of Nazi economic policies, written in his blog post in 2012, which caused Social Democratic Party to cancel the talks about government coalition with EKRE after parliament elections.^{282, 283}

Martin Helme (born in 1976, Tallinn), is a son of Mart Helme, vice-chairman of the EKRE and member of Estonian parliament. He came into the spotlights of the media in 2013, where he proposed the immigration policy along the rule – “if you are black – go back”, while stating that he wishes for Estonia to be “a white country”²⁸⁴

Being a young political party, EKRE participated in only one parliament election, in 2015. They won 8.1% of votes, earning them 7 out of 101 places in Estonian parliament.²⁸⁵ EKRE is currently not present in the EU parliament, although it is considering to participate in the elections in 2019 (already holding talks with partner parties from Finland, Austria, Poland and Hungary), with the potential candidates being Mart Helme, Riigikogu MP Henn Põlluaas and Jaak Madison.²⁸⁶ The support for EKRE is on the rise in 2018, reaching 18.4% in January, while experienced drop of 3% of support among the Estonian voters in May (**Table 1**).^{287,288}

²⁸⁰ Biography of Jaak Madison, Official website of EKRE, Internet, <https://ekre.ee/team/jaak-madison/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁸¹ Михайлов Сергей, “Март Хельме переизбран председателем EKRE”, Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 22.04.2018, Internet, <https://rus.err.ee/824456/mart-helme-pereizbran-predsedatelem-ekre> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁸² “Sotsiaalmeedias levib veel üks EKRE poliitiku vastakaid arvamusi tekitav postitus”, Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 03.03.2015, Internet, <https://www.err.ee/530768/sotsiaalmeedias-levib-veel-uks-ekre-poliitiku-vastakaid-arvamusi-tekitav-postitus> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁸³ “Mikser välistas valitsuskoostöö EKRE-ga”, Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 03.03.2015, Internet, <https://www.err.ee/530738/mikser-valistas-valitsuskoostoo-ekre-ga> Accessed on: 25.05.2018: 25.05.2018:

²⁸⁴ Teder Merike, “Martin Helme soovitus immigratsioonipoliitikaks: kui on must, näita ust”, Postimees, 29.05.2013, Internet, <https://www.postimees.ee/1252028/martin-helme-soovitus-immigratsioonipoliitikaks-kui-on-must-naita-ust> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁸⁵ Voting results of the 2015 Estonian Parliament Elections, Vabariigi Valimiskomisjon, Internet, <http://rk2015.vvk.ee/voting-results.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁸⁶ 2019 European elections: Parties, candidates biding their time, Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 16.03.2018, Internet, <https://news.err.ee/690089/2019-european-elections-parties-candidates-biding-their-time> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁸⁷ "Poll: Estonian Reform Party's support highest in five years", Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 28.01.2018, Internet, <https://news.err.ee/677698/poll-estonian-reform-party-s-support-highest-in-five-years> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁸⁸ "Coalition Government boosted by resurgence in Social Democrats' support", Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 18.05.2018, Internet, <https://news.err.ee/832519/coalition-government-boosted-by-resurgence-in-social-democrats-support> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

EKRE's stance on Russia

EKRE owns much of its popularity to the strong anti-Russian rhetoric that was adopted by its leadership after the 2014 crisis in Ukraine, and therefore it can be seen as staunch anti-Russian political party (or at least anti-Russian minority in Estonia).²⁸⁹ This can be viewed in both their political programs and in statements of their leadership. In their political program for 2015 parliament elections, EKRE advocated for creating a militarized border with Russia, as well as for re-negotiation of Estonia-Russia border treaty.²⁹⁰ In addition, EKRE is a proponent of creating a wall that will physically divide Estonian border with Russia.²⁹¹

In their “Eurovision platform”, EKRE strongly expressed its disapproval with the visa-free regime with Russia, which in its view, will lead to “*massive Slavic migration wave that will bring Estonia back to 1986*”, and “*allow the Kremlin to aggressively ‘protect’ its people*” in Estonia.²⁹² In addition, EKRE states that the membership in the EU does not change Estonia’s geopolitical reality and that Estonia needs to seek additional guarantees of its security among other EU Member States, while at the same time EKRE will work on preventing Estonia to have any “Moscow-friendly” MEP in the European Parliament, in order to protect “Estonian national interests”.²⁹³

In their official political program, EKRE states that in relations with Russia it emphasizes 1920 Tartu Peace Treaty as a basis for Estonian-Russian relations. EKRE here also repeats the desire to cancel current border treaty with Russia and re-negotiate a new one. In addition, EKRE wishes to ban all “propaganda against Estonian state, its people, and history”, while demanding from Russia reparation for “All the occupation losses, including losses of victims and their families of forced labor under communist repression”.²⁹⁴ In their political pamphlet “Conservative Vision” that envisions Estonia in 2030, EKRE sees Estonia having a “*constructive communication*” with Russia, with “*problems and injustices arising from history*” being “rehabilitated” by it.²⁹⁵

EKRE party leadership is consisted with the anti-Russian messages that are disseminated by their political programs and pamphlets. A year before EKRE’s foundation in 2011, its future leader Mart Helme was advocating for increased trade with Russia, stating that current Estonian export volume to it was around 15%, but that Russia’s “imperial and neo-imperial policies” actually

²⁸⁹ Lanko D., “ESTONIAN POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE MID-2010S”, Saint-Petersburg State University, Baltic region. 2015. № 2 (24). p. 51., Internet, https://journals.kantiana.ru/upload/iblock/c2e/Lanko_50-57.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁹⁰ Riigikogu 2015, Official Website of EKRE, Internet, <https://www.ekre.ee/riigikogu-2015/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁹¹ Eesti Konservatiivse Rahvaerakonna fraktsioon, Parliament of Estonia, Internet, <https://www.riigikogu.ee/riigikogu/fraktsioonid/eesti-konservatiivse-rahvaerakonna-fraktsioon/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁹² Eurovalimiste Platvorm, Official Website of EKRE, Internet, <https://ekre.ee/eurovalimiste-platvorm/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁹³ Ibid

²⁹⁴ EKRE political program (EKRE Programm – Konservatiivne Programm), Official Website of EKRE, p. 15 Internet, <https://ekre.ee/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/EKRE-PROGRAMM-KONSERVATIIVNE-PROGRAMM.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁹⁵ Konservatiivne Visioon, Official Website of EKRE, Internet, <https://ekre.ee/konservatiivne-visioon/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

prevented the increase of trade between two countries.²⁹⁶ In November 2015 EKRE accused Center Party and Socialist Party that they are advancing Russian interests in Estonia.²⁹⁷ In April 2016, Mart Helme stated that having good relations with Russia is the biggest guarantee of Estonian security, although Russia first had to recognize Estonia under the Tartu Peace Treaty, and to recognize that it held Estonia under “50 years of occupation”.²⁹⁸ Furthermore, “Russia needs to apologize and admit that it conducted crime against humanity towards Estonian people”.²⁹⁹

In May 2017, Helme was highly critical of the decision to include Russian songs at the yearly Music Festival in Tallin, as it would cause “divide in the Estonian society”.³⁰⁰ In the same month, EKRE sent a bill to the country's parliament proposing that immigrants from non-EU countries (mainly, Russia) and 'non-citizens' (mainly country's ethnic Russian and Russian-speaking residents) be stripped of the right to vote in upcoming local elections.³⁰¹ Defending this bill, Mart Helme said that “voting rights for non-EU immigrants and 'non-citizens' served to worsen the effectiveness of local government” as “non-citizens supposedly vote for candidates that are 'hostile to the country's indigenous population’”.³⁰²

In June same year, EKRE leader stated that “Our (Estonian) destiny is Russia” and that future Estonian president has to keep close eye to both developments in the EU and in the Russia.³⁰³ Following month, Helme stated that Estonia must support the United States and not the EU concerning Russia sanctions policy, as in his opinion, Estonian government decision to support the EU on sanctions policy against Russia damages the country's relations with Estonia's primary guarantor of security, the United States.³⁰⁴

²⁹⁶ Oja Anne, “Helme: Venemaa osa Eesti ekspordist võiks olla 15%”, Äripäev, 13.12.2011, Internet, <https://www.aripaev.ee/uudised/2011/12/13/helme-venemaa-osa-eesti-ekspordist-voiks-olla-15> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁹⁷ “Martin Helme: Venemaa huve viib Eestis ellu sotsiaaldemokraadid”, Õhtuleht, 19.11.2015, Internet, <https://televaab.ohhtuleht.ee/704457/martin-helme-venemaa-huve-viib-eestis-ellu-sotsiaaldemokraadid> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁹⁸ Koorits Vahur, “Mart Helme: Venemaaga normaalsete suhete omamine on meie julgeoleku kõige suurem garantii”, DELFI, 11.04.2016, Internet, <http://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/eesti/mart-helme-venemaaga-normaalsete-suhete-omamine-on-meie-julgeoleku-koige-suurem-garantii?id=74204495> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

²⁹⁹ Koorits Vahur, “Mart Helme: Venemaaga normaalsete suhete omamine on meie julgeoleku kõige suurem garantii”, DELFI, 11.04.2016, Internet, <http://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/eesti/mart-helme-venemaaga-normaalsete-suhete-omamine-on-meie-julgeoleku-koige-suurem-garantii?id=74204495> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁰⁰ Kadi Raal Toimetaja, “Martin Helme riigikogu infotunnis: vene keel laulupeol on meie identideedi teadlik ja süstemaatiline lammutamine”, DELFI, 31.05.2017, Internet, <http://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/eesti/martin-helme-riigikogu-infotunnis-vene-keel-laulupeol-on-meie-identideedi-teadlik-ja-sustemaatiline-lammutamine?id=78406236> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁰¹ “Apartheid, Estonian-Style: Lawmakers Propose Stripping Russians of Right to Vote”, Sputnik News, 22.05.2017, Internet, <https://sputniknews.com/europe/201705221053858214-estonia-local-elections-initiative/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁰² Ibid

³⁰³ “Mart Helme: meie saatus on Venemaa”, 07.06.2016, Eesti Rahvusringhääling, Internet, <https://www.err.ee/561228/mart-helme-meie-saatus-on-venemaa> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁰⁴ “EKRE chairman: Estonia must support US on sanctions against Russia”, 28.07.2017, Eesti Rahvusringhääling, Internet, <https://news.err.ee/609930/ekre-chairman-estonia-must-support-us-on-sanctions-against-russia> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

In September 2017, Mart Helme expressed his discontent at the established Estonian-Russian border agreement and perceived bilingual policy of Estonian government.³⁰⁵ The same month, EKRE leader stressed that Russian language is wide-spread in Estonia, and that “It is perfectly obvious that the knowledge of Estonian is an inevitable precondition for the well-being of Estonia in terms of both the labor market and social life,”³⁰⁶ In November 2017, Helme stated that Russia was preparing grounds for major cyber-warfare operation against Estonia, in the case of conventional war against Baltics, Scandinavia and Poland.³⁰⁷

In January 2018, EKRE leader accused Minister of Justice, Urmas Reinsalu, of breaching constitution by allowing the use of Russian language in courts for dealing with non-constitutional court process, although Estonian constitution fully allows that.³⁰⁸ For their pre-election campaign, among other things, EKRE stated in the campaign video that it is fighting against “Russification” of Estonia.³⁰⁹ Jaak Madison, in an open letter in March 2018, announced that he plans to visit Crimea after a fund-raising campaign, in order to help out the Estonian community of 600 people, who are living there. Although he referred to Crimea as an occupied territory, he was accused of being a “useful idiot” for the Russians by other political forces in Estonia.^{310, 311, 312} The same month, Jaak Madison called for respecting the decision of those EU countries that did not expelled Russian diplomats after pressure from UK government, as it is a sovereign right for each country to decide its own course of action.³¹³

³⁰⁵ Helme Mart, “Mart Helme: Eesti poliitika suur vastasseis”, Postimees, 07.09.2017, Internet, <https://arvamus.postimees.ee/4235949/mart-helme-eesti-poliitika-suur-vastasseis> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁰⁶ Punamäe Sander “Martin Helme: Keskerakond ja sotsid seisavad vene keele eest omakasu”, Postimees, 08.09.2017, Internet, <https://poliitika.postimees.ee/4237191/martin-helme-keskerakond-ja-sotsid-seisavad-vene-keele-eest-omakasu-nimele> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁰⁷ Mart Helme FSB agendi kinnipidamisest: Venemaa tegeleb Eestiga väga intensiivselt, Uued Uudised, 07.11.2017, Internet, <http://uueduudised.ee/uudis/eesti/mart-helme-fsb-agendi-kinnipidamisest-venelased-tegelevad-eestiga-vaaga-intensiivselt/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁰⁸ Kristjan Lukk, “Kas Urmas Reinsalu lubas kohtutes kuulutada asjaajamiskeeleks vene keele?”, Eesti Päevaleht, 23.01.2018, Internet, <http://epl.delfi.ee/news/faktikontroll/faktikontroll-kas-urmas-reinsalu-lubas-kohtutes-kuulutada-asjaajamiskeeleks-vene-keele?id=80879685> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁰⁹ Середенко Сергей, “Предвыборная гонка по-эстонски: как это было”, Rubaltic, 13.10.2017, Internet, <https://www.rubaltic.ru/article/politika-i-obshchestvo/13102017-predvybornaya-gonka-po-estonski-kak-eto-bylo/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³¹⁰ Madison Jaak, “Jaak Madison: meie kohus on Krimmi eestlastele appi minna”, Postimees, 27.03.2018, Internet, <https://arvamus.postimees.ee/4452155/jaak-madison-meie-kohus-on-krimmi-eestlastele-appi-minna> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³¹¹ “Andres Herkel: Jaak Madison, ära sõida Krimmi! Sa jätad mulje, et toetad Venemaa okupatsiooni”, DELFI, 27.03.2018, Internet, <http://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/eesti/andres-herkel-jaak-madison-ara-soida-krimmi-sa-jatad-mulje-et-toetad-venemaa-okupatsiooni?id=81573655> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³¹² Vasli Toimetaja Karoliina, “Marko Mihkelson: Jaak Madisoni idee külastada Krimmi poolsaart on täiesti arusaamatu”, DELFI, 09.03.2018, Internet, <http://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/eesti/marko-mihkelson-jaak-madisoni-idee-kulastada-krimmi-poolsaart-on-taiesti-arusaamatu?id=81383005> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³¹³ “EKRE поддержала право стран ЕС не высылать российских дипломатов”, Sputnik News, 27.03.2018, Internet, <https://ru.sputnik-news.ee/politics/20180327/9935102/ekre-podderzhala-pravo-eu-vysylka-russia-diplomat.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

Based on the party programs and previous statements, it can be concluded that:

- EKRE sees Russia as a threat to Estonian nation and its sovereignty
- EKRE advocates irredentist policies towards Russia
- the party would be very strict in its policies towards Russian-speaking minority, possibly further deteriorating their status inside the Estonia

As expected from far-right Estonian party, EKRE has, if not openly hostile stance towards Russia, then unrealistic expectations of what Russia has to do in order for EKRE to maintain good relations with her. In addition, EKRE's leader Mart Helme is the most vocal in his anti-Russian rhetoric. EKRE will most likely seek support in Europe by other anti-Russian oriented parties, and therefore, if attaining power, it will prove as a major challenge for Russia to deal with, especially given the vulnerable state of Russian minority in Estonia.

EKRE's Stance on NATO

EKRE is a party that is defending what they see as "Estonian national interests" while to a degree, having a negative stance towards full-time presence of major NATO forces that are not under direct command of Estonian military leadership. In their "Conservative vision from Estonia" political pamphlet, EKRE is adamant that in 2030 Estonia will still be active member of NATO, basing its security on this membership, along with the "*compulsory military service, total security and international cooperation*".³¹⁴ This is also repeated in their official 2015 Party Program, as well as EKRE's disagreement of participation of Estonian military forces in EU rapid response force (EU battalions), "*due to the scarcity and fragmentation of military resources*".³¹⁵ In addition, EKRE stated in their program that "*we (party) consider it important to conclude additional co-operation and mutual assistance agreements with Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Norway (and preferably with Finland and Sweden), which will provide immediate military assistance to each other in the event of aggression*".³¹⁶

In January 2014, Mart Helme said that the permanent bases of the United States as a member of NATO are unnecessary and unrealistic, "*in spite of Russia's immediate rearmament*", and that

³¹⁴ Konservatiivne Visioon, Official Website of EKRE, Internet, <https://ekre.ee/konservatiivne-visioon/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³¹⁵ EKRE political program (EKRE Programm – Konservatiivne Programm), Official Website of EKRE, p. 17 Internet, <https://ekre.ee/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/EKRE-PROGRAMM-KONSERVATIIVNE-PROGRAMM.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³¹⁶ Ibid

such proposals to the US administration are “inappropriate and counterproductive”.³¹⁷ In addition, he added that EKRE believes that participation of Estonia’s military forces in foreign mission is a waste of unnecessary resources, and that Estonia has to develop strong defense capabilities, which can provide safe passage for the NATO forces in case of any aggression towards Estonia.³¹⁸ In late 2015, a scandal erupted in Estonia, with racial-inspired incidents between black NATO staff and local Estonian population. While EKRE was blamed for supporting racism in Estonia, Martin Helme stated that “EKRE supports Estonia's membership in NATO in its program” and that racial attacks were not connected to his “if you are black – go back!” anti-immigration slogan.³¹⁹ EKRE’s leader supported the idea of creating a NATO battalion that would be based in Estonia, but on the condition that it is under direct command of Estonian High Command, and not Bundeswehr or Pentagon in the event of conflict.³²⁰

Jaak Madison pointed out in April 2017 that “it is clear that joining NATO was a right and necessary step for Estonia.”, while stating that since it takes 30 days for Article 5 of NATO to be activated, and that too only with the consent of all the Member States, Estonia has to rely on its own defense capabilities first.³²¹ In July 2017, Martin Helme stated that Donald Trump (who was presidential candidate in that time) said the truth, that NATO may not come to aid to Baltic Republics in case of war, even when Estonia fulfills yearly 2% GDP NATO participation quota.³²² In an interview in August 2017, Mart Helme expressed his disapproval for NATO’s mission in Afghanistan, saying that NATO should strengthen military security in Estonia instead of spending huge amount of finances, men and equipment on a lost cause.³²³ ³²⁴ Jaak Madison stated in September 2017 that “we (EKRE) have been one of the most active NATO supporters who see Estonia in this community”³²⁵ In December 2017 during the meeting with NATO Military

³¹⁷ “EKRE: USA baasidest olulisem on iseseisev kaitsevõime, Kesknädal”, 29.01.2014, Internet, <http://www.kesknadal.ee/g2/uudised?id=22288> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³¹⁸ Ibid

³¹⁹ “Helme ei kiirusta mustanahalisi sõdureid solvanuid hukka mõistma”, Postimees, 29.10.2015, Internet, <https://www.postimees.ee/3379671/helme-ei-kiirusta-mustanahalisi-sodureid-solvanuid-hukka-moistma> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³²⁰ “MART HELME: NATO PATALJON EESTIS EI TOHI JÄÄDA PABERTIIGRIKS”, Official EKRE Website, 19.05.2016, Internet, <https://ekre.ee/mart-helme-nato-pataljon-eestis-ei-tohi-jaada-pabertiigriks/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³²¹ “Jaak Madison: Hea kolleeg Liisa Oviir, jätke meelde, EKRE ei soovi NATO-st välja astuda!”, Uued Uudised, 16.04.2017, Internet, <http://uueduudised.ee/arvamus/jaak-madison-hea-kolleeg-liisa-oviir-jatke-meelde-ekre-ei-soovi-nato-st-valja-astuda/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³²² “Helme: Trump ütles välja selle, mida kõik teised NATO-s mõtleavad”, Pealinn, 21.07.2016, Internet, <http://www.pealinn.ee/koik-uudised/helme-trump-utles-valja-selle-mida-koik-teised-nato-s-motlevad-n172898> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³²³ “INTERVJUU: Mart Helme: NATO peaks julgeolekut tugevdama Eestis, mitte Afganistanis!”, Uued Uudised, 31.08.2018, Internet, <http://uueduudised.ee/uudis/eesti/intervjuu-mart-helme-nato-peaks-julgeolekut-tugevdama-eestis-mitte-afganistanis/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³²⁴ Einmann Andres, “Riigikaitsekomisjon kaldub võimalikku Afganistani missiooni pooldama, Postimees, 25.09.2017, Internet, <https://www.postimees.ee/4222395/riigikaitsekomisjon-kaldub-voimalikku-afganistani-missiooni-pooldama> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³²⁵ Madison Jaak, “Jaak Madison: EKRE on tagajärg, mitte põhjus”, Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 13.09.2017, Internet, <https://www.err.ee/618295/jaak-madison-ekre-on-tagajarg-mitte-pohjus> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

Committee chairman Gen. Petr Pavel, Mart Helme said that the establishment of a permanent NATO naval unit for the Baltic Sea is critical for Estonia, adding that "*...in order for it to be possible to send in troops to help Estonia, a corridor needs to be established for NATO aircraft that is protected by a NATO naval unit from the surface*".³²⁶

Therefore, it can be concluded that:

- EKRE views Estonia's NATO membership as crucial tool in defense of the country against any hypothetical conflict
- Nevertheless, EKRE argues that NATO forces should be under command of Estonian General Staff, rather than for them to be ordered from Washington or Berlin
- EKRE will support NATO and Estonia's NATO membership, only as long as it shows dedication in preserving the Estonian sovereignty

While it cannot be said for EKRE that it is an anti-NATO party, it is also not unconditionally NATO-dedicated one. Often EKRE's leadership criticized NATO's role in foreign military operations, citing the need of protection of NATO's periphery countries first. EKRE doesn't have big faith in other NATO member states that they will defend Estonia in case of a hypothetical war, while it sees the United States as the only NATO member that can really contain any perceived threat to Estonia. Nevertheless, EKRE fully support Estonia's NATO membership and no major change of current Estonia's NATO policy can be expected even if EKRE does obtain a position within a future Estonian government.

EKRE's stance on EU

As seen from the Bauska declaration, and from the general tone of the party ideology and political program, EKRE can be considered not only a Eurosceptic political option in Estonia, but also in some aspects fully opposing one. At the EKRE's Congress in April 2014, the so-called "Eurovision Platform" was adopted, which states that "*...our political party is based on the sovereignty of the Estonian people, the legal continuity of the Republic of Estonia and the supremacy of our constitution*" and that "*we (Estonians) belong to the Union of Independent States of Nations, and not to the Euro-federation*".³²⁷ In addition, the platform states that "*...the politicians who build the European Union, are abusing the people's mandate, violate our constitution, undermine democratic order and endanger the survival of the Estonian nation, our language and culture*".³²⁸ In general, this platform calls for return of decision-making powers to the

³²⁶ "EKRE MP: Permanent NATO naval unit needed on Baltic Sea", Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 14.12.2017, Internet, <https://news.err.ee/648739/ekre-mp-permanent-nato-naval-unit-needed-on-baltic-sea> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³²⁷ Eurovalimiste Platvorm, Official Website of EKRE, Internet, <https://ekre.ee/eurovalimiste-platvorm/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³²⁸ Ibid

Member States, cutting-off of the Brussels's bureaucracy, removal of Estonia from the European Stability Mechanism, less EU laws, and reformation of Europe back to the alliance of the Nation States, among other things.³²⁹

In their official political program, under the title “Foreign and security policy”, EKRE stated that “*Estonia’s foreign and European policies, as well as the fundamentals of national defense and security policy, are shaped comprehensively.*”³³⁰ EKRE views Estonia’s place in Europe as one of the “*shapers of diversity of Europe, with the population policies that strengthens European cultures and nation-states and helps to keep them sustainable.*”³³¹ For Conservative People’s Party of Estonia, the Estonian Constitution is supreme law, and it would not comply with the EU laws or other regulations that can “*jeopardize the survival of Estonia as a nation state or is at odds with the Estonians’ sense of justice, morale and good practice*”.³³²

Additional perspective of Estonia towards the future of the EU can be viewed in their political pamphlet called “Estonia 2030”, where among other things, is stated that Estonia is actively involved in shaping European development and has sufficient information and competence to play an equal role in European politics with other countries. They see the Europe working as an alliance of nations, which values the cultures and national affairs of different nations.³³³

In February 2016, Martin Helme wrote on his Facebook page that the “*disintegration of the European Union would be the best thing for Estonia, as the possibility to leave the union virtually does not exist*”, adding that Estonia has a status of “province” inside the EU, and that “*...since I can see no possibility for somehow making the European Union better, nor do I see a possibility of Estonia stepping out of it, the best outcome for our future would be if this terrible Socialist union disintegrated.*”³³⁴ During the interview in April 2017, Mart Helme stated that Estonia is not completely sovereign, as “*More than 80 percent of our (Estonian) legislation is from the European Union*”, while the same time, Helme underlined that EKRE doesn’t wish for Estonia to leave the EU, which is somewhat contradicting the official stance of the party that favours the referendum on the Estonia’s EU membership.^{335,336,337} In May 2017, Jaak Madison stated that his party always

³²⁹ Eurovalimiste Platvorm, Official Website of EKRE, Internet, <https://ekre.ee/eurovalimiste-platvorm/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³³⁰ EKRE political program (EKRE Programm – Konservatiivne Programm), Official Website of EKRE, p. 16, Internet, <https://ekre.ee/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/EKRE-PROGRAMM-KONSERVATIIVNE-PROGRAMM.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³³¹ Ibid

³³² Ibid

³³³ Konservatiivne Visioon, Official Website of EKRE, Internet, <https://ekre.ee/konservatiivne-visioon/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³³⁴ “Conservator Helme: EU's disintegration best thing for Estonia”, The Baltic Course, 22.02.2016, Internet, http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/baltic_states/?doc=117071 Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³³⁵ Kooch Tuli, “Mart Helme: Culture living off Soviet fat”, Postimees, 13.04.2017, <https://news.postimees.ee/4079705/mart-helme-culture-living-off-soviet-fat> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³³⁶ “EKRE congress confirms Helme, wants new EU referendum”, Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 10.04.2017, Internet, <https://news.err.ee/589098/ekre-congress-confirms-helme-wants-new-eu-referendum> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³³⁷ “EKRE: Tallinn and national platforms”, Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 28.09.2017, Internet, <https://news.err.ee/633080/ekre-tallinn-and-national-platforms> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

stood against EU as a federal state, and that national parliaments have to have a greater role in shaping inside it.³³⁸ At the end of September 2017, EKRE's members staged a picket against Angela Merkel, during her visit to Tallinn, in opposition to the EU's refugee policy, with demonstrators calling Angela Merkel "*the midwife of multiculturalism*".^{339,340}

In December 2017, Mart Helme stated that Estonia must support Catalonia's aspirations toward independence, as "*they (Catalans) have chosen a course of sovereignty regardless of the intimidation and twisting of arms from Brussels and Madrid*",³⁴¹. He stated further that "*us (Estonians)... as a small country should recognize the aspirations of Catalans and not swear blind allegiance to Merkel and Juncker*", and that "*events occurring in Catalonia clearly characterize the agony of the European Union*,"^{342,343} During the UN Jerusalem vote in December 2017, EKRE's chairman Mart Helme criticized the Estonia's vote in favor of the UN's Jerusalem resolution as a "*foolish decision*", while adding that Estonia made a decision damaging to country's security while most of the EU countries kept a clear mind and remained impartial in the UN.³⁴⁴ In addition, he blamed "*Estonia's leftist, pro-Berlin and -Brussels government*" that it made a decision "*damaging to Estonia's security*" as in his opinion, the United States are the only country capable of ensuring Estonia and the region's security.³⁴⁵

³³⁸ "JAAK MADISON: EESTI PEAB KA EESISTUMISE PERIOODIL KAITSMA OMA RAHVUSLIKKE HUVE", Official EKRE Website, 16.05.2017, Internet, <https://www.ekre.ee/jaak-madison-eesti-peab-ka-eesistumise-perioodil-kaitsma-oma-rahvuslikke-huve/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³³⁹ "Mikser: EKRE picket against Merkel only served Russian interests, Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 01.10.2017, Internet, <https://news.err.ee/633583/mikser-ekre-picket-against-merkel-only-served-russian-interests> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁴⁰ Koortis Vahur "Reinsalu: Euroopa juhid saatsid Eestisse sõdureid meie kaitsmiseks, aga EKRE lõugab pottide-pannidega ja võrdleb Merkelit Hitleriga", DELFI, 29.09.2017, Internet, <http://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/eesti/reinsalu-euroopa-juhid-saatsid-eestisse-sodureid-meie-kaitsmiseks-aga-ekre-lougab-pottide-pannidega-ja-vordleb-merkelit-hitleriga?id=79672136> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁴¹ "EKRE leader: Estonia must start supporting Catalonia's independence", The Baltic Times, 23.12.2017, Internet, https://www.baltictimes.com/ekre_leader_estonia_must_start_supporting_catalonia_s_independence/ Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁴² "EKRE leader: Estonia must start supporting Catalonia's independence", The Baltic Times, 23.12.2017, Internet, https://www.baltictimes.com/ekre_leader_estonia_must_start_supporting_catalonia_s_independence/ Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁴³ "EKRE leader in favor of Catalan independence", Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 29.10.2017, Internet, <https://news.err.ee/639315/ekre-leader-in-favor-of-catalan-independence> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁴⁴ "Politicians split into two camps over Estonia's UN Jerusalem vote", Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 22.12.2017, Internet, <https://news.err.ee/650355/politicians-split-into-two-camps-over-estonia-s-un-jerusalem-vote> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁴⁵ Ibid

It can be concluded that:

- EKRE is against federalization of Europe and supports the idea of sovereign nation-states.
- It is highly possible that EKRE would support referendum on potential Estonia's exit from the EU if circumstances would allow for it.
- EKRE will call for increased role of Estonian parliament in the Estonian 'affairs, over the supra-national EU laws and recommendations.

EKRE is openly against any kind of further federalization of European Union, which they are stating that clearly. Same as for NATO, EKRE views EU firstly as a beneficial tool for Estonia, rather than viewing it through the ideological prism. They are against any kind of supra-national control of Estonia since it would hurt its sovereignty and right to decide its own actions. If the EU keeps the current form, then EKRE will support the Estonia's membership (although they may cause resistance towards EU immigration policy), but if the EU pushes for a more integrated model, EKRE will likely find itself as a party that organizes Estonia's "exit" from the EU.

EKRE is growing in the popularity and its re-entrance to the Riigikogu after 2019 Estonian parliament elections shouldn't be much of a surprise. The question is whether it can find a coalition partner to form up the new government, or will it be still in the opposition. Nevertheless, ascension of the EKRE in the government of Estonia could prove problematic for Russia, as its propagated nationalism is based on Russophobia and the defense of Estonian involvement in the Second World War on the side of the Nazi forces (such as a yearly public celebration and remembrance of veterans of Estonian Legion). EKRE is a NATO-oriented political option (at least, as long as it serves as a factor of defense of Estonia), and will highly likely will continue the present Estonian course of NATO cooperation. Russia should worry about the rights and potential major segregation of Russian-speaking minority in Estonia, as well as potential re-negotiation of the Border Treaty, if EKRE becomes a dominant political force. Nevertheless, in that case, some common ground would need to be found between EKRE and Russia in order to protect and preserve the Russian-speaking minority in the country, and ease military tensions in the Baltic region.

3. Nordic region

3.1. The Finns Party (Finland)

The origins of the Finns Party can be traced back to the 1959, when the Finnish Agrarian Party (or Finnish Rural Party - *Suomen Maasedun Puolue* – SMP) was founded in opposition to the urban elite and claimed to speak on behalf of the common man in rural Finland, the so-called ‘forgotten people’ (“*unohdetun kansa*”) in town and country, who felt detached from the ruling class in the urban south. The Finnish Agrarian Party exploited the existing center-periphery divide in Finland, and achieved considerable electoral success in 1970, 1972 and in 1983, when the party won approximately 10% of the vote on each election. As the Finland was transforming from predominantly agricultural to a high-tech communication-based society, so was the popularity of the Finnish Agrarian Party falling. Finally, as the SMP ran into serious financial difficulties, new nationalist populist party, the True Finns Party (re-named in English to the Finns Party in 2011), absorbed its remains in 1995, and thus, in a way, became spiritual successor of the old SMP.³⁴⁶

The rise of popularity for the Finns Party began in the late 2000s, with the 2007 parliamentary elections funding scandal damaging reputation of the Finland’s three biggest political parties that were involved in it. This was used by the Finns Party, which branded itself as an anti-establishment party and representative of ordinary people (while mixing left-leaning social and economic policies with nationalism and conservative values), to present itself as a true alternative to the mainstream parties and their consensus-oriented EU policies, winning 9.8% of the votes in the elections.³⁴⁷ This was significant increase from 1.57% of votes in 2003 and 4.05% in 2007 (**Figure 3**).^{348,349}

The party’s biggest success came during the 2011 parliamentary elections, where it won 19.1% of votes, becoming the third strongest party in Finland.³⁵⁰ In 2015, Finns Party entered coalition government for the first time, marking this event pinnacle of the party’s political influence.

³⁴⁶ Bergmann Eirikur, “The Surge of the Finns Party: A brief History”, Oxford Research Group/Sustainable Security Programme, 06.03.2017, Internet,

<https://sustainablesecurity.org/2017/03/06/the-surge-of-the-finns-party-a-brief-history/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁴⁷ Iso-Markku Tuomas, “Euro-scepticism vs. Political Pragmatism: The Finns Party tones down its criticism of the EU”, European Policy Institutes Network, No. 19/ 26 June 2014, p.2, Internet,

https://www.ceps.eu/system/files/EPIN%20Commentary%20No%2019%20Finns_Party.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁴⁸ Finnish Parliament Elections 2003 Results, IPU, Internet, http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2111_03.htm Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁴⁹ Finnish Parliament Elections 2007 Results, IPU, Internet, http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2111_07.htm Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁵⁰ Eremina Natalia, Seredenko Sergei, “Right Radicalism in Party and Political Systems in Present-day European States”, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, p.55

Already in 2017, it was ousted from the government coalition, mainly thanks to the internal leadership split.^{351,352}

Until he left the Finns Party in 2017, Timo Soini, (party leader from 1995 to 2017), accepted for Finns Party to be branded as populist one, although refusing the extreme-right label for it. In addition, the Finns Party rejected neo-liberal economic policies, as it inherited centrist economic policy of the SMP, making its right wing populism socio-cultural one, rather than socio-economic. It continued to champion the rights of the “forgotten people” against the elite, while in addition, vowed to fight against immigration and multiculturalism and to limit the Europeanization of Finland.³⁵³ The sociological polarization is a common theme in Finnish society, as historically the axes of divide were East/West, Socialism/Nationalism, Urban-rich/Rural poor and Cosmopolitan/Local, among others. Thus, The Finns Party is relying on the center-periphery divide, exchanging the agrarian focused populism of the SMP for the more general cultural divide based on the ethno-nationalist program.³⁵⁴ The Finns Party tries to position itself against the urban Helsinki-based cosmopolitan elite that are consolidated around the south coast, in favor of the “forgotten people” who are mainly working in rural areas. In addition, it draws on traditional Christian values which are seen as pure and morally superior beliefs than those of the privileged elite. The Finns Party also takes strong socially-conservative stance on matters such as religion, morality, crime, corruption, law and order, being in essence more authoritarian than libertarian, and fully supporting the Finnish state.³⁵⁵ Other aspects of their ethno-nationalistic focus came through the strong emphasis of the Finnish national cultural heritage, negative perception of the Swedish influence, and suppression of minorities such as gypsies and Lapps (Sami). According to their perception, The Finns Party actively promotes patriotism, strength and unselfishness of the Finnish people. Their narrative is based on the view, that Finland managed to overcome suppression caused by powerful and expansionist neighbors, and developed from the poor and peripheral country into a recognized nation of progress and wealth, thanks to the internal strength and endurance.³⁵⁶

The party experienced massive fall in support since it joined government in 2015, mostly because party leadership broke the promises they made during elections towards their voters, and made compromises with the ruling coalition. The three most salient electoral promises made by the party were that there would be no EU bailouts, no cuts in welfare and that halt would be put to immigration. During the Finns Party participation in the coalition government, EU took the decision to provide more economic support to Greece and the Finnish government voted in favour. In addition, the government made substantial cuts in welfare during the economic crisis, an in autumn

³⁵¹ Raunio Tapio, “Europe and the 2015 Finnish election: the success of the Finns Party continues”, The European Parties Elections and Referendums Network, 05.05.2015, Internet, <https://epern.wordpress.com/2015/05/05/europe-and-the-2015-finnish-election-the-success-of-the-finns-party-continues/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁵² “Finnish government survives confidence vote after nationalist split”, Deutsche Welle, 20.06.2017, Internet, <http://www.dw.com/en/finnish-government-survives-confidence-vote-after-nationalist-split/a-39333527> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁵³ Bergmann Eirikur, “The Surge of the Finns Party: A brief History”, Oxford Research Group/Sustainable Security Programme, 06.03.2017, Internet, <https://sustainablesecurity.org/2017/03/06/the-surge-of-the-finns-party-a-brief-history/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁵⁴ Ibid

³⁵⁵ Ibid

³⁵⁶ Ibid

2015, Finland saw massive influx of refugees. This all lead to the Finns Party public inter-political struggle and conflicts, while groups of party members openly criticized party leadership for prioritizing power over ideological purity.^{357,358}

In June 2017, The Finns Party splintered into two parliamentary groups, four days after Jussi Halla-aho was elected as a new party leader. Twenty-one out of the Finns Party's 38 MPs defected to the new parliamentary group that was first called "New Alternative" (and after, "Blue Group"), under the leadership of the Finns Party's former leader and current foreign minister Timo Soini. The government crisis was averted after the New Alternative MPs were allowed to stay on their previous positions, which they held in the ministries and parliament while they were members of the Finns Party, which was now ousted from the governmental coalition.^{359,360}

The party leadership is recovering from the split in 2017. The old party leader, Timo Soini, lead the Finns Party since the 1995, and saw the party rise from the humble success on elections to the third biggest party in Finland and part of governing coalition. He himself attained a post of Foreign Minister, a role that he still fulfills in the coalition. Nevertheless, because of the compromises that The Finns Party had to make in order to be in the government, and downfall of popular support for it, Timo Soini was defeated on party leadership elections in 2017 by hardline representative Jussi Halla-aho, an event that sparked the party split and propped Soini to create new MEP group from the former Finns Party MEPs.³⁶¹

The Finns Party also has a youth wing, called "The Finns Party Youth" which styles itself as a "*Finnish conservative, nationalist and populist political youth organization.*" On their official website, the Finns Party Youth states that "*conservatism and nationalism are above all the defense of western democratic ideals, with the respect for unique Finnish national identity and efforts to reform Nordic welfare state.*" In addition, The Finns Party Youth sees populism as a "*political philosophy that is for the people, by the people, against interests of the elite, corruption and overt bureaucracy.*" They also state that "*Electioneering on multiculturalism at the expense of Finnish and western culture appears to us short-sighted.*" In addition, they state that "*on the European level The Finns Party Youth supports independent and sovereign nation-states and is against European federalism.*" which is fully along the lines of the main party. Given that during the 2017 party split,

³⁵⁷ Milne Richard, "Finnish government avoids collapse as True Finns split", Financial Times, 12.06.2017, Internet, <https://www.ft.com/content/9d4ed4be-d73f-3942-817c-59b1ab48f338> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁵⁸ Jungar Ann-Cathrine, Right-wing populism and government: An uneasy relationship, Clingendael Spectator 3 – 2017 (vol.71), p.2, Internet, https://www.clingendael.org/pub/2017/3/_pdf/IS-2017-3-jungar.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁵⁹ Milne Richard, "Finnish government avoids collapse as True Finns split", Financial Times, 12.06.2017, Internet, <https://www.ft.com/content/9d4ed4be-d73f-3942-817c-59b1ab48f338> .Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁶⁰ Pagni Johm, "The Finnish government is falling due to new Finns Party leader", Business Insider Nordic, 12.06.2017, Internet, <https://nordic.businessinsider.com/the-finnish-government-is-falling-due-to-new-finns-party-leader-2017-6/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁶¹ Milne Richard, "Finnish populist laments the lessons of office", Financial Times, 16.11.2017, Internet, <https://www.ft.com/content/6f0eb682-c923-11e7-ab18-7a9fb7d6163e> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

almost all the Finns Party Youth stayed loyal to the new leadership, it is certain that their ideals will shape the future generation of party functionaries and leaders.³⁶²

Jussi Halla-aho (born in 1971, Tampere), is the current leader of the Finns Party. In 2011, Halla-aho became a chair of parliamentary Administration Committee (a committee that handles immigration issues as well as domestic security matters), a post from which had to resign in 2012, due to receiving a Supreme Court verdict violating the free exercise of worship and for incitement against an ethnic group.³⁶³ Halla-aho is known for his radical views on immigration and the EU, and he has openly criticized Timo Soini's leadership for being too soft on these issues, which was the reason he became his opponent on party leadership elections in 2017.³⁶⁴ He represents the forces inside the Finns Party that were unsatisfied with the political course of the party during its participation in coalition government and is dedicated to return the party to its original values.

Laura Huhtasaari (born in 1979, Mänttä) is a former religion teacher and a special education teacher. She was elected in a city council of Pori (in 2012 and 2017), and in 2015, she became Member of the Parliament (*Suomen eduskunta*), where she also currently serves as a member of the Legal Affairs Committee, the Education and Culture Committee, and the Finnish Delegation to the Nordic Council. In June 2017, she was elected as the first vice president of the Finns Party being personally endorsed by the Jussi Halla-aho, and in August she was chosen as the presidential candidate of the Finns Party for the 2018 presidential elections.^{365,366} Although she won only 6.9% of votes on the presidential elections in February 2018, Laura Huhtasaari came in the 3rd place. Some Finnish political analysts believe that the presidential race had a different meaning for the Finns Party, as they counted on more long-term effect. With the media representation of Huhtasaari and her public appearance, the Finns Party can now present new strong political leader (along with the Jussi Halla-aho) for the next parliament elections, which can potentially restore party's reputation after the infighting in 2017.³⁶⁷ In addition, Huhtasaari opened some new topics that were not so much represented in the political arena in the recent years, such as family policy, gender equality, welfare issues - such as health and medical care and education, while trying to attract more female votes for the party.³⁶⁸ The support for the Finns Party among Finnish voters oscillated

³⁶² "PS-nuoret tukee uutta puoluejohtoa ja soimaa irtautuneita – "Jos itsensä pettää, mitä jäljelle jää?"", Lapin Kansa, 13.06.2017, Internet, <https://www.lapinkansa.fi/kotimaa/ps-nuoret-tukee-uutta-puoluejohtoa-ja-soimaa-irtautuneita-itsensa-pettaa-mita-jaljelle-jaa-200205569/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁶³ Jutila Karina, Sundell Björn, "The Populism of The Finns Party – Fun or Ugly?", Think Tank e2/ Think Thank Magma/ Think Tank Vision, Helsinki, 18.10.2012, p.21, Internet, http://www.liberalforum.eu/tl_files/events/2012/Populism%20Barcelona/CATDEM_Populism%20in%20Finland.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁶⁴ Sorri Karl, "The risks of Finland's populist downfall", Global Risk Insights, 25.05.2017, Internet, <https://globalriskinsights.com/2017/05/risks-finlands-populist-downfall/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁶⁵ Kinnunen Pekka, "Henkilökuvassa Laura Huhtasaari: Kun maailma mureni kolmessa päivässä", 09.01.2018, Internet, <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9986024> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁶⁶ Standish Reid, "Finland's Marine Le Pen", Politico, 26.01.2018, Internet, <https://www.politico.eu/article/laura-huhtasaari-president-election-finland-marine-le-pen/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁶⁷ Karlsson Simon, "Huhtasaarieffekten är långsiktig" – Sannfinländarna har bäddat inför riksdagsvalet tror forskare", Svenska Yle, 29.01.2018, Internet, <https://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2018/01/29/huhtasaarieffekten-ar-langsiktig-sannfinlandarna-har-baddat-infor-riksdagsvalet> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁶⁸ Ibid

between 9.6% in January to the 7.7% in May 2018 (**Table 1**).^{369,370} Next parliament elections in 2019 will surely be a decisive test for this new direction and leadership of the Finns Party: either they will manage to recover themselves from the party split, and regain their 10-15% share of votes, or they will lose significance on the Finnish political scene.

The Finns Party's Stance on Russia

In 2014, The Finns Party parliamentary group approved the EU's decisions on certain embargoes on Russia, but was critical of economic sanctions. True Finns thought that the sanctions would have an economic disadvantage for Europe and especially for Finland since strong counter-measures were expected from Russia. In their view, counter-measures would not be targeted fairly across the EU, with Finland, the Baltic States, and Germany being the most impacted by them.³⁷¹ In addition, they advocated maintaining of good bilateral relations with Russia.³⁷² Their forecast turned out to be correct when in January 2015 Finnish exports to Russia were down by 43 percent against the previous year, while imports fell by 36 percent.³⁷³

*In an interview on January 2015, Jussi Halla-aho stated that "We (Finns Party) see Russia as a threat to European security and values and think it is strategically necessary to remove countries like Ukraine from the "grey zone" and Russian sphere of influence."*³⁷⁴ Jussi Halla-aho again expressed negative sentiment against Russia in February 2017, describing Russia as "an existential threat to Finland", but nevertheless "great country in many respects" with "interesting history and society and people's minds".³⁷⁵ In December 2017, only 40% of Finns regarded Russia or the political processes happening inside it as a threat, as opposed to 56% who did so in 2014.³⁷⁶

³⁶⁹ "Ylen kannatusmittaus: presidentinvaalit nostivat kokoomusta ja perussuomalaisia, aktiivimalli ropisee SDP:n laariin", YLE, 08.02.2018, Internet, <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-10063466> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁷⁰ "Sdp on säilyttänyt paikkansa suosituimpana puolueena, perussuomalaisten kannatus laskee eniten", Helsingin Sanomat, 17.05.2018, Internet, <https://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000005682873.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁷¹ "PS: Ei talouspakotteita Venäjälle – vastatoimet kohdistuisivat Suomeen", Suomen Uutiset, 18.03.2014, Internet, <https://www.suomenuutiset.fi/ps-ei-talouspakotteita-venajalle-vastatoimet-kohdistuisivat-suomeen/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁷² Iso-Markku Tuomas, "Euroscepticism vs. Political Pragmatism: The Finns Party tones down its criticism of the EU", European Policy Institutes Network, No. 19/ 26 June 2014, p.2, Internet, https://www.ceps.eu/system/files/EPIN%20Commentary%20No%2019%20Finns_Party.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁷³ Kostyuk Ruslan, "What the Finnish parliamentary elections mean for Russia", Russia Direct, 20.04.2015, Internet, <http://www.russia-direct.org/opinion/what-finnish-parliamentary-elections-mean-russia> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁷⁴ "True Finns: "We see Russia as a threat"", EUbloggen, 05.01.2015, Internet, <https://eublogg.wordpress.com/2015/01/05/true-finns-we-see-russia-as-a-threat/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁷⁵ Karvala Kreeta, "Halla-aho: Venäjä on uhka Suomelle - "Asia ei tule varmaan koskaan muuttumaan"", Iltalehti, 19.02.2017, Internet, http://www.iltalehti.fi/politiikka/201702172200072617_pi.shtml Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁷⁶ "Finns Less Afraid of Russia, Less Keen on NATO", Sputnik News, 14.12.2017, Internet, <https://sputniknews.com/europe/201712141059989762-finland-nato-russia/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018:

In 2017, True Finns spearheaded a law that as an experiment allows students in Finland opportunity to study Russian instead of Swedish, the country's second most-spoken language.³⁷⁷ By the end of February 2018, the National Board of Education will choose schools that will be admitted to the language experiment, with the total of 2,200 students to be offered the opportunity to participate in the experiment throughout the country.³⁷⁸

The Finns Party candidate for 2018 presidential elections, and rising star among senior leadership of the party, Laura Huhtasaari, made several statements regarding Russia in her interviews and blogs.

In an interview from December 2017, Huhtasaari stated that "*Russia will always be a potential threat to Finland*"³⁷⁹, while at the same time adding that while (Finns Party) "*will never accept the way in which Russia took Crimea... We should acknowledge the facts and focus on solving the situation in eastern Ukraine.*"³⁸⁰ In addition, some of her supporters for presidential race identified her political position as "against NATO, good relations with Russia and opposed to immigration"³⁸¹.

Before the elections, Huhtasaari further stated that "*It is not necessary to have common values to cooperate with one's neighbors. There is no alternative to reaching agreements with Russia,*" while emphasizing the necessity of focusing on issues that unite Helsinki and Moscow, such as trade and cultural exchange.³⁸² In addition, in an interview in December 2017, Huhtassari said that "*I am in favor of trade, I am in favor of cultural exchanges, I am in favor of diplomatic relations and it is really important that we are in good standing with the Russians.*"³⁸³ Given that Laura Huhtassari is opposed to the NATO membership of Finland, and that advocates Finland's exit

³⁷⁷ "Finn's Fight Against Mandatory Swedish Clears Way For Russians", Sputnik News, 26.04.2017, Internet, https://sputniknews.com/art_living/201704261053010422-finland-swedish-russian/ Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁷⁸ Hänninen Jaana, "Ensi syksyn kuudesluokkalaiset pääsevät ehkä opiskelemaan ruotsin kielen sijaan venäjän kieltä — Mertalan, Talvisalon, Kerimäen ja Punkaharjun yhtenäiskoulut pyrkivät valtakunnalliseen kielikokeiluun", Itä-Savo, 23.02.2018, Internet, <https://ita-savo.fi/uutiset/lahella/86ca268b-7a9a-4ddd-b440-0d48901f9afa> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁷⁹ Markku Uhari, "Ylen väittely: Uhkaako Venäjän karhu Suomea vai ei? Huhtasaari pitää naapurina po-ten-ti-aa-li-se-na uhkana", Kaleva, 14.12.2017, Internet, <http://www.kaleva.fi/uutiset/kotimaa/ylen-vaittely-uhkaako-venajan-karhu-suomea-vai-ei-huhtasaari-pitaa-naapurina-potentiaalisena-uhkana/779083/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁸⁰ "Laura Huhtasaari Suomen puolustuksesta: Omiin asevoimiinsa panostanutta maata on helpompi ulkopuolistenkin auttaa", 14.12.2017, The Finns Party Official Website, Internet, <https://www.suomenuutiset.fi/laura-huhtasaari-suomen-puolustuksesta-omiin-asevoimiinsa-panostanutta-maata-helpompi-ulkopuolistenkin-auttaa/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁸¹ Armi Suojanen, "Laura Huhtasaari hurmasi kannattajansa Vantaalla: "Isänmaallinen ja vastustaa haitallista maahanmuuttoa"", Vantaan Sasnomat, 08.11.2017, Internet, <https://www.vantaansanommat.fi/artikkeli/578265-laura-huhtasaari-hurmasi-kannattajansa-vantaalla-isanmaallinen-ja-vastustaa> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁸² "Finnish "Laura Huhtasaari" presidential candidate against Burqa, EU, NATO", Sputnik, 25.01.2018, Internet, <https://sputniknews.com/europe/201801251061050481-finland-candidate-burqa-ban/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁸³ Virtanen Matti, "Huhtasaari ihmettelee tiedusteluvoittoa: "Kremlin asiallako tässä ollaan?"" , Talouselämä, 19.12.2017, <https://www.talouselama.fi/uutiset/huhtasaari-ihmettelee-tiedusteluvoittoa-kremlin-asiallako-tassa-ollaan/5d10cefa-e7b6-3b2d-bfdf-efe63575baa1> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

from the European Union, she could well be one of the key players in Finland politics in the coming years.

Taking all of this in account, it can be seen that the following is stance of the Finns Party towards Russia:

- Russia is seen as a potential threat
- Nevertheless, there are grounds for mutual economic and cultural cooperation which have to be developed
- Sanctions against Russia that were imposed by the EU and USA hurt Finland's economic interests more than those of some other EU member states (mainly Germany)

While Finns Party is not overly supporting of anti-Russian option, they are still seeing it as a potential threat to Finland. Nevertheless, there are areas where deeper trust and cooperation can be established, such as in economic and cultural spheres. As long as Finland stays out of NATO, and concentrates more on creating a regional defense bloc made of Nordic countries (an idea that is active among certain political options), it can count on Russia's understanding and goodwill. If Finns Party again joins coalition government, their ministers might serve as a bridge towards improvement of Finno-Russian ties in the future.

The Finns Party's stance on NATO

In December 2017, support for NATO among Finnish population was around 19%, which was considerable decline from 2014-2016, when crisis in Ukraine reached its peak.³⁸⁴ In a survey conducted in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015 and 2016, more than half of Finns Party members were opposed to Finland's membership in NATO.^{385,386,387} On their website in October 2016, Young Finns stated that they are fully opposed to Finland's NATO membership, and that with the growing tensions between Russia and NATO, Finland would find itself in a huge security risk by being a

³⁸⁴ Stenroos Maria, "Analyysi: Päättäjien päättämättömyys heijastuu suomalaisten Nato-näkemyksiin", Yleisradio Oy, 13.12.2017, Internet, <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9973576> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁸⁵ "The opinions of Finns about the foreign, security and defence policy of Finland and the Defence Forces' reform", The Advisory Board for Defence Information (ABDI) – Finnish Ministry of Defence, 2013, pp.8-9, https://www.defmin.fi/files/2672/report_text_in_english.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁸⁶ "The opinions of Finns about the foreign, security and defence policy of Finland and the Defence Forces' reform", The Advisory Board for Defence Information (ABDI) – Finnish Ministry of Defence, 2012, p.8, Internet, https://www.defmin.fi/files/2248/Survey_in_english_28_11_2012.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁸⁷ "FINNS' OPINIONS ON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY, NATIONAL DEFENCE AND SECURITY", The Advisory Board for Defence Information (ABDI) – Finnish Ministry of Defence, 2016, p.8 Internet, [https://www.defmin.fi/files/3579/ABDI_\(MTS\)_December_2016_Report_in_english.pdf](https://www.defmin.fi/files/3579/ABDI_(MTS)_December_2016_Report_in_english.pdf) Accessed on: 25.05.2018

NATO member.³⁸⁸ In February 2017, Halla-aho stated that even though he is personally in favour of Finland's membership in NATO, he will not use his position in the Finns Party to promote it, mainly because he believes that it is not a realistic option for Finland.³⁸⁹ Interestingly, this is in contrast to the Laura Huhtasaari clear anti-NATO position.^{390,391}

Finns Party 2015 parliamentary elections program established the current view of the party towards the NATO. The opinion of the Finns Party expressed in the program is that there is no concrete justification for the Finland's membership in NATO which can presume that the defense of Finland will be improved with it. In fact, the Finns Party believes that security policy choices of the country will become narrower and that new obligations will arise for the international crisis management if Finland is a part of NATO. The Finns Party support military non-aligned Finland that this prepared for the defense of the entire country through a regional defense system based on general conscription. In addition, reasons why Finland should not join NATO, in the Finns Party view, is that in a long-term, NATO membership will lead to decline of conscription system and thus weaken nation's defense capabilities. Also, the Finns Party is concerned with financial obligations of NATO member states, as NATO's recommendation for the defense budget of each state is 2% of GDP, while Finland is currently at an estimated 1.3% GDP. Therefore, the Finns Party is strongly for "Finns defending Finland" and independent decision-making process for its security environment. It should be noted however that in case that Sweden does join the NATO and that the political climate in the Finland is such that its citizens are in the favour for nation's NATO membership, before it can be considered by the state, it has to go through the referendum first.³⁹²

The Finns Party views on the defense policy offer some interesting insight towards their relation to EU battle groups, Ottawa agreement and Nordic Sphere co-operation. In their opinion, EU battle groups as a concept offers little to Finnish security, as it requires significant funding on Finland's part, while not being able to receive proper security guarantees. In addition, the Finns Party believes that each nation thinks of their own interest. In their opinion, Sweden does not want a defense union with Finland, and it sees it as a buffer state, while Norway, Denmark and Iceland rely on NATO, and for these countries, "the Nordic defense co-operation looks like a spicy add-on".³⁹³ Although critical of its neighbors, the Finns Party recognize some benefits of Nordic defense co-operation - especially in the areas of procurement, training and joint exercises, including in

³⁸⁸ "Absolutely not for NATO" (Ehdoton ei NATO:lle), Official Young Finns Website, Internet, <https://www.ps-nuoret.fi/kannanotot/ehdoton-ei-natolle/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁸⁹ *Summanen Kasper*, "Jussi Halla-aho: Naton kannattaminen ei tule näkymään toiminnassani", Verkkouutiset, 19.02.2017, Internet, <https://www.verkkouutiset.fi/jussi-halla-aho-naton-kannattaminen-ei-tule-nakymaan-toiminnassani-61741/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁹⁰ Virtanen Matti, "Huhtasaari ihmettelee tiedusteluvoittoa: "Kremlin asiallako tässä ollaan?""", *Talouselämä*, 19.12.2017, Internet, <https://www.talouselama.fi/uutiset/huhtasaari-ihmettelee-tiedusteluvoittoa-kremlin-asiallako-tassa-ollaan/5d10cefa-e7b6-3b2d-bfdf-efe63575baa1> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁹¹ Järvenpää Heidi, "Presidenttiehdokkuutta harkitseva Huhtasaari luottaa omavaraisuuteen", *Maaseudun Tulevaisuus*, 14.07.2017, Internet, <https://www.maaseuduntulevaisuus.fi/politiikka/presidenttiehdokkuutta-harkitseva-huhtasaari-luottaa-omavaraisuuteen-1.198318> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁹² The Finns Party Defense and Security Policy 2015 ("*Perussuomalaisen turvallisuuspoliittinen ohjelma 2015*"), Internet, <https://www.perussuomalaiset.fi/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Turvallisuuspoliittinen.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁹³ Ibid

international crisis management. The Finns Party sees international crisis management as a practical and flexible structure for co-operation, where “each country decides on a case-by-case basis, and even in a smaller group of countries, progress can be made.”³⁹⁴ Although not directly tied to their stance on NATO, the True Finns critical position on Ottawa agreement may be of interest for Russia, as the True Finns advocate Finland’s withdrawal from the agreement, and a heavy usage of anti-personnel land mines to secure its eastern border.^{395,396}

In December 2017, during the interview of presidential candidates, a question was raised – what would they do if Estonia was attacked by Russia, since Finland is a member of the EU. Laura Huhtasaari, expressed her doubts about the mutual assistance clause of the EU and insisted that Finland must under no circumstances tolerate military activity in its sovereign territory, which means that the EU support and troops should not go to Estonia through Finland, including any NATO troops.³⁹⁷

Therefore, it can be concluded that:

- Although the leadership is somewhat divided on the Finland’s NATO membership issue, The Finns Party in general is advocating military-neutral Finland
- NATO membership is seen as a threat to the national defense system of Finland (increased expenditure, abolishment of conscription, limited decision making power during security crises etc.)
- If the majority of Finland population demands NATO membership, and if Sweden becomes a NATO member, referendum on Finland’s NATO membership must be held before any decision can be made by the government.

Given that a newly-elected president of Finland is known for his cautious stance with NATO (meaning that he won’t personally push for the membership), and that general sentiment among Finnish population is prevalingly against NATO membership, it is safe to assume that the Finns Party will keep their current views on this issue.³⁹⁸ There shouldn’t be any radical changes in their stance, as even during the pinnacle of Ukrainian crisis, the Finns Party didn’t change their stance in their political program. Although again, the Finns Party cannot be perceived as “Russian-friendly” one, it is certainly not its adversary, and does not form its security policy mainly on “Russian threat” scare tactics, but is mainly concerned with limitation of its sovereignty over security decision

³⁹⁴ The Finns Party Defense and Security Policy 2015 (*“Perussuomalaisten turvallisuuspoliittinen ohjelma 2015”*), Internet, <https://www.perussuomalaiset.fi/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Turvallisuuspoliittinen.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁹⁵ Ibid

³⁹⁶ Ibid

³⁹⁷ “NATO, European Defence and the presidential candidates: a lot of nonsense and ignorance”, Finland Politics, 17.12.2017, Internet, <https://finlandpolitics.org/2017/12/17/nato-european-defence-and-the-presidential-candidates-a-lot-of-nonsense-and-ignorance/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

³⁹⁸ Rosendahl Jussi, Forsell Toumas, “Finns, worried by Russia, hand cautious president huge election win”, Reuters, 28.13.2018, Internet, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-finland-election-president/finns-worried-by-russia-hand-cautious-president-huge-election-win-idUSKBN1FH06X> Accessed on: 25.05.2018:

making power in case of NATO membership. Therefore, if some of the future government includes again the Finns Party, or it is formed mainly by it, Russia can expect continuation of reasonable dialogue with Finland and perhaps, fully evade potential Finland's NATO membership.

The Finns Party's stance on EU

Although the Finns Party is known to be an anti-EU political option in Finland, Timo Soini's vision was more pragmatic than ideological one, as it was seen from his actions during the Finns Party short time in the coalition government. For 2014 European Parliament election, the Finns Party decided to tone down their anti-EU image, as Timo Soini decided to bring the party into the Finnish government. Therefore, their 2014 manifesto was more in the lines of an EU-critical reform party.^{399,400} The manifesto applauded David Cameron's proposal for a thorough reform of the EU as well as the Dutch government's idea to roll back the EU's powers in certain policy areas. It also criticized the rescue packages and all related policy measures, such as the European Stability Mechanism, but it didn't demand that Finland leave the EU or the Eurozone, stating at the end that there should be "less, but better EU".⁴⁰¹ It is also worth noticing that after 2014 parliament elections, the Finns Party left the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) group headed by the UK Independence Party, and joined the the British Tories in the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group, along with the Danish People's Party.^{402,403}

With the Jussi Halla-aho as the new party leader, it can be expected that the Finns Party will take more anti-EU stance than before. For now, the party seems content to still advocate "EU reformation" than EU exit, as it can be seen in their political program on their official website.

In their political program, Finns Party outlines 4 key points in their EU policy:⁴⁰⁴

1. EU federal development must be countered and the Member States' sovereignty guaranteed
2. Support package policy needs to be stopped

³⁹⁹ Iso-Markku Tuomas, "Euroscepticism vs. Political Pragmatism: The Finns Party tones down its criticism of the EU", European Policy Institutes Network, No. 19/ 26 June 2014, p.3, Internet, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/181481/EPIN%20Commentary%20No%2019%20Finns_Party.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁰⁰ "Perussuomalaisen EU-vaaliohjelman", Official The Finns Party Website, Internet, <https://www.perussuomalaiset.fi/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/EU-vaaliohjelman.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁰¹ Ibid

⁴⁰² Keating Dave, "ECR group takes two parties from Farage", Politico, 04.06.2014, Internet, <https://www.politico.eu/article/ecr-group-takes-two-parties-from-farage/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018:

⁴⁰³ Iso-Markku Tuomas, "Euroscepticism vs. Political Pragmatism: The Finns Party tones down its criticism of the EU", European Policy Institutes Network, No. 19/ 26 June 2014, p.4, Internet, https://www.ceps.eu/system/files/EPIN%20Commentary%20No%2019%20Finns_Party.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁰⁴ The Finns Party EU Election Program (EU-vaaliohjelman), The Finns Party Official Website, Internet, <https://www.perussuomalaiset.fi/eu-vaaliohjelman/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

3. Economic Cooperation needs to be further developed

4. EU democracy needs to be strengthened

Further, Finns Party goes in-depth in explaining their EU points in the program. Considering increasing federalization of the EU, Finns Party states that while they support the basic idea of European integration – to safeguard peace by combining financial interests, they are absolutely against the building of “Federal Europe” state. In their view, the EU is primarily a Free Trade Association, making decisions at EU level when necessary and at national level as much as possible. The reasons why federal Europe wouldn’t work, in Finns Party eyes are “economic, linguistic, cultural and historical differences between Member States”, although they fully support the development of the internal market by dismantling of trade barriers and the minimal amount of any new regulations. Other issues that the Finns Party cares about are the budget of the EU, taxation of the Finnish citizens by the Union, increased power of Brussels and representation of Finland in European Parliament. Last point is especially underlined by Finns Party, as they argue that current 13 Finnish seats out of 766 (as per 2014 European Parliament Elections) constitute only 1.7%, while the 98.3% of non-Finnish members have power to decide which laws will apply for Finland.⁴⁰⁵

Opposition for support package policy is also one of the main points of the Finns Party’s EU policy. Their concerns are that it is not up to Finnish taxpayers to support or finance other Member States, or to participate in rescue packages and solidarity mechanism, which in their view undermines the unity of Europe. Further criticizing EU policy, they state that EU’s common currency euro is above all a political project aimed towards the federal Europe. Therefore Finland needs to be prepared for the possible breakdown of the euro, such as preparing the Bank of Finland and other national central banks to re-introduce their own currency.⁴⁰⁶

Finns Party also calls for reformation of the EU, as EU in the current form, “*with its democratic deficits and endless bureaucracy...is more and more the problem itself than the solution.*” They propose several changes to the functioning of the union, such as creating a voting system for selecting Commissioners in national, country-specific elections for EU Commission, creation of a lighter Union (as per British view), reinstating some of the rights to the member states, and launching of bureaucratic cuts in the EU, among other things. In addition, Finns Party supports the referendum on the EU membership for the Finland, along the model of the Britain.⁴⁰⁷

The political program of Finns Party for the European Union is confirmed by various statements and comments of the Finns Party leadership. In October 2016, Young Finns published on their website support for the referendum on Finland’s exit from the EU.⁴⁰⁸ In January 2017, Halla-aho stated that he still supports Finland’s exit from both the EU and Eurozone, viewing it as a

⁴⁰⁵ The Finns Party EU Election Program (EU-vaaliohjelma), The Finns Party Official Website, Internet, <https://www.perussuomalaiset.fi/eu-vaaliohjelma/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁰⁶ The Finns Party EU Election Program (EU-vaaliohjelma), The Finns Party Official Website, Internet, <https://www.perussuomalaiset.fi/eu-vaaliohjelma/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid

⁴⁰⁸ “Suomi EU:ssa – tulos tai ulos!”, Official Young Finns Website, Internet, <https://www.ps-nuoret.fi/kannanotot/suomi-eussa-tulos-ulos/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

strategic goal for Finland.⁴⁰⁹ His statements from June 2017 further confirmed his anti-EU stances, as in his speech he mentioned Finland's issues with the EU, such as the free movement of labour inside EU, common currency and federalization.⁴¹⁰ Halla-aho also argued for increased immigration control, criticizing other EU members who allowed influx of migrants and asylum seekers.⁴¹¹ Perhaps the best outline of the future stance of Finns Party towards the EU can be seen in a speech of Halla-aho from June 2017, after his election as the chairman of Finns Party. In this speech, he stated that the *Finns Party has become "a channel for those who believe in independent nation states and a rigorous immigration policy", as well as that the national legislative bodies are sliding towards "transnational bodies (EU)", that immigration is becoming uncontrolled and that even multiculturalism itself is starting to be a concern for ordinary Finnish citizen.*⁴¹² He further stated that the "current amount of (EU) integration is appropriate, but no more is needed" as the "current state of the European Union is such that the integration that has already been implemented has created problems that can not be solved except by adding further integration"⁴¹³ Nevertheless, Halla-aho is aware that the resignation from the EU is not an option as long as the majority of Finns favor membership, although in his opinion, the basic task of the Finns Party is to "promote and maintain a critical and reasoned debate", as it is the only EU-critical party in Finland.⁴¹⁴

Laura Huhtasaari shares the same view as Halla-aho and the Finns Party political program. General position of Huhtasaari can be seen in her so-called "May Day Speech" in 2017, where her statements can be summarized as following:⁴¹⁵

1. Returning back to national currency and abandoning of the euro
2. Developing and carrying on Finland's own industrial policy with a healthy protectionism of the welfare state
3. (Finland) Taking the lead role in reforming the EU by dismantling its centralized decision-making bodies and restoring decision-making power to the Member States.
4. Cutting off Finland's participation in solidarity program aimed towards financially unsuccessful EU members

⁴⁰⁹Warris Olli, "Halla-aho arvostelee perussuomalaisten EU-linjaa - kannattaa itse EU:sta eroamista", 12.01.2017, *Itälhehti*, http://www.iltalehti.fi/uutiset/201701122200052762_uu.shtml Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴¹⁰ "Perussuomalaisten Jussi Halla-aho linjapuheessaan: "Kansallismielinen ajattelu on ainoa kestävä ratkaisu"", *Yle Uutiset*, 11.06.2017, *Internet*, <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9663299> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴¹¹ Kirkkala Antti, "Jussi Halla-aho: Rajatarkastukset käyttöön kaikilla rajoilla", *Verkkouutiset*, 23.01.2018, *Internet*, <https://www.verkkouutiset.fi/jussi-halla-aho-rajatarkastukset-kayttoon-kaikilla-rajoilla/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴¹² "Lue Jussi Halla-ahon linjapuhe sana sanalta: Paljastaa suunnan", *Uusi Suomi*, 11.06.2017, *Internet*, <https://www.uusisuomi.fi/kotimaa/222994-lue-jussi-halla-ahon-linjapuhe-kokonaisuudessaan-nayttaa-puolueen-suunnan> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴¹³ Ibid

⁴¹⁴ "Lue Jussi Halla-ahon linjapuhe sana sanalta: Paljastaa suunnan", *Uusi Suomi*, 11.06.2017, *Internet*, <https://www.uusisuomi.fi/kotimaa/222994-lue-jussi-halla-ahon-linjapuhe-kokonaisuudessaan-nayttaa-puolueen-suunnan> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴¹⁵ Official Web Presentation *Laura Huhtasaari (Presidential Election 2018)* <https://www.laurahuhtasaari.fi/13> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

5. Transformation of the EU into a free trade zone for independent states, with the return of the decision-making power to the Member States

6. Resignation of Finland from the EU if it does not reform.

In November 2017, Huhtassari stated in an interview that the EU federation is progressing in every area, as Finland already has a common social policy, common army, common asylum policy and a common monetary policy with the EU, and that Finns Party hopes that with Brexit, EU will return to a purely commercial union.⁴¹⁶ During her presidential campaign speech in December 2017 Huhtassari stated that EU application of the Paris Climate Agreement is disastrous for Finland as, in her view, it doesn't take into account that Finnish energy and industrial plants have already minimized their emissions and that further restrictions will cause "*the industry to leave Finland*".⁴¹⁷ She also criticized EU defense policy, as she feels that Finland has to reject the EU military and to maintain strong national defense. Finally, she stated that if today's progress of the EU federalization continues, Finland will become "*a region of the EU without the possibility of really affecting (our) destiny*", and in January 2017, she openly accused Germany that it is the only country that benefits from the common currency, to the expense of all other Member States.^{418,419}

To summarize:

- Finns Party is fully against the federalization of the EU, but supports economic union between sovereign nation-states of Europe
- As soon as the popular sentiment increases against the Finland's EU membership, Finns Party is expected to support a referendum on Finland's exit from the EU
- According to the Finns Party, immigration, taxation, free movement of labour force and a common defense policy are the most pressing issues that Finland is facing with the EU

Although in recent years, the Finns party made considerable success on the political scene, going so far as to enter the coalition government, most of the success was nullified with the leadership split in mid-2017 and the party's exit from the government. Finns Party is not in a position today to influence so much politics in Finland as it was perhaps a year ago. Their staunch anti-EU stance, among their other policies, brings them enough votes to still be relevant on Finland's political scene. Halla-aho is not expected to change his views towards the EU, which is also true for Laura Huhtasaari, who is seen as a potential future leader of Finns Party. Her success on the elections

⁴¹⁶ Jantunen Heikki, "PS vastustaa liittovaltiota – muut ovat EU:n puudeleita", Verkko uutiset, 22.11.2017, Internet, <https://www.verkkouutiset.fi/ps-vastustaa-liittovaltiota-muut-ovat-eun-puudeleita/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴¹⁷ Pansu Pekka, "Presidenttiehdokas Laura Huhtasaari ryöpytti EU:ta kampanja-avauksessaan: "EU muistuttaa Neuvostoliittoa"", Yleisradio Oy, 03.12.2017, Internet, <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9960548> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴¹⁸ Ibid

⁴¹⁹ Laura Huhtasaari: "EU:ssa Suomen rooli on maksaa ja totella", Savon Sanomat, 13.01.2018 <https://www.savonsanomat.fi/mielipide/Laura-Huhtasaari-EUssa-Suomen-rooli-on-maksaa-ja-totella/1093576> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

(third candidate), although perhaps small in percentage of votes compared to Sauli Niinistö, the current president of Finland, came after a major blow to Finns Party political reputation and internal structure. With the European Union falling deeper in political, economic and social crisis, the right-wing parties of Europe will rise in popularity and support. Same can be expected for the Finns Party – with the next crisis Finland faces, whatever its nature may be, The Finns Party will start to gather popularity once more, and perhaps join some new coalition government, possibly even as soon as after the Finnish parliament elections of 2019, thus influencing anti-EU policies of the country anew. If by some chance they enter the next coalition government, and this time really follow their political program trough, Finland can take different turn, although not necessary with negative impact towards Russia, as the Huthasaari and even Halla-aho can be seen as a hardline right-wing Finnish leaders that understands why it is important to maintain good relationships with Russia, and not to be part of a NATO at the same time.

3.2. Swedish Democrats (Sweden)

Founding of Swedish Democrats can be traced back to 1988, when former members of the far-right parties and organizations, such as Progress Party, Swedish Party, White power movement etc, decided to make a new political party, under the guidance of Leif Zeilon.⁴²⁰ Nicholas Aylott, a senior lecturer in political science at Södertörn University in Stockholm, stated that when the Swedish Democrats were formed, it was by the people “who could reasonably be classified as a Nazis”.⁴²¹

Stefan Löfven, current prime minister, stated that Swedish Democrats were originally a Nazi and a racist party, a sentiment that is shared by Anna Kinberg Batra and Jan Björklund, party leaders of the Moderate party and the Liberals respectively.⁴²² Since its founding, Swedish Democrats attracted neo-Nazis, including Swedes who fought for Nazi Germany in the Second World War.⁴²³

All of this called for re-branding of Swedish Democrats, starting with excluding radical claims from their program, to a new, less controversial party logo in the shape of Anemone hepatica flower (instead of logo that was almost exact copy of UK’s National Front)^{424, 425, 426} This supposed reformation was reinforced by party president Jimmie Åkesson, who claims that the extremists were kicked out of the party.⁴²⁷

With obvious effort to distance themselves from fascist and Nazi roots, Swedish Democrats currently define themselves as “neither a right nor left”, claiming that they believe in a strong welfare society while being inspired by the traditional conservative ideas. They further state that their policy aims to unite and to bring people around common basic values with a common view of

⁴²⁰ Eremina Natalia, Seredenko Sergei, *“Right Radicalism in Party and Political Systems in Present-day European States”*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, p.62

⁴²¹ Roden Lee, *“Just how 'far right' are the Sweden Democrats?”*, The Local, 10.10.2016, Internet, <https://www.thelocal.se/20161010/just-how-far-right-are-the-sweden-democrats> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴²² Ujkani Venera, *“The Swedish Democrats Ideological Foundation and Affiliation”*, Linnaeus University, The Department of Political Science, Bachelor Thesis in Political Science, 2016, p. 1, Internet, <http://www.diva-portal.se/smash/get/diva2:1066673/FULLTEXT01.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018: 25.05.2018:

⁴²³ Bjurwald Lisa, *“From boots to suits: Sweden Democrats' extreme roots”*, Eu Observer, 11.03.2014, Internet, <https://euobserver.com/eu-elections/123316> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴²⁴ Eremina Natalia, Seredenko Sergei, *“Right Radicalism in Party and Political Systems in Present-day European States”*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, p.62

⁴²⁵ Magnus and Eriksson Meninger, *“Sverigedemokraterna – historien om et rasistparti”*, Radikal Portal, 21.09.2014, Internet, <https://radikalportal.no/2014/08/21/sverigedemokraterna-historien-om-et-rasistparti/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴²⁶ Swedish Democrats Press Release, *“Sverigedemokraterna presenterar ny logotype”*, My News Desk, 27.04.2013, Internet, <http://www.mynewsdesk.com/se/sverigedemokraterna/pressreleases/sverigedemokraterna-presenterar-ny-logotyp-860383> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴²⁷ Crouch David, *“The rise of the anti-immigrant Sweden Democrats: ‘We don’t feel at home any more, and it’s their fault’”*, The Guardian, 14.12.2014, Internet, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/14/sweden-democrats-flex-muscles-anti-immigrant-kristianstad> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

“gender equality, freedom of speech, democracy and what is right and wrong”.⁴²⁸ Among the main points in party’s policies are stopping of mass immigration, rejection of multiculturalism, referendum on EU membership, re-negotiation of Schengen Agreement, reinstatement of military service and increased defense budget, and preservation of Swedish cultural heritage.⁴²⁹ The support for Swedish Democrats comes mostly from citizens concerned with growing occurrence of rapes, violence, bomb attacks and assaults, while critics of the party point out party’s fascist roots, xenophobia and racism.⁴³⁰

The party’s first real success came with the 2010 elections for the Swedish parliament Riksdag. Having won 5.7% of votes (improvement by 2.8% compared to 2006 elections), Swedish Democrats secured 20 seats in the parliament, entering Riksdag for the first time in history.⁴³¹ This event is also important as it marks the crisis of traditional parties, and growing trend towards right-wing options in Sweden.⁴³² The party managed to be even more successful in 2014 Riksdag elections, having won 12.86% of the votes (increase of 7.1%), and securing 49 seats in the parliament (**Figure 4**).⁴³³

In the same year, Swedish Democrats also entered the European Parliament for the first time, securing two seats by winning 9.67% votes in the elections.⁴³⁴ Though they had original agreement to support Le Pen’s European Alliance for Freedom in the EU Parliament, Swedish Democrats switched their allegiance in order to make alliance with Nigel Farage’s UKIP in the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) group, a move which soured the relations between SD and FN.⁴³⁵ This was seen as maneuvering by UKIP to help Swedish Democrats lose the status of a “pariah” in the mainstream politics, due to the party’s fascist roots.⁴³⁶ In June 2014, Europe of Freedom and Democracy was renamed to Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy, whose charter states that it favours “*open, transparent, democratic and accountable co-operation among sovereign European States*”, while rejecting “*the bureaucratisation of Europe and the creation of a single centralised*

⁴²⁸ Swedish Democrats website, “Our Party”, Internet, <https://sd.se/vart-parti/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴²⁹ Swedish Democrats website, “Our Politics”, Internet, <https://sd.se/var-politik/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴³⁰ Lišaníková Kateřina, The Growing Popularity of Far-Right Swedish Democrats, Ceena Policy Paper, April 2015, p. 1 Internet, http://cenaa.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/PP_Right-Far.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴³¹ Parliament Election Results, “*Allmänna valen 2010, Del 1 - Riksdagen, den 19 september 2010*”, Statistiska centralbyrån, 2011, p.378, Internet, http://www.scb.se/statistik/publikationer/me0104_2010a01p_br_me01br1101.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴³² Eremina Natalia, Seredenko Sergei, “*Right Radicalism in Party and Political Systems in Present-day European States*”, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, p.62

⁴³³ Swedish Parliament 2014 Election Results, Internet, <http://www.val.se/val/val2014/slutresultat/R/rike/index.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴³⁴ Swedish European Parliament 2014 Election Results, Internet, <http://www.val.se/val/ep2014/slutresultat/E/rike/index.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴³⁵ “Le Pen: Sweden Democrats' choice was a 'mistake'”, The Local, 18.11.2016, Internet, <https://www.thelocal.se/20161118/le-pen-slams-swedish-nationalists-for-eu-defection> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴³⁶ “Sweden Democrats Ukip deal eases pariah status”, The Local, 20.06.2014, Internet, <https://www.thelocal.se/20140620/expert-sweden-democrat-ukip-deal-eases-pariah-status> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

European superstate".^{437,438} It currently has 41 members in European parliament, and Swedish Democrats' Peter Lundgren is one of the vice-chairs inside this group.⁴³⁹

Popularity of Swedish Democrats is on the rise in 2017, having peaked with 20% support in June, making every fifth Swedish citizen potential voter of this party.⁴⁴⁰ Though the support slightly declined by September 2017, with support of 18.1% of the population, Swedish Democrats can most likely count to make even better results for the Riksdag elections in September 2018.⁴⁴¹ The reason for predicting the good election results can be seen also in the support of Swedish Democrats in January and May 2018, where they had 21.9% and 20% of support among Swedish voters respectively (**Table 1**).^{442,443}

Two members of Swedish Democrats have tendency to appear often in media: its president Jimmie Åkesson, and the leader of the party's parliament group Mattias Karlsson. Jimmie Åkesson (born 1979, Ivetofta) started his career in Swedish Democrats in 1995, as a member of the youth section. In 1998, he was elected as a councilman in Sölvesborg Municipality, and at the same time, as a deputy chairman to Sweden Democratic Youth (*Sverigedemokratisk Ungdom*), where he would attain the position of the chairman from 2000 to 2005. Åkesson became a party leader for the Swedish Democrats on May 7, 2005, and has been leading the party until now.⁴⁴⁴

Mattias Karlsson (born 1977, Rottne), joined Swedish Democrats at the end of 1990's. He participated in creation of the new party program, alongside Jimmie Åkesson and Mikael Jansson, party chairman until 2005. In September 2014, he became parliament group leader in front of Swedish Democrats in Riksdag. He is currently considered as one of the main ideologists of the party.^{445,446}

⁴³⁷ Morris Jake, Hopkins Nick, "UKIP secures control of £1.5m EU cash, *Newsnight* learns", BBC, 15.12.2014, Internet, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-30486154> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴³⁸ Charter of the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy, Internet, <http://www.efddgroup.eu/about-us/our-charter> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴³⁹ Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy website, Internet, <http://www.efddgroup.eu/members/peter-lundgren-mep> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁴⁰ Niklas Svensson, "Åkessons nya rekordsiffra: SD lockar var femte svensk", *Expressen*, 08.06.2017, Internet, <http://www.expressen.se/nyheter/akessons-nya-rekordsiffra-sd-lockar-var-femte-svensk/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁴¹ Demoskop Pool Ratings September 2017, Internet, <https://demoskop.se/publicerat/valjarbarometern-september-2/#text> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁴² "Statsvetare: "Moderaternas ökning har bromsats upp" – Sentio februari är här", *Nyheter Idag*, 20.02.2018, Internet, <https://nyheteridag.se/statsvetare-moderaternas-okning-har-bromsats-upp-sentio-februari-ar-har/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁴³ "DN/IPSOS POLITISK BAROMETER", IPSOS, 22.05.2018, Internet, https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2018-05/dn_ipsos_politisk_barometer_maj_2018_webb_0.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁴⁴ Jimmie Åkesson biography on archived SD website, Internet, <https://web.archive.org/web/20100702002909/http://sverigedemokraterna.se/vart-parti/jimmie-akesson-sverigedemokraternas-partiledare/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁴⁵ Poohl Daniel, "Ideologen", *Expo Idag*, 2011, Internet, http://expo.se/2011/ideologen_3625.html Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁴⁶ "Mattias Karlsson ny SD-gruppledare", *Sveriges Radio*, 29.09.2014, Internet, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=5977743> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

Swedish Democrats are a party that will definitely have impact on Sweden's political scene in the coming years. Since the change of political program in 2002 and the change of party leader in 2005, Swedish Democrats saw a steady rise in support from Sweden's population. As a leading party of the right sector in Sweden, it is important to understand its position towards EU, NATO and Russia, as there is a realistic chance that it will be a part of policy-making process in Sweden as early as the next parliament elections in 2018.

Swedish Democrats' stance on Russia

Although cooperation between Russia and a nationalistic party such as Swedish Democrats may seem challenging, they in fact have a lot of common ground. Though historically Russia could be seen more as a regional adversary than a partner, some of the points on which both sides agree are preservation of national and cultural heritage, rejection of NATO enlargement, reservation towards increased federalisation of European Union and international terrorism issues.

Patrik Oksanen, a political editor of Swedish daily newspaper Hudiksvalls Tidning, in 2015 claimed that there is a "*faction within the Swedish Democrats party which takes a more positive view of Russia and views Vladimir Putin as an inspiring ideological example to follow*", as opposed to the "*more traditionally-minded right-wingers who take a more skeptical view of Russia.*"⁴⁴⁷ International think-tank, European Council On Foreign Relations, listed in 2016 Swedish Democrats as an ally of Russia in European Parliament, along with the Dutch PPV, UK's UKIP, Italy's Northern League and France's Front National, based on their voting patterns in parliament on topics such as association agreements with Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova and ongoing Ukrainian civil war.^{448,449}

Besides being suspected of working for Russian interests in European Parliament, Swedish Democrats were also accused by their political opponents that they are taking side of Belorussian government interests, based on their vote casting during certain resolutions.⁴⁵⁰ Some Swedish media noticed appearance of legal spokesman of Swedish Democrats, Kent Ekeröth, on RT news, which was enough to declare this party as an "ally of Vladimir Putin", while stating that RT News also played Swedish Democrats' made documentary "*No money/No home*" on air in November 2015.^{451,452}

⁴⁴⁷ "Some of Sweden's Democrats back Russia on Ukraine – Newspaper", Sputnik News, 08.03.2015, Internet, <https://sputniknews.com/europe/201503081019227289/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁴⁸ Wesslau Fredrik, "Putin's friends in Europe", European Council on Foreign Relations, 19.10.2016, Internet, http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_putins_friends_in_europe7153 Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁴⁹ "Russia-index: 11 new EU-sceptic parties added", EUBloggen, 10.01.2015, Internet, <https://eublogg.wordpress.com/2015/01/10/russia-index-11-new-eu-sceptic-parties-added/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁵⁰ Fjellner Christofer, "SD förhalade EU:s kritik mot Ryssland", Blekinge Läns Tidning, 14.04.2017, Internet, <http://www.blt.se/debatt/sd-forhalade-eus-kritik-mot-ryssland/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018:

⁴⁵¹ Lönnaeus Olle: "Malmo a weapon in Russia's information war", Sydsvenskan, 21.02.2017, Internet,

Jörgen Fogelklou, District Chairman of Swedish Democrats Göteborg, in an interview to Göteborgs-Posten in September 2016, stated that ”*Swedish democrats are deeply critical of Russia's current regime, something that has been said by some leading party delegates*“.⁴⁵³ In the same interview, Björn Söder (party security spokesman), Mikael Jansson (party defense spokesman) and Julia Kronlid (party foreign-speaking spokesman) underlined that “...*we are even more critical of Russia's superpower fraternities who violate international laws and hold an even greater democratic deficit. Any other attitude would be illogical and inconsistent*”. Richard Jomshof, party secretary further in the interview declared that he has “*extreme problems with Putin*” while Mattias Karlsson stated that “*the recurrent attacks and assassinations of oppositionists in Russia prove that Putin, consciously or because of inability, has failed the most basic tasks of a democratic conservative leader, i.e. to guarantee and maintain freedom of speech and law and order*”⁴⁵⁴

Kent Ekeröth, in an interview for Svenska Dagbladet in September 2016, stated that he is critical of both Russia and Putin and that he never “*trusted them*”.⁴⁵⁵ In the same interview, on an observation that Sweden security services warned that Russia is allegedly using nationalist parties in Europe to destabilize countries like Sweden, Ekeröth replied that he has not seen any Russians trying to use them, and that he cannot see the supposed links with Russia that media tries to show.⁴⁵⁶ The following month, Jimmie Åkeson was attacked in the Riksdag by the Moderate Party (*Moderata samlingspartiet*) leader Anna Kinber Batra and the Center party leader (*Centerpartiet*) Annie Lööf for the supposed Swedish Democrats ties with Russia and purported protection of Russian interests before Swedish, to which Åkeson replied that “*We (Swedish Democrats) are the party that has clearly pointed to the threat from Russia, the threat from Putin*” and that it is one of the worst conspiracy theories he has heard in the parliament.⁴⁵⁷ That didn't stop Anna Kinber Batra of the Moderates to seek negotiations with Swedish Democrats, which prompted Prime Minister Stefan Löfven to accuse her of losing a political compass since she was negotiating with a party that ”*you (Batra) yourself say is racist and pro-Russia*”⁴⁵⁸

<https://www.sydsvenskan.se/2017-02-21/malmo-a-weapon-in-russias-information-war> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁵² Lönnæus Olle: “*Så utnyttjar Putin SD i sitt informationskrig mot Europa*”, Sydsvenskan, 01.10.2016, Internet, <https://www.sydsvenskan.se/2016-10-02/putin-utnyttjar-sd-i-sitt-informationskrig-mot-europa> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁵³ Fogelklou Jörgen, “*SD är djupt kritiskt till Putins Ryssland*”, Gothenburg Post, 29.09.2016, Internet, <http://www.gp.se/nyheter/debatt/sd-%C3%A4r-djupt-kritiskt-till-putins-ryssland-1.3827165> A Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁵⁴ Fogelklou Jörgen, “*SD är djupt kritiskt till Putins Ryssland*”, Gothenburg Post, 29.09.2016, Internet, <http://www.gp.se/nyheter/debatt/sd-%C3%A4r-djupt-kritiskt-till-putins-ryssland-1.3827165> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁵⁵ “Ekeröth (SD) bryter tystnaden: “*Litar inte på Ryssland för fem öre*” “, Svenska Dagbladet, 29.09.2016, <https://www.svd.se/ekeroth-sd-bryter-tystnaden-litar-inte-pa-ryssland> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid

⁴⁵⁷ “*Alliansen angriper Åkesson: SD stödjer Putin*” “, Svenska Dagbladet, 12.10.2016, Internet, <https://www.svd.se/alliansen-angriper-akesson-sd-stodjer-putin> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁵⁸ Orange Richard, “*First we take Hässleholm ... Swedish far right rises*”, Politico, 10.02.2017, Internet, <http://www.politico.eu/article/sverigedemokraterna-first-we-take-hassleholm-swedish-far-right-rises-ulf-erlandsson-anna-kinberg-batra-stefan-lofven/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

Mattias Karlsson, in an interview for a Dagens Industry news media in January 2017, stated that eleven years ago, he personally wrote an article in Swedish Democrats news agency, where he pleaded for “*increased resources for defense, warned of Russia's rebuilding and the Putin's regime's increasingly totalitarian move*”.⁴⁵⁹ Few months later, reacting on accusations for supposedly Russian links within the Swedish Democrats, Karlsson, warned that Social Democrat would “*seek to depict (his) party and its supporters as influenced by Russia, or even as active agents or spies*” and that the “*Social Democratic government are using Russia as a means to try to silence the opposition, and trying to make everybody who doesn't share their political views suspect of being a Russian spy*”⁴⁶⁰. Swedish media reacted along the same lines, already accusing Swedish Democrats that they are “Trojan Horse” for the supposed Russian intelligence operation for influencing the elections in 2018. While role of Swedish Democrats as a potential “Trojan Horse” is not proven, supposed Russian influence of elections is backed up by claims by MUST (Militära underrättelse- och säkerhetstjänsten / Military Intelligence and Security Service) and Säpo (Säkerhetspolisen / State Security), though again without concrete evidence.^{461, 462, 463}

During the Russian local elections in September, a parliament member of Swedish Democrats, Pavel Gamov, was present in Moscow in a role of an observer, for which he was accused by Swedish media that he is “legitimizing regime of Vladimir Putin”.⁴⁶⁴ This is consistent with a message that “vote for Jimmie Åkesson is a vote for Moscow”, as disseminated by their political opponents.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁵⁹ “Mattias Karlsson: SD står emot Putin”, Dagens industry, 13.01.2017, Internet,

<http://www.di.se/opinion/mattias-karlsson-sd-star-emot-putin/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁶⁰ “Sweden Democrats fear Russia link attacks in 2018 campaign”, Sverige Radio, 24.03.2017, Internet,

<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2054&artikel=6659484> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁶¹ Järkstig Linnea, “Satsar 10 miljoner för att motverka rysk propaganda”, Omnipunktse AB, 02.07.2017, Internet,

<http://omni.se/satsar-10-miljoner-for-att-motverka-rysk-propaganda/a/aV3qL> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁶² Olle Lönnaeus, “Putin kan använda SD som redskap i cyberkrig mot Sverige”, Sydsvenskan, 07.01.2017, Internet,

<https://www.sydsvenskan.se/2017-01-07/putin-kan-anvanda-sd-som-redskap-i-cyberkrig-mot-sverige> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁶³ “Säpo warns the parties before the election”, Helagotland, 31.03.2017, Internet,

<http://www.helagotland.se/nyheter/in-utrikes/sapo-varnar-partierna-infor-valet-13999004.aspx> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁶⁴ Dahlin Patrik, “Pavel Gamov (SD): Jag är inte Putinist”, Upsala Nya Tidning, Internet,

<http://unt.se/nyheter/uppsala/pavel-gamov-sd-jag-ar-inte-putinist-4754655.aspx> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁶⁵ Lindberg Anders, “Åkesson och Putin gillar inte Hultqvist”, Aftonbladet”, 17.09.2017, Internet,

<http://www.aftonbladet.se/ledare/a/3nL7v/akesson-och-putin-gillar-inte-hultqvist> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

In short:

- Swedish Democrats do not share *a priori* anti-Russian sentiment as other mainstream parties in Sweden
- They have common grounds to develop relationship with Russia, especially since they aligned themselves with Russian-friendly political options in EU parliament
- Though critical of Russian government in some aspects, at the same time they are neither basing their ideology on anti-Russian sentiment, nor stimulating such a sentiment among their voters.

Therefore, it can be said that although Swedish Democrats are far away from being an open political party in support of Russia, they are also not basing their program or message with anti-Russian sentiment. In the case that deeper cooperation between Sweden under larger influence of Swedish Democrats and Russia is needed, common ground such as defense of traditional values, international terrorism and conservative ideas should be exploited in order to improve the relations between the two countries.

Swedish Democrats' stance on NATO

Swedish Democrats are a party that publicly opposes the NATO membership, though around half of their supporters would be in favour of Sweden's NATO membership.⁴⁶⁶ In April 2016, Swedish Democrats were accused of pro-Russian stance, as they were willing to vote in Riksdag against "Memorandum of Understanding on Host State Support" with NATO, instead opting for a "defence federation" with Finland.^{467, 468} It seemed that Swedish Democrats were willing to cooperate with the Leftist party which was also against such treaty, but only two days after the statement that SD won't support Host State memorandum, its parliamentary group revoke the support for the Left Party initiative.⁴⁶⁹ This caused a rift among the elder party members on the NATO stance. A joint statement from Björn Söder (SD security policy spokesman), Mikael Jansson (SD defense policy spokesman), Roger Richtoff (Member of the Riksdags Defence Committee) and Jeff Ahl (deputy member of the Defense Committee) was issued in the name of the Swedish Democrats, stating that "*we say no to a Swedish NATO membership*" and that "*the answer to*

⁴⁶⁶Svensson Anna H, "Nato – så tycker partierna", SVT Nyheter, 10.11.2015, Internet, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/nato-sa-tycker-partierna> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁶⁷ Cwejman Adam, "SD sviker försvaret", Göteborgs-Posten, 15.04.2016, Internet, <http://www.gp.se/ledare/sd-sviker-f%C3%B6rsvaret-1.190183> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁶⁸ Andersson Sigge, "Därför röstar SD nej till världlandsavtalet: "Vi tror på alliansfriheten" ", Nyheter Idag, 29.04.2016, Internet, <https://nyheteridag.se/darfor-rostar-sd-nej-till-varldlandsavtalet-vi-tror-pa-alliansfriheten/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁶⁹ Rydhagen Maria, "SD backar – stöder inte V:s Nato-yrkande", Expressen, 24.04.2016, Internet, <http://www.expressen.se/nyheter/sd-backar--stoder-inte-vs-nato-yrkande/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

maintaining the balance and security is to form a defense federation with Finland”, which, by their own words “...at a meeting with the NATO delegates in Brussels, it was clear that they had no objection to strong Swedish defense, preferably in association with Finland. Russia has also not expressed any other view.”^{470,471}

Mattias Karlsson expressed further support for the possible military alliance with Finland in favour of NATO, stating that they are very similar countries, with similar values and security policy.⁴⁷² This was also official position of Swedish Democrats in their 2014 program for Riksdag elections, where they advocate for creation of Nordic alliance, as well as continuation of maintenance of neutrality and non-alignment.^{473,474} Nevertheless, they are not against using resources gained by joining NATO’s Partnership for Peace program, as stated at their website.⁴⁷⁵

The anti-NATO stance that seemingly originates from Swedish Democrats has enough support among the people to be considered as beneficial to the party. The SVT broadcaster published results of a poll in Jun 2017, where results showed that 43% of respondents express a negative attitude towards the idea of Sweden’s ascension to NATO.⁴⁷⁶ Therefore, if Swedish Democrats stay at their current position that they favour a regional (and Nordic) alliance, which is more along the nationalistic message that the party disseminates, they could potentially count on support of almost half of Swedish population.

The following can be concluded:

- Swedish Democrats are against Sweden joining NATO, but for fully using current resources provided by the organization to non-NATO member states, such as Partnership for Peace program and others
- Swedish Democrats would prefer full military alliance with Finland and integration of two country’s defense system than joining NATO
- Voters of the Swedish Democrats might put pressure on party leadership to change stance on NATO in the future, though party elders might resist such course of action.

⁴⁷⁰ “SD: I Nato blir Sverige ett automatiskt mål i krig”, Svenska Dagbladet, 30.06.2016, Internet, <https://www.svd.se/sd-i-nato-blir-sverige-ett-automatiskt-mal-i-krig> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁷¹ Sörn Söder, Jansson Mikael, Richtoff Roger, Ahl Jeff, “SD säger fortsatt nej till Nato”, Vestmanlands Läns Tidning, 27.06.2016, Internet, <http://www.vlt.se/opinion/debatt/sd-sager-fortsatt-nej-till-nato> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁷² “SD-toppar går emot partilinjen – säger ja till Nato”, Sverige Radio, 01.06.2016, Internet, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=6444290> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁷³ Swedish Democrats Principal Program 2011, p. 39, Internet, https://sd.se/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/principprogrammet2014_webb.pdf Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁷⁴ Taras Raymond, “Fear and the Making of Foreign Policy”, Edinburgh University Press, 2015, p.175

⁴⁷⁵ Swedish Democrats Official Website, Internet, <https://sd.se/var-politik/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁷⁶ “Poll shows most Swedes oppose NATO membership”, TASS, 2017, Internet, <http://tass.com/world/954403> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

That Sweden is increasingly approaching potential NATO membership can be seen in military exercise Aurora 17, held in September 2017. It is the most massive military exercise conducted on Sweden soil to date, which includes around 21.000 military personnel from all branches of the Swedish Armed Forces, as well as military personnel of NATO member states, such as France, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Norway, Germany and the United States.⁴⁷⁷ A Sweden's NATO membership would mean additional threat to Russia and Russian interests in Baltic Sea. At the same time, it would mean escalation of conflict potential in the region, since Sweden would be effectively member of an offensive alliance directed towards Russia. Therefore, it would be in everyone's best interest if Swedish Democrats truly pursue their agenda of purely Nordic alliance with Finland – it would give both countries sense of security and mutual assistance, while keeping the non-alignment approach. Meanwhile, Russia would not feel threatened by alliance of countries that lack any serious offensive capabilities of their own, which in turn could be seen as a solution to deescalate the current tensions in the region.

Swedish Democrats' stance on EU

The official position of Swedish Democrats is that they consider that they have to work in the name of the Swedish people in Riksdag and EU Parliament in order to decide which EU laws and regulations will apply to Sweden. But their long term goals are those of stopping the transfer of power to Brussels and working towards the trend of intergovernmental cooperation between the states, instead of supporting increased sovereignty and federalism of the EU.⁴⁷⁸

Stated positions of the Swedish Democrats are summarized at their official website as a referendum on EU membership, continuing resistance towards EMU (European Monetary Union), restored border protection through renegotiations of the Schengen Agreement, and no acceptance of Turkey to the EU.^{479, 480} Jimmie Åkesson and Johnny Skalin (EU Political Spokesman Sweden Democrats) in an article for Svenska Dagbladet, stated that referendum for Sweden's membership in the EU is needed as "The EU that Sweden voted for in 1994 was something completely different from the EU we currently have...today's union has evolved into a supranational political superpower that increasingly impedes the self-determination of individual nations"⁴⁸¹

One of the anti-EU views that Swedish Democrats expresses is their stance on multiculturalism, for which they believe is negative since it "*leads to fragmentation and segregation*

⁴⁷⁷ Swedish Armed Forces Official Website, Internet, <http://www.forsvarsmakten.se/en/activities/exercises/aurora-17/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁷⁸ Swedish Democrats Official Website, Internet <https://sd.se/var-politik/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid

⁴⁸⁰ "SD: "Orimligt med turkiskt EU-medlemskap" ", Svenska Dagbladet, 11.09.2016, Internet, <https://www.svd.se/sd-orimligt-med-turkiskt-eu-medlemskap> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁸¹ SD: Låt även svenskarna få rösta om EU, Svenska Dagbladet, 20.03.2017, Internet, <https://www.svd.se/sd-dagens-eu-helt-annat-an-det-vi-rostade-om/om/storbritannien-efter-brexite> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

where culture clashes occur”⁴⁸² At the same time, Swedish Democrats support strong anti-immigration policy, opposed to the “open-doors” policy advocated by the majority of the EU decision-makers.⁴⁸³ That opinion strongly corresponds to the general public concern in Sweden, as there were several high-profile incidents connected to migrants and asylum seekers during the last years, including 38 reported sexual assaults at a Stockholm music festival during the summer 2016.⁴⁸⁴ Strong anti-immigration policy that Swedish Democrats enthusiastically disseminate propelled some to mark SD as a “one issue party” On the other hand, it addresses a pressing issue in Swedish society, where some 20% of Sweden’s 9.5 million people are immigrants or children of immigrants.^{485, 486} Therefore, it is not surprising that the use of the phrase “Swedish values” is on the rise in newspapers and blogs, where it was mentioned 1.600 times in 2016, compared to just 286 times in 2012.⁴⁸⁷ It is easy to understand why Swedish Democrats are forcing the immigration issue in both their program and campaigns, and why it provokes clashes with the official EU’s open-doors migration policy.

That the Swedish Democrats is openly eurosceptical party is confirmed by Matias Karlson in an interview in May 2017, where he stated that people were starting to realize that the (Sweden’s) state’s sovereignty was being compromised.⁴⁸⁸ In his opinion, Sweden is becoming more Eurosceptic, since the people saw the problems with Euro and all the problems European Union is facing in general, while the feeling that Swedes are not governing their country anymore is growing among the citizens. He further observed that the position of Swedish Democrats is the one which demands Swexit (exit of Sweden from the EU) as soon as possible, since the membership in the European Union is hurting Sweden’s financial and cultural stability, and is making the country less protected against the organized crime. With the 54% favourable view on the EU among Swedish population, anti-EU messages that are disseminated by the Swedish Democrats have a fertile ground among the other 46% of citizens.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸² Sharman Jon, “Anti-immigrant party takes first place in Sweden, poll shows”, The Independent, 25.03.2017, Internet, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/anti-immigrant-sweden-democrats-yougov-poll-first-most-popular-refugee-a7649506.html> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁸³ Mannheimer Edgar, Feder Lester J, “How Sweden Became “The Most Alt-Right” Country in Europe”, BuzzFeed News, 03.04.2017, Internet, https://www.buzzfeed.com/lesterfeder/how-sweden-became-the-most-alt-right-country-in-europe?utm_term=.ibPAaOmDJ#.pqPiv0BEd Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁸⁴ “Far-right Sweden Democrats neck-and-neck in poll with 2nd most popular party”, RT News, 16.11.2016, Internet, <https://www.rt.com/news/367187-sweden-democrats-second-popular-poll/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁸⁵ Mirisch John, “The Sweden Democrats: How to Deal with a One-Issue Party”, Huffington Post, 31.08.2015, Internet, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-mirisch/the-sweden-democrats-how_b_8068416.html Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁸⁶ Green Dominic, “As the Swedes Go, So Goes Europe”, The Weekly Standard, 22.12.2014, Internet, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/as-the-swedes-go-so-goes-europe/article/821210> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁸⁷ “Immigration is changing the Swedish welfare state”, The Economist, 08.06.2017, Internet, <https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21723123-more-needs-be-done-ensure-it-survives-immigration-changing-swedish-welfare> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁸⁸ Stromme Lizzie, “Eurosceptics demanding ‘SWEXIT NOW’ become Sweden’s largest party after SURGE in polls”, Express, 14.04.2017, Internet, <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/791142/Eurosceptics-Swexit-Sweden-largest-party-surges-polls-EU-Mattias-Karlsson> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁸⁹ Verbergt Matthias, Michael Ovaska, “Who Else Wants to Break Up With the EU”, Wall Street Journal, 04.12.2016, Internet, <http://graphics.wsj.com/euroskeptics/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

As mentioned before, Swedish Democrats have two members inside the European Parliament. Some party critics share an opinion that Swedish Democrats run for European Parliament elections only because of the financial incentive, since they receive financial support for the staff and travel expenses, or to promote Russia's interests in the EU Parliament.⁴⁹⁰ Taking into account that SD members in the EU parliament voted against the Association Agreement with Ukraine, Mattias Karlsson stated that it wasn't because of "Moscow wishes", but that it was based on a Swedish Democrats' view that this means a clear step towards Ukrainian EU membership, which in turn would cause further reduction in Sweden's influence in the EU and additional costs for Swedish taxpayers. To distance his party from the claims that it is "pro-Russian", Karlsson additionally stated that Swedish Democrats voted for EU sanctions against Russia and for resolution that condemns supposed persecution of opposition forces by Russian government.⁴⁹¹

To summarize:

- Swedish Democrats are openly "anti-EU" party
- They are proponents for a reformation of the EU along the line of cooperation among the sovereign nations, instead of further concentration of power in Brussels
- They are willing to hold a referendum on "Swexit" and Schengen agreement

With the rise of various problems that EU was inefficient to deal with, such as migration crisis, over-bureaucratization, forced multiculturalism and terrorist threats, even the traditionally liberal society of the Sweden is experiencing a turn to the right among its citizens. Growing euroscepticism and increased support for once marginalized political party, along with the first real success in the elections in the past 7 years, leads to the conclusion that Swedish Democrats have realistic chance of becoming a more serious policy maker inside the Swedish society. Based on their stances on questions such as EU, NATO and relations towards Russia, it can be expected that if Swedish Democrats take power in Sweden during the next ten years, Russian Federation might find if not an ally, then at least a government more open to the idea of cooperation and not dependent on the NATO bloc. The preference of Swedish Democrats for a smaller, local alliance would further benefit Russia, since military capabilities of such an alliance would be negligible compared with the potential presence of NATO in Scandinavian countries.

With potential rise of SD to policy-making level, the EU would find itself with one more member that is against centralization of power and bureaucracy in Brussels, and that is fighting for more local sovereignty. In the most extreme case, a "Swexit" might further erode the power and significance of the EU.

⁴⁹⁰ Lindén David, "Why anti-EU Sweden Democrats care about European elections", The Local, 30.01.2014, Internet, <https://www.thelocal.se/20140130/why-anti-eu-sweden-democrats-care-about-european-elections> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁹¹ "Mattias Karlsson: SD står emot Putin", Dagens Industry, 13.01.2017, Internet, <http://www.di.se/opinion/mattias-karlsson-sd-star-emot-putin/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

Next Swedish general elections are going to be held on September 2018. If the trend of growing support for Swedish Democrats continue, they may well pass the current 18-20% they have among the population now, which will make them second strongest party in Sweden. If they manage to increase support to around 30%, they might even become strongest party in Sweden, pushing out Social Democratic Party (*Socialdemokraterna*) from the lead position. Since Center Party was already willing to enter in negotiations over some issues with Swedish Democrats, it wouldn't be hard to imagine some future Swedish Democrats-Center Party-Moderate Party coalition government. If that doesn't happen, at least Swedish Democrats can count on strong opposition role until 2022 general elections. Results like these were hardly imaginable in the early 2000. Reforms that the new leadership brought, along with the total re-branding and (supposed) expelling of fascist elements from the party made its presence socially acceptable on the mainstream political scene. By concentrating on an important issue that is dividing Swedish public – immigration, Swedish Democrats are securing a place in both media and in voters' attention.

For Russia, larger policy-making role of Swedish Democrats can mean new opportunities for improved cooperation and security in the Baltic region. Though Swedish Democrats base their political identity on nationalism (though they supposedly cleared their ranks from Nazi supporters), they do not strike out as a party hostile to Russia, as some other Swedish parties demonstrate. On contrary, they are not pushing the agenda of Sweden's NATO enrolment, they are highly critical towards current EU establishment and political course and they seem to be taking more "live-and-let-live" approach towards Russia, something that should be taken into account.

If Swedish Democrats do attain a measure of power in the future, it would perhaps be prudent from the Russian side to discreetly support the creation of a Nordic alliance, as a mean to contain NATO's expansion in the region. As stated before, by creating such an alliance, both Sweden and other Scandinavian countries could get a sense of security without the need to invite other alliances or foreign powers to build missile and/or army bases, military airports etc. It would be safe to assume that Russia wouldn't feel threatened by such an alliance, as it would clearly lack any significant offensive capabilities against Russian territory, while with its either official or unofficial support, it would do wonders to counter hostile propaganda-induced label of "aggressor" and "factor of regional destabilization".

3.3. The Progress Party (Norway)

The Progress Party (*Fremskrittspartiet* - FrP), is one of the more interesting parties in the Nordic region. Not only is it in government coalition since 2013, but it is also not quite “right-wing” in the usual context of the political party spectrum, although it is considered so in the Norwegian political environment. Certainly, it is a party that raises questions and points out issues in the Norwegian society that other parties do not, such as immigration and crime, and it mostly owes to that a high degree of current popularity, as it will be presented further down in this research.

The predecessor of the Progress Party was established in 1973, as the “Anders Lange’s Party for a Strong Reduction in Taxes, Duties and Public Intervention” (*Anders Langes Parti til sterk nedsettelse av skatter, avgifter og offentlige inngrep – ALP*).⁴⁹² Journalist by profession, Anders Lange was a critic of state intervention and in his view, welfare state’s over-regulation.⁴⁹³ On the elections same the year, Anders Langes party received five percent of the votes and four representatives in the Storting (Norway’s parliament).⁴⁹⁴ The cause of the breakthrough of such a party in the relatively stable Norway’s political system was described as a combination of factors: growing anti-tax sentiment in public opinion, a change in voting patterns in the aftermath of the polarizing Norwegian referendum on accession to the European Community in 1972, and the charismatic personality of Anders Lange.⁴⁹⁵ After the death of Lange and internal disputes in the party, it changed its name to Progress Party in 1978, with Carl I Hagen elected as the chairman.

During the next two decades, the Progress Party reoriented its political message from tax-protest party towards the anti-immigration and anti-crime party, while the critique of the welfare state was replaced with the ‘welfare chauvinism’, pleading for better care for ethnic-Norwegian inhabitants.⁴⁹⁶ In the elections in 1997 and 2001, the Progress Party won around 15% of the votes, while in 2005 and 2009, it managed to secure around 22% of votes during parliament elections.⁴⁹⁷ Success of the Progress Party can also be seen in the perception of Norway’s citizen who consider it as the only alternative to the existing political actors, since they are the ones that open the debates in the public over the burning issues in the country (such as immigration, crime rate, terrorism etc.), while at the same time propose solution to these problems.⁴⁹⁸ There are indicators that the Progress

⁴⁹² Marius Hylland Ole, “*Fremskrittspartiets kulturpolitikk – kulturpolitisk opposisjon i utvikling*”, Nordisk kulturpolitisk tidsskrift, 01-02 / 2011 (Volum 14), Internet, <https://www.idunn.no/nkt/2011/01-02/art06> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁹³ Bjerkem Johan, The Norwegian Progress Party: an established populist party, European View, December 2016, Volume 15, Issue 2, pp 233–243, Internet, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs12290-016-0404-8> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid

⁴⁹⁸ Eremina Natalia, Seredenko Sergei, “*Right Radicalism in Party and Political Systems in Present-day European States*”, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, p. 61

Party rhetoric has a lot in common with right-wing, anti-immigration rhetoric of similar parties in Europe.⁴⁹⁹

The Progress Party can be defined as a right-wing populist party, as it holds anti-establishment and anti-immigration views, and has a strict position on law and order.⁵⁰⁰ Although it is viewed as a right-wing party in the local political context, it managed to successfully re-brand itself into a more mainstream political option, therefore becoming desirable partner for centrists such as Liberal and Christian parties, with which they later formed a governmental coalition.⁵⁰¹ Nevertheless, from time to time members of the Progress Party make controversial statements, such as that made by Minister of Justice and FrP member, Sylvi Listhaug, that the opposition Labour party is supporting terrorists, after parliament voted down FrP's proposal that supreme court is allowed to deprive Norwegian citizenship from individuals without court decision in some conditions.⁵⁰²

Some classified the Progress Party as the "moderate right-wing populist party", who toned down much of its rhetoric in order to enter the government.⁵⁰³ This proved true as in September 2017, the Progress Party, along with the Conservative party and two other minor coalition partners, won narrow victory against left-wing political opponents in coalition around Labor party of Norway.⁵⁰⁴ The message that it sent to voters was clear – the immigrants are taking advantage of the system and the taxes are too high, which obviously grants FrP fair share of the support in the elections.⁵⁰⁵ Since 2013, the Progress Party backed the Conservatives' coalition compromise on tax reforms - including cutting corporate and wealth taxes, which passed with Labour's support, while it managed to obtain support for laws that tightening immigration policies - the number of asylum

⁴⁹⁹ Anniken Høgelund (2003) "A matter of decency? The Progress Party in Norwegian immigration politics", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 29:1, 47-65, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242540829_A_Matter_of_Decency_The_Progress_Party_in_Norwegian_Immigration_Politics Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁰⁰ Bjerkem Johan, *The Norwegian Progress Party: an established populist party*, *European View*, December 2016, Volume 15, Issue 2, pp 233–243, Internet,

⁵⁰¹ Nome Magnus, "The Norwegian shift to the right: 10 short lessons on The Progress Party", *Open Democracy*, 14.10.2013, Internet, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/magnus-nome/norwegian-shift-to-right-10-short-lessons-on-progress-party> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁰² Norway Justice Minister's Post Creates Another Controversy, *The Nordic Page*, 12.03.2018, Internet, <https://www.tnp.no/norway/politics/norway-justice-ministers-post-creates-another-controversy> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁰³ Schultheis Emily, "What Right-Wing Populists Look Like in Norway", *The Atlantic*, 12.09.2017, Internet, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/09/norway-progress-party-populism-immigration/539535/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁰⁴ Henley John, "Norway's rightwing coalition claims victory in general election", *The Guardian*, 11.09.2017, Internet, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/11/norways-rightwing-coalition-set-to-retain-power-by-slender-margin> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁰⁵ Hellenes Thea, "Norvège : le Parti du progrès au gouvernement", *Le Journal International*, 16.10.2013, Internet, https://www.lejournalinternational.fr/Norvege-le-Parti-du-progres-au-gouvernement_a1346.html Accessed on: 25.05.2018

applications fell from over 16,000 in 2015 to about 1,200 in late 2017.⁵⁰⁶ Some concessions were also needed to be made, as the coalition government agreed to rule out oil and gas explorations off the coasts of Lofoten, Vesterålen and Senja, to maintain a strict alcohol policy and to grant permanent residency to the children of illegal immigrants who have lived in Norway for more than three years.⁵⁰⁷ These concessions were not well received with the Progress Party own electorate, as gas exploration and stricter immigration policies were for several years among the party's main electoral promises.⁵⁰⁸ Among major victories of the Progress Party in the coalition government are the formation of a new ministry for immigration and integration, the adoption of stricter rules for granting of permanent residencies in Norway, along with the toughening of the criteria regarding the social benefits that refugees are eligible for.⁵⁰⁹

By their own words, “the Progress Party is a libertarian party that believes in freedom for the individual, lower taxes, prosperity and a limited government that empowers people.”⁵¹⁰ They further establish themselves as a party that is based on “Norway's constitution, Norwegian and Western tradition and cultural heritage based on Christian philosophy”⁵¹¹ Libertarianism plays central role in the ideology of the party, with minimal government interference in daily people's lives but with stricter laws against any crimes committed.⁵¹² The Progress Party reinforce their strict stance towards the immigrants in their 2017-2021 Action Plan, insisting on total ban of burka and hijabs, labeling them “women-discriminating garments”, with promises of additional mechanisms for both integration of immigrants to Norwegian society and additional policies that can prevent mass immigration to Norway.⁵¹³ The Progress Party policies are based on “*people's government, with decentralized political power and decision in elected bodies and are employed to legislate binding referendums as part of our constitutional system*”.⁵¹⁴

In 2001 and 2005 parliament elections in Norway, The Progress Party secured 14.70% and 22.0% of votes respectively.^{515,516} The Progress Party managed to achieve 22.9% of votes in 2009

⁵⁰⁶ Norway's centre-right coalition is re-elected, The Economist, 14.09.2017, Internet, <https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21728996-letting-populists-join-governments-can-be-good-way-defang-them-norways-centre-right-coalition> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁰⁷ Bjerkem Johan, The Norwegian Progress Party: an established populist party, European View, December 2016, Volume 15, Issue 2, pp 233–243, Internet, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs12290-016-0404-8> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid

⁵¹⁰ “Information in English”, Official Progress Party Website, Internet, <https://www.frp.no/english> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵¹¹ “Tjøme FrP Valgprogram for kommunevalget 2015”, Official Progress Party Website, p.2 Internet, https://www.frp.no/~/media/images/vestfold/tjoeme/tj%C3%B8mefrp_valgprogram2015.pdf?la=nb-no Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵¹² “Fremskrittsparties Prinsipper 2009-2013”, Official Progress Party Website, p.4, Internet, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/polsys/data/filer/parti/10355.pdf> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵¹³ “Prinsipp- og handlingsprogram 2017-2021”, Official Progress Party Website, p.65, Internet, <https://www.frp.no/hva-vi-mener/prinsipp-og-handlingsprogram> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵¹⁴ Ibid

⁵¹⁵ Norway Parliament Elections 2001 Results, IPU, Internet, http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2239_01.htm Accessed on: 25.05.2018

parliamentary elections, securing 41 seats out of 169.⁵¹⁷ In 2013, the Progress Party had decline of votes, securing only 16.3%, and losing 12 seats in the parliament.⁵¹⁸ In 2017, it won 15.2%, with 27 seats in parliament (**Figure 5**).⁵¹⁹ Current support for the Progress Party is around the results of the previous parliament elections, with 13.1% of voters support in January and 14% of support in May 2018 (**Table 1**).^{520,521} In 2013, Conservatives formed coalition government with Progress Party and in January 2018, the coalition between them was renewed, with the addition of center-right Liberal party, after some concessions were made over environment and oil exploitation.^{522, 523} In the current coalition government, the Progress Party has the following ministers - Minister of Justice, Public Security and Immigration, Minister of Agriculture and Food, Minister of Fisheries, Minister of Petroleum and Energy, Minister of Transport, Minister of Health and Care Services and Minister of Finance.⁵²⁴ In overall, the Progress Party has 8 out of 20 ministers in the current coalition government, although not the foreign and defense ministry – positions which allow for more concrete shaping of the country’s internal and external policies.

Following members of the Progress Party were prominently represented in the media during past year:

Siv Jensen (born in 1969, Oslo) is the Progress Party leader since 2006 and Finance Minister of Norway since 2013.⁵²⁵ She is known for her pro-Israel and anti-Islam stances among the politicians in Norway.^{526, 527, 528} As a Minister of Finance, she was credited for Norway’s strong economy and for the government’s business-friendly tax cuts.⁵²⁹

⁵¹⁶ Norway Parliament Elections 2005 Results, IPU, Internet, http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2239_05.htm
Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵¹⁷ Norway Parliamentary Elections 2009, Norwegian Directorate of Elections, Internet, <https://valgresultat.no/?type=st&year=2009> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵¹⁸ Norway Parliamentary Elections 2013, Norwegian Directorate of Elections, <https://valgresultat.no/?type=st&year=2013> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵¹⁹ Norway Parliamentary Elections 2017, Norwegian Directorate of Elections, <https://valgresultat.no/?type=st&year=2017> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵²⁰ Norstat for NRK 7. februar 2018, Poll of Pools, 07.02.2018, Internet, <http://www.pollofpolls.no/?cmd=Maling&gallupid=3357> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵²¹ "Sentio for Dagens Næringsliv 24. mai 2018, Poll of polls, 24.05.2018, Internet, <http://www.pollofpolls.no/?cmd=Maling&gallupid=3414> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵²² "Norway's Conservatives to form coalition with anti-immigration party", The Guardian, 01.10.2013, Internet, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/01/norway-conservatives-coalition-immigration> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵²³ "Norway confirms new minority coalition government after negotiations", The Local, 15.01.2018, Internet, <https://www.thelocal.no/20180115/norway-confirms-new-minority-coalition-government-after-negotiations> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵²⁴ Official Website of Norway's Government, Internet, <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dep/id933/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵²⁵ Siv Jensen Official Biography, The Progress Party Website, Internet, <https://www.frp.no/frp-i-regjering/sivjensen>
Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵²⁶ Tommelstad Bjørnar, Politisjefen i Rosengård «arresterer» Siv Jensen, VG, 23.02.2009, Internet, <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/n3M4J/politisjefen-i-rosengaard-arresterer-siv-jensen> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

Ketil Solvik-Olsen (born in 1972, Time) is the Second Vice President of FrP and Minister of Transport since 2013. In 2005 he was elected to the Storting, where he was a member of the Standing Committee on Energy and the Environment from 2005 to 2011, and a delegate to the United Nations General Assembly from 2011 to 2013.^{530,531}

Christian Tybring-Gjedde (born in 1963, Oslo) is a career politician and Progress Party member, who served first as a member of the parliament's Finance Committee until the 2013, when he went to the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.⁵³² He currently holds a post of second vice-chairman there⁵³³. In 2010, he came into the media spotlights after he co-authored op-ed titled "Dream from Dysneland" for the *Aftenposten* – Norway's largest printed newspapers in the circulation, where he attacked Labour party's open-immigration policy, while stating that the Norwegian culture is being expelled due to ethnic-Norwegians slowly becoming minority in many places.^{534,535,536}

⁵²⁷ "Advarte mot 11. september i Norge, Dagbladet", 12.02.2010, Internet, <https://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/advarte-mot-11-september-i-norge/64952436> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵²⁸ Fremstad Mads, "Jensen lovet jødiske ledere at Frp ikke vil innføre omskjæringsforbud", ABC Nyheter, 28.06.2017, Internet, <https://www.abcnyheter.no/nyheter/politikk/2017/06/28/195313426/jensen-lovet-jodiske-ledere-frp-ikke-vil-innfoere-omskjaeringsforbud> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵²⁹ Norway's centre-right coalition is re-elected, *The Economist*, 14.09.2017, Internet, <https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21728996-letting-populists-join-governments-can-be-good-way-defang-them-norways-centre-right-coalition> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵³⁰ Ketil Solvik-Olsen Biography, Official Website of the Progress Party, Internet, <https://www.frp.no/frp-i-regjering/solvikolsen#> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵³¹ Ketil Solvik-Olsen Biography, The Norway Parliament Website, Internet, <https://www.stortinget.no/no/Representanter-og-komiteer/Representantene/Representantfordeling/Representant/?perid=KETS&tab=Biography> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵³² Christian Tybring-Gjedde Biography, The Norway Parliament, Internet <https://www.stortinget.no/no/Representanter-og-komiteer/Representantene/Representantfordeling/Representant/?perid=CT> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵³³ Ibid

⁵³⁴ Aldridge Øystein, Henriksen Arve, "Aftenposten har det høyeste avisopplaget i Norge", *Aftenposten*, 03.03.2015, Internet, <https://www.aftenposten.no/kultur/i/8x5Q/Aftenposten-har-det-hoyeste-avisopplaget-i-Norge> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵³⁵ Håndlykken Tora Bakke, "Tybring-Gjedde: - Jeg representerer flertallet", *VG*, 27.08.2010, Internet, <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/e9OEQ/tybring-gjedde-jeg-representerer-flertallet> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵³⁶ Sæther Eivind, "Spåmannen, Dagbladet", 11.13.2013, Internet, <https://www.dagbladet.no/magasinet/spamannen/63984000> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

The Progress Party's stance on Russia

The Progress Party can be seen as a political option in Norway that, although to a degree nationalistic, shares positive sentiment towards Russia, stressing the importance of having good relations and a need for cooperation.

In October 2015, Christian Tybring-Gjedde, criticized NATO Secretary General for having an excessively strong language against Russia and President Vladimir Putin, adding that Russia is a crucial ally in fight against the ISIS and that NATO and Russia should create a united front against terrorists.⁵³⁷ Tybring-Gjedde continued to express positive stance towards Russia, as in July 2017, he stated that *“United States are gliding away from Europe”* and that it is important to have good relations with Russia and China. In addition, he highlighted that *“United States has an interest in keeping Russia out of markets (of Norway) and losing competition”*.⁵³⁸

In August the same year, Tybring-Gjedde asked Norway's Foreign Minister Børge Brende to remove sanctions against Russia, stating that *“must realize that Russia is not going to leave the Crimea”*, and if Russia is complying with Minsk agreements, then sanctions should be removed.⁵³⁹ Bengt Rune Strifeldt repeated the call for removing sanctions against Russia few days later, stating that *“If we are to use the potential which lies in our neighbourly relations with Russia we have to work for the abolishment of the sanctions, he have to try to solve the issues on a very different level than to introduce sanctions”*, while adding that *“We have a very good cooperation with Russia, we have had it for generations, it is a huge market for goods and people, and it is of special importance for us living here north in Finnmark”*⁵⁴⁰

Two months after, commenting on alleged Russian training of amphibious assault of Svalbard archipelago during “Zapad 2017” military exercise, Tybring-Gjedde said that he was actively engaging in dialogue with Russia and that *“in a world where there is so much uncertainty, it is important that we have dialogue with Russia”*.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁷ “Government Party FrP in Norway: Russia Can Be a Good Ally”, The Nordic Page, 02.10.2015, Internet, <https://www.tnp.no/norway/politics/5098-government-party-frp-in-norway-russia-can-be-a-good-ally> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵³⁸ Ask Alf Ole, "Christian Tybring-Gjedde: «Du hører ikke Børge Brende ofte si at norsk utenrikspolitikk ligger fast lenger, det er bra.»", Aftenposten, 04.07.2017, Internet, <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/politikk/i/oqwPW/Christian-Tybring-Gjedde-Du-horer-ikke-Borge-Brende-ofte-si-at-norsk-utenrikspolitikk-ligger-fast-lenger-det-er-bra> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵³⁹ "Høyre og Frp er uenige om Russland-sanksjoner" ABC Nyheter, 02.08.2017, Internet, <https://www.abcnyheter.no/nyheter/2017/08/02/195321108/hoyre-og-frp-er-uenige-om-russland-sanksjoner-> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁴⁰ Staalesen Atle, "Norway's rightwing Progress Party wavers over Russia sanctions", The Barents Observer, 07.08.2017, Internet, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/2017/08/norways-rightwing-progress-party-wavers-over-russia-sanctions> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁴¹ Ask Ole Alf, "Fikk ikke visum i februar – nå vurderer Stortinget ny tur til Moskva", Aftenposten, 18.10.2017, Internet, <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/politikk/i/vvEK5/Fikk-ikke-visum-i-februar-na-vurderer-Stortinget-ny-tur-til-Moskva> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

In September 2017, Ketil Solvik-Olsen, FrP member and Minister of Transport and Communications opened, jointly with his Russian counterpart a new bridge between Norway and Russia, stating that such cross-border infrastructure was important for developing of cooperation between the two countries. In addition to this, other joint projects were being considered, such as interconnection of fiber optic cables across the border and visa-free border crossing for residents of the border zone.⁵⁴² The same month, Tybring-Gjedde stated that good relationship with Russia is crucial, and that Norway has to find a way to cooperate with Vladimir Putin, and not define him as an enemy, like the United States and the rest of the Europe did.⁵⁴³ State Secretary for the Ministry of Industry and Fisheries Roy Angelvik (FrP), commenting on significant drop of export value of seafood exports, stated in January 2018 that “*there is too little focus on how important an opening of the Russian market may be for Norwegian seafood industry*”, and that he was looking forward to the opening of Russian markets in August same year, as it would lead to a significant increase of the average seafood export price for the rest of the 2018.⁵⁴⁴

In March 2018, Bård Hoksrud, a FrP member and observer of Norway’s parliamentary delegation to the OSCE, stated that he didn’t witness irregularities in the polling stations during the Russian presidential elections, in contrast to the accusations of the Russian opposition observes that there were cases of electoral irregularities.⁵⁴⁵ The same month, Christian Tybring-Gjedde stated that he believes that the West's penalty and sanction policy towards Russia is deeply wrong, and that “it is less productive to maintain Russia as aggressive while insisting that we want to normalize relations with the country.”⁵⁴⁶ In addition, he underlined the importance of understanding the events that occurred in Crimea in broader historic and geo-political context, while stressing the need for Norway to be partners with Russia in the fight against international terrorism, which he sees as a much bigger threat to Norway’s security than anything else.⁵⁴⁷ When FrP member Tor Mikkjel Wara became new Norway’s Justice, Preparedness and Immigration Minister in April 2018, his party colleagues believed that the relationship between Norway and Russia will be one of several important things for him, as he wished to focus on the northern regions and the Russian border crossing.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴² "Oppgradert E105 mellom Kirkenes og Murmansk åpnet", The Norway Government Official Website, 29.09.2017, Internet, <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/oppgradert-e105-mellom-kirkenes-og-murmansk-apnet/id2573287/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁴³ Brunmark Kristine, "Frp-Tybring-Gjeddes drøm: Bli utenriksminister", ABC Nyheter, 12.09.2017, Internet, <https://www.abcnyheter.no/nyheter/politikk/2017/09/11/195331583/frp-tybring-gjeddes-drom-bli-utenriksminister> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁴⁴ Berglihn Harald, Bjerknes Christian, "Bommet på 100 mrd. – Avhengig av Russland for ny mulighet", Dagens Naeringsliv, 08.01.2018, Internet, <https://www.dn.no/nyheter/2018/01/08/2057/Havbruk/bommet-pa-100-mrd-avhengig-av-russland-for-ny-mulighet> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁴⁵ "OSSE gir valget i Russland godkjent-stempel", Adresseavisen, 19.03.2018, Internet, <https://www.adressa.no/nyheter/utenriks/2018/03/19/OSSE-gir-valget-i-Russland-godkjent-stempel-16314990.ece> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁴⁶ Nilsen Kjell Arild, "Frp holder armlengdes avstand til Moskva", Agenda Magasin, 08.06.2017, Internet, <https://agendamagasin.no/intervjuer/frp-holder-armlengdes-avstand-moskva/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid

⁵⁴⁸ Gangnes Lovise Ingeborg, Løset Kjetil, Salater Roy-Arne, "Tor Mikkjel Wara (53) blir ny justisminister", TV 2, 04.04.2018, Internet, <https://www.tv2.no/a/9778937/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

It can be summarized that:

- The Progress Party sees Russia as a partner to be cooperated with, rather to be confronted
- The Progress Party presence in the Norway government is a positive boost to Norway-Russia relations
- If the Progress Party achieves even greater role in some future government of Norway, Norway-Russia relations are highly likely to reach historic maximum.

Russia has an unexpected ally in the Progress Party, and it needs to cultivate this kind of relationship. This can lead not only to economic benefits for both countries, but increased political capital of Russia in other Nordic countries too. If the Progress Party obtains majority in some future coalition government, it can shape and influence Norway's policies in a much higher degree than within the current levels. Thus, with Progress Party being a very pragmatic party in its core, it may move forward with the decision to unilaterally lift the sanctions against Russia. In addition, if high level of trust is achieved between Russia and hypothetically FrP-dominated government of Norway, perhaps the FrP will less be likely to advocate larger NATO presence in Norway, a move that would benefit Russia greatly. It would be prudent from the side of Russia to further develop positive ties with individuals within the FrP and Progress Party as whole.

Progress Party's stance on NATO

The Progress Party can be seen as a staunch NATO supporter, as it is visible from both their party program and information found at their official website. The Progress Party program states that the FrP supports NATO and believes that it ensures "safety and global peace", and that Norway should continue its membership in the future, while constantly developing closer ties with allied countries.⁵⁴⁹ The Progress Party also emphasizes the North Sea Strategy, which includes UK, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and Norway, and focuses on joint training, operations, command and control system.⁵⁵⁰ In their political program, FrP states that due to the activities in the Arctic, Norway's marine areas are becoming increasingly important, along with the Norway's fishing resources and deposits of oil and gas in them. That makes Norway's military presence necessary, in order to preserve the country's access to such strategic resources.⁵⁵¹

The Progress Party states that any potential crisis must be handled initially by the Norway's forces, while at the same time a corridor for the allied reinforcements must be maintained. In addition, it claims that Norway is facing many challenges, including international organized crime,

⁵⁴⁹ Official Website of the Progress Party, Internet, <https://www.frp.no/english> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁵⁰ The Progress Party Information on NATO, Official Website of the Progress Party, Internet, <https://www.frp.no/tema/forsvar/aliansepolitikk-og-nato> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁵¹ Ibid

terrorism and cyber security.⁵⁵² Considering these facts, FrP's stance is that Norway has to have an active role in NATO, as it is the cornerstone of Norway's defense policy, and that the country has to participate in joint training and exercises with other NATO member states. FrP singles out the United States as the most important ally of Norway, and stresses the importance of continuing developing strategic partnership between Norway and USA. FrP also sees the cooperation between Sweden and Finland as a natural one, since the party views both those countries holding same values as Norway, and concludes that it is important to strengthen Nordic cooperation. Considering the defense budget, the goal of 2% GDP for NATO participation has to be met no longer than 2024.⁵⁵³ In the summary of their position towards NATO, FrP states that it will ensure continued Norwegian membership and influence in NATO through active political and military participation, continue to strengthen the alliance with the United States as the closest ally of Norway, and advocate that Norway serves as a country for both NATO training and infrastructure, in order to enhance Norway's defense capabilities.⁵⁵⁴

In April 2016, Siv Jensen confirmed Norway's and the Progress Party's commitment to NATO and in the position of the Finance Minister, announced the plans for rebuilding of Norway's military forces, such as procurement of US F-35 fighter jets that were planned to replace Norway's older F-16 fighter jets.⁵⁵⁵ In January 2018, Labor Party of Norway announced that it wishes that the country works actively on achieving global nuclear disarmament within the framework of the Non-proliferation Agreement NPT, with a long-term goal of an international ban on nuclear weapons. This sparked debate among political parties in Norway, with the Christian Tybring-Gjedde from FrP stating that these are populist moves from the Labor Party, and that NATO's central member states have even greater need to have nuclear weapons in order to provide sufficient deterrent effect against so-called rogue states that can acquire nuclear weapons and use them against what Tybring-Gjedde calls democratic countries.⁵⁵⁶ In April 2018, Siv Jensen strongly expressed her support towards Norway's 2% GDP goal of NATO participation by 2024, stressing that army forces must not be weakened in any way.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵² The Progress Party Information on NATO, Official Website of the Progress Party, Internet, <https://www.frp.no/tema/forsvar/aliansepolitikk-og-nato> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁵⁴ "Prinsipp- og handlingsprogram 2017-2021", Official Progress Party Website, p.14, Internet, <https://www.frp.no/hva-vi-mener/prinsipp-og-handlingsprogram> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁵⁵ Alexandersen, Rune S., "Siv Jensen: – Forsvaret skal styrkes", AldriMer, 23.04.2016, Internet, <https://www.aldrimer.no/siv-jensen-forsvaret-skal-styrkes/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁵⁶ Persen Kjell, "FrP om Aps atomvåpenforbud: – NATO blir stående som gissel", TV 2, 01.05.2017, Internet, <https://www.tv2.no/a/9081183/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁵⁷ "Hær og Landmakt på Lavkarbo", ABC Nyheter, 11.04.2018, Internet, <https://www.abcnyheter.no/nyheter/politikk/2018/04/10/195386635/haer-og-landmakt-pa-lavkarbo> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

In short:

- Progress Party has strong pro-NATO stance and sees this alliance as cornerstone of national defense
- It will advocate for further increase of Norway's NATO participation, both financial and military
- Progress Party strongly supports military and political cooperation with United States, as the main NATO Member State

As seen both from the official documents and statements, Progress Party is not likely to question Norway's role in NATO anytime in the future. The only direction that can be expected if the Progress Party obtains larger degree of influence in government is higher commitment in this alliance. Nevertheless, given the statements of the Progress Party leadership towards Russia, that signal the will for cooperation, there might be space for some degree of mutual cooperation between both Norway's and Russia's security interests, as development of positive relations might curb the need of Norway for additional NATO bases and/or security personnel, which in turn might benefit Russia also as it would not feel threatened by large NATO presence near its borders.

The Progress Party's stance on EU

Based on their political program, the Progress Party certainly falls under the Eurosceptic political parties. It declares that the European Union was established in its time with the purpose of promoting peace, freedom and trade in Europe, just to become oversized bureaucracy in Brussels which places obstacles in the way of people of Europe. This places the Progress Party firmly against the Norwegian EU membership, which is further confirmed by their statement that "*The Progress Party support the peoples' right to a referendum on a possible membership in the European Union. Membership will entail a large decision with consequences for generations to come, and only the people directly should be able to make those kinds of decisions.*", found on their official website.^{558,559}

In addition, Fpr advocate for stricter border control, as some Schengen country members are caving under pressure of illegal border crossings and mass migrations.⁵⁶⁰ Further in their political program, the Progress Party states that it will work against continued membership of Norway in the EU, on making exports of oil, gas and fish to be subjected to Norwegian law and jurisdiction, re-

⁵⁵⁸ "Prinsipp- og handlingsprogram 2017-2021", Official Progress Party Website, pp.56-57, Internet, <https://www.frp.no/hva-vi-mener/prinsipp-og-handlingsprogram> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁵⁹ The Official Website of the Progress Party, Internet, <https://www.frp.no/english> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid

thinking Norway's membership in Schengen zone if other member states cannot control their borders, and re-negotiating parts of the EEA.⁵⁶¹

The Agreement on the European Economic Area, which entered into force on 1 January 1994, brings together the EU Member States and the three EEA EFTA States — Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway — in a single market, referred to as the "Internal Market".⁵⁶² Although EEA does not cover regular EU policies such as Common Agriculture and Fisheries Policies, it still contains provisions on various aspects of trade in agricultural and fish products.⁵⁶³ Fishery and seafood industry is especially critical for Norwegian economy, as the Norway's profits in 2016 from seafood export reached record high of \$10.5 billion worth of seafood to the global market, representing nearly 10% of the world's total seafood supplies in that year.⁵⁶⁴ Therefore, the Progress Party recognizes the importance of the EEA for the Norwegian industry, but at the same time, in its political program, it vows to improve this agreement in order to suit more Norwegian interests. The Progress Party states that in some areas, EEA must be interpreted stricter, or even be renegotiated in order to "*better safeguard Norwegian sovereignty and national interests*".⁵⁶⁵

In April 2018, Per Sandberg, a member of the Progress Party and Norwegian Minister of Fisheries, stated that Norway has to renegotiate the EEA agreement as the import duties on processed fish in the EU put strain to Norway's own economy, and that "*full market access to the EU is top priority for the government*".⁵⁶⁶

Another issue that recently came up in Norway relating the EU was the signing of agreement with EU's energy union, which aims to provide EU citizens and businesses with "affordable, secure and clean energy."⁵⁶⁷ The market would be overseen by EU's Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER), and the decision of the coalition government of Norway to support such deal caused divisions among members of Parliament, Norway's top opposition Labour Party and the general public, as there are fears that joining the energy union and participating in ACER would increase electricity rates.⁵⁶⁸ While Terje Sjøviknes (FrP), Minister of Petroleum and Energy supported the deal stating that there is nothing in ACER that would raise the costs of electricity rates, Iceland, another member of EEA EFTA, is currently declining to sign it, which is an action

⁵⁶¹ The Official Website of the Progress Party, Internet, <https://www.frp.no/english> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁶² EEA Agreement, European Free Trade Association, Internet, <http://www.efta.int/eea/eea-agreement> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁶³ Ibid

⁵⁶⁴ "Norway Fishing Industry: World's Second Largest Seafood Exporter", BizVibe Blog, 11.10.2017, Internet, <https://www.bizvibe.com/blog/norway-fishing-industry-largest-exporter/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁶⁵ "Prinsipp- og handlingsprogram 2017-2021", Official Progress Party Website, pp.56-57, Internet, <https://www.frp.no/hva-vi-mener/prinsipp-og-handlingsprogram> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁶⁶ "Sjømat-topp vil ha EU-kamp om fisketoll", E24, 15.04.2018, Internet, <https://e24.no/naeringsliv/fiskeri/sjoemat-topp-vil-ha-eu-kamp-om-fisketoll/24310915> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁶⁷ ACER: Mission and Objectives, Official ACER Website, Internet, https://www.acer.europa.eu/en/The_agency/Mission_and_Objectives/Pages/default.aspx Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁶⁸ Ochs Rebecca, "Norwegians divided over EU energy union", European Scientist, 12.03.2018, Internet, <https://www.europeanscientist.com/en/energy/norwegians-divided-eu-energy-union-decision/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

similar to veto in the EEA EFTA relations.^{569,570} This is an interesting development for the Progress Party, as they are not political option that pushes for deeper integration with the EU. Will this have impact on its voting body, remains to be seen.

It can be concluded that:

- Progress Party will not push for Norway's membership in the EU,
- nevertheless, it will continue to support trade agreements, if they are re-negotiated in more beneficial framework for Norway's own national interests,
- while in government, the Progress Party was not always consisted with its electoral promises (ACER affair).

The Progress Party's view is more pragmatical than ideological – what is beneficial for Norway's national interests will be adopted, such as EEA (although some parts needs to be renegotiated to better suit the Progress Party taste), and most recently ACER agreement (which is seen as beneficial by FrP). What is not – the Progress Party will be against, such as the EU membership. Since Norway is not part of the EU, the Progress Party does not mention in its official documents a need for the EU to be reformed from its current state, or similar propositions that are present in some other conservative parties. While it states that EU moved from its original design to a more federalized one, it also acknowledges that Norway should not seek membership in the EU, as it would hurt its national interests. Therefore, when anticipating further EU policies from the Progress Party, they would need to be assessed first through the prism of “Norway first” kind of stance.

As stated above, the Progress Party is not a typical right-wing party of Europe, although in the Norway political climate, it can be considered so. Even though it is based on conservative Christian values, it also show a high degree of flexibility and pragmatism, such as support for Israel and even suggested cooperation with Russia in order to combat international terrorism. Therefore, the Progress Party places interests of Norway first, as its seen in arguing for better relations with Russia and lifting of sanctions against it, as it would greatly benefit Norway's export capacity. Same tactic is seen in re-negotiating EEA with the EU where Norway feels its interests are jeopardized, while casting doubt on the efficiency of the current Schengen system and its capacity to prevent future waves of mass migration. The Progress Party calculated that the EU membership would do more harm to Norway's interests than current levels of mutual cooperation, and therefore it should not be expected for the party to change their stance in the future, especially since French president

⁵⁶⁹ Gjerstad Synnøve, "Stortinget sier ja til Acer", TV 2, 22.03.2018, Internet, <https://www.tv2.no/a/9759372> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

⁵⁷⁰ Kleveland Kathrine, "Erna Solberg må vise Island respekt", ABC Nyheter, 14.04.2018, Internet, <https://www.abcnyheter.no/nyheter/norge/2018/04/14/195387717/erna-solberg-ma-vise-island-respekt> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

Emmanuel Macron called for even greater integration of the EU.⁵⁷¹ And with the same reason, the Progress Party will continue to support Norway's NATO membership, and especially its alliance with the United States, as the cornerstone of Norway's defense policy. Nevertheless, the Progress Party's larger percentage of parliament seats and larger part in government can be beneficial for Norway-Russia relations, especially if in the future, the Progress Party obtains the control of Foreign Ministry. In turn, Russia should support economic and political initiatives coming from the Progress Party ministers, in order to enhance relations with this important country of the Nordic bloc. If mutual trust can be built, then perhaps the Progress Party can also feel that there is no need for such staunch pro-NATO stance, since there won't be any threats to its security, at least in the shape of hypothetical full-scale foreign invasion.

⁵⁷¹ Simms Brendan, Schade Daniel, "Europe after the storm: how Emmanuel Macron plans to transform the EU", NewStatesman, 19.02.2018, Internet, <https://www.newstatesman.com/world/europe/2018/02/europe-after-storm-how-emmanuel-macron-plans-transform-eu> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

4. Conclusion

It is already evident knowledge that the European political scene is experiencing “interesting times”, with rise of the nationalist/populist parties and increased division among EU member states (mostly on the West-East Europe axis). Moreover, Europe is facing additional challenges from its “near abroad”, such as wars, divisions and insurgencies in the Middle East and Northern Africa, as well as somewhat erratic behavior of the most important military power for the continent– the United State of America. All of this presents new challenges for the Russian Federation too, which needs to constantly adapt to the fast changes that are occurring in these regions. Therefore, understanding of political shifts in the European voting patterns and governments is one of the keys for successful formulation of new policies and strategies.

The parties that were researched in this scientific work were, those parties that were not so much present in the main-stream media, as the right-wing parties of the Western Europe are. Nevertheless, the countries of the parties’ origin are all holding a significance for Russian Federation – whether they can be potentially close allies inside the EU (such as Austria and Hungary), that are sharing near-abroad and have significant Russian ethnic-minority (Estonia), or with which Russia can establish even better cooperation in the critically-important region (such as Finland, Sweden and Norway).

This work for the first time compiles detailed examination of the politically-relevant right-wing parties from the Eastern Europe and the Nordic countries that are holding high significance for Russia’s foreign and security environment, while giving answer on their political stances towards Russian Federation, EU and the NATO – questions of high relevance for Russia. Taking into account the current voter support for the examined political parties, as well as their results from the last national parliament elections in their respective countries, the importance of understanding their motives for Russian Federation are more than clear. Not only are some of the parties already in coalition governments of their national states, but the next cycle of national elections could bring additional changes to these governments, with other political options attaining a degree for the first time.

In the **Table 1** are listed current support of the examined parties (with the first poll rating dating from January and the second dating from May), last parliament election results, and finally, the current status in the political life of their national states – are they in the opposition or in the coalition government.

Party Name	Current poll rating (01.-05. 2018)	Last parliament elections	In the government
FPÖ (AUSTRIA)	26% - 31%	26% (2017 Austrian legislative elections)	YES
Jobbik (HUNGARY)	18% - N/A	19.06% (2018 Hungarian parliamentary election)	NO
EKRE (ESTONIA)	18.4% - 15%	8.1% (2015 Estonian parliament elections)	NO
Swedish Democrats (SWEDEN)	21.9% - 20%	12.9% (Swedish general elections 2014)	NO
The Progress Party (NORWAY)	13.1% - 14%	16.3% (Norwegian parliamentary elections 2013)	YES
The Finns Party (FINLAND)	9.6% - 7.7%	17.7% (Finnish parliamentary elections 2015)	NO (YES until June 2017)

Table 1 – Current state of support for researched political parties, their last election results and whether they are part of government coalition or not.

Some of the examined political parties currently have more voter support than they managed to win on previous elections. This can be explained with the shifting political and/or economic situation in both national countries and EU as whole. As said before, with each new crisis that EU (as well as their national states, with pro-Brussels governing parties) faces, right-wing and conservative parties can expect to experience a rise in their support and popularity. This is perhaps not so much due to their political ideology, as it is to their populist rhetorics and voters' protest against the ruling parties.

The **Table 2** summarizes the positions of the examined parties towards the Russian Federation. Based on the conclusions obtained during the research, three different stances are covered:

1. **Negative stance towards Russia** – this represents the overall negative view of Russia, based on the party documents and statements of the leadership. The party views Russia along the lines of either adversary, threat to national security or hostile force with which is not possible to negotiate, or there is no will to do so. If there is a political will for cooperation or dialogue, it is not expressed enough in the public, or it is under-represented in the party documents and/or leadership statements.
2. **Neutral stance towards Russia** – the political party sees Russia neither as an adversary, nor a partner with whom it can or wishes to establish closer connections. The current level of national interaction with the Russian Federation is satisfactory at best. Alternatively, the party seeks neither deeper cooperation nor confrontation with Russia.
3. **Positive stance towards Russia** – the examined party openly favors cooperation with Russia, and/or sees in it a friendly country with shared values. Statements of party leadership are positive towards deeper interaction between the national state and Russian Federation.

In general, most of the researched parties have either neutral or positive stance towards Russia. Some of them are more pragmatical than ideological, and understand the value of cooperation and good relations with Russia. Others see it as a country with national, family and religious values that are counter-weight to the left-wing or liberal ideology dominant in the both Brussels and pro-EU party discourse. Finally, some of the parties view Russia as a crucial ally in the fight against the international terrorism, as the Russian Federation involvement in Syria demonstrates the willingness to combat the threat of international terrorist organizations. Russia should explore the ways in which it can enhance the cooperation and understanding between political options which harbor positive sentiment towards it, as they can prove valuable allies in Europe provided they attain a degree of influence and power in the future governments of their national states.

Party Name	Stance on Russia	Comment
FPÖ (AUSTRIA)	Positive	FPO is openly supporting Russia, and it is seen as a major ally inside the Austrian government. FPO wishes to take down sanctions against Russia which in their opinion hurt Austrian economy.
Jobbik (HUNGARY)	Positive	Russia is seen as a natural ally of the European nations and as a defender of Christian and traditional values in Europe, opposing Euro-Atlantic “liberalism”. Willing to cooperate.
EKRE (ESTONIA)	Negative	Russia is perceived as an existential threat for Estonia. Irredentist policies towards Russian Federation are advocated.
Swedish Democrats (SWEDEN)	Neutral	Although critical of Russian government in some aspects, they are neither basing their ideology on anti-Russian sentiment, nor stimulating such a sentiment among their voters.
The Progress Party (NORWAY)	Positive	In many instances, party leadership expressed desire for Norway to cooperate with Russia and to lift the sanctions imposed against it.
The Finns Party (FINLAND)	Neutral	Although Russia is seen as a threat to the Finland’s national security, the party believes that sanctions against Russia need to be lifted. There are grounds for economic and cultural developments between Finland and Russia.

Table 2 – Examined parties’ stance on Russia

Table 3 summarizes the positions of the researched parties stances towards the NATO. As before, the political stances are divided into 3 levels, based on the conclusions obtained during the research:

1. Negative stance towards the NATO – the researched party is fully against the NATO as an alliance. It can either be against national country’s membership in NATO, or support anti-NATO political option if the national country chooses to conduct referendum on alliance membership. The party in question can either favor a more localized alliance over NATO, and/or strongly disagree with NATO-led military campaigns around the world.

2. Neutral stance towards the NATO – the party is not against the NATO membership or against the possible membership if the national state is seeking it. In some cases the political party may fully support NATO membership, although it can be highly critical on how military, political and financial resources in the alliance are spent, or it might not be for hosting of large number of military personnel or bases on its territory.

3. Positive stance towards the NATO - The party fully supports the national state’s NATO membership, or will support pro-NATO political options on the potential NATO membership referendum. The party fully supports not only membership, but also active involvement of national armed forces in NATO military campaigns around the world.

The prevailing negative sentiment towards NATO among the researched parties can be explained with the fact that part of their ideology derives from nationalism, where the defense of the country’s own borders with its own resources is considered a priority, rather than relying on foreign alliances. That is the case especially if NATO is conducting offensive operation overseas – nationalistic parties tend to be conservative with its nation’s resources, and are not in favor of financing some of the NATO member states military adventures. Nevertheless, each party’s national state is in a specific situation regarding local and international alliances, each case for or against NATO membership should be viewed and analyzed separately.

Party Name	Stance on NATO	Comment
FPÖ (AUSTRIA)	Negative	FPO is against Austrian's NATO membership. NATO is seen as a long arm of US geopolitical interests, which start conflicts around the world and push away Russia from European cooperation.
Jobbik (HUNGARY)	Negative	NATO is an offensive alliance that damages Hungarian national interests. The party denounces NATO efforts to escalate the conflict with Russia.
EKRE (ESTONIA)	Neutral	NATO guarantees Estonia's security, but it has to be less involved in foreign missions (including Estonia's military) and more dedicated to protection of Eastern European allies.
Swedish Democrats (SWEDEN)	Negative	Against Sweden's NATO membership, favoring a more local regional alliance, although the party is not against using resources from the PFP program between Sweden and NATO.
The Progress Party (NORWAY)	Positive	NATO guarantees Norway's security. Norway should be more integrated in the alliance.
The Finns Party (FINLAND)	Negative	Holds a prevalently negative view towards Finland's NATO membership. Although the party's members are somewhat divided on this issue, the Finns Party in general is advocating military-neutral Finland.

Table 3 – Examined parties' stance on NATO

What are the positions of the examined parties towards European Union is summarized in **Table 4**. The grading of the political stances is again divided into three levels based on the conclusions obtained during the research:

1. **Negative stance towards the EU** – The researched party has a negative stance towards the current form of the European Union. It could either seek a national referendum on EU exit, or support the anti-EU position on an EU referendum if the country is not a member of the union. Alternatively, it could seek to reform the European Union from within. The party is against increased federalization and surrendering of national sovereignty to the Brussels’s bureaucracy.

2. **Neutral stance towards the EU** – the party is currently content with the achieved level of integration with the EU. The researched party does not seek a national “exit” from the EU, nor does it seek deeper integrations besides the current level. Possibly it doesn’t support the full federalization of the EU, but at the same time, it most likely does not seek reformation of the EU in the direction of further de-federalization.

3. **Positive stance towards the EU** – the party fully supports all the EU integrations or the potential EU membership of the national state. It embraces the increased federalization of the EU, and is strongly against any kind of national “exit” from the EU, or potential EU reformation in the opposite direction.

The researched political parties have in general a negative stance towards the EU, and they can be considered as anti-federalist political options in their national countries. Most of them are actually founding their programs on anti-federal EU sentiment, and being populist and nationalistic in nature, advocate for the reforms that will lead to the new/old concept of EU – a loose political and economic union of sovereign nation-states. Since most of these parties hold a very small number of MPs in the European parliament, it is questionable if they really can induce the desired reforms, even if they were in coalition with other anti-federalist parties. But their presence in the governments of EU member states and questions they raise about the effectiveness of the current system certainly add to the EU dialogue and the path of future development that is ahead for the union.

In addition, this is an indicator that their support will rise or fall with the success of the future EU consolidation and its capability to unitedly respond to any crises that would occur in the future. If economic disparity increases, along with the unemployment and immigration rates, those governments that fully support the EU may find opposition among the population, which might vote for conservative political options that can offer “less EU and more national” programs and political options.

Party Name	Stance on EU	Comment
FPÖ (AUSTRIA)	Negative	Anti-Federalist EU party that rejects forced multiculturalism and supports Europe of sovereign nations.
Jobbik (HUNGARY)	Negative	Anti-federalist EU party that wishes to reform the EU along the lines of sovereign nation states.
EKRE (ESTONIA)	Negative	Against the federalization of the EU, and supports potential referendum on Estonia's EU "exit" if the union stops to serve Estonian's national and security interests.
Swedish Democrats (SWEDEN)	Negative	An openly anti-EU party that supports referendum on Sweden's EU membership, or at least the reformation of the EU along the lines of sovereign nation states.
The Progress Party (NORWAY)	Neutral	Will not push for the Norway's membership to EU, but will continue to economically cooperate with it (EEA and ACER).
The Finns Party (FINLAND)	Negative	Against federalization of Europe and supports the reforms along the lines of sovereign nation states. It will conduct referendum on EU exit as soon as the political climate allows for that.

Table 4 – Examined parties' stance on EU

Finally, **Table 5** presents a more simplified summary of the main results and the in-depth research presented in the previous chapters. It should serve only as a reference point, since each party's positions on the corresponding topics are summarized in just a single word (positive/negative/neutral) without any detailed explanation.

Political Party	Stance on Russia	Stance on NATO	Stance on EU
FPÖ (AUSTRIA)	Positive	Negative	Negative
Jobbik (HUNGARY)	Positive	Negative	Negative
EKRE (ESTONIA)	Negative	Neutral	Negative
Swedish Democrats (SWEDEN)	Neutral	Negative	Negative
The Progress Party (NORWAY)	Positive	Positive	Neutral
The Finns Party (FINLAND)	Neutral	Negative	Negative

Table 5 – Summary of the main results

The goal of this thesis was to examine political positions of major right-wing parties in Eastern Europe and Nordic countries, i.e. those parties that can or are currently influencing policies of their national governments. Russian Federation has to prepare a strategy on how to deal with the coalition governments that include either Russia-friendly or Russia-hostile political parties, in order to capitalize on possible political shifting of European governments. In addition, as this research showed, most of these parties have goals that can correspond to Russian interests concerning the EU and NATO. The European Union in its current form is guided by an inefficient bureaucratic apparatus that is rapidly losing the support across the continent, especially by the “new members” from the Eastern Europe and those who are waiting in line to be accepted in the future, such as Balkan countries. As French President Macron stated, “Europe is almost in the state of the civil war” between pro-federalist western European governments⁵⁷² and those Central and Eastern European countries that favor more national sovereignty over supra-national state.

⁵⁷² Crisp James, “Macron warns of European 'civil war' over growing East-West divide”, The Telegraph, 17.04.2018, Internet, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/04/17/macron-warns-european-civil-war-growing-east-west-divide/> Accessed on: 25.05.2018

It could be argued that Russia would find more fertile ground for cooperation, trade and understanding if the EU reformed in the direction of sovereign nation-states that are taking part in volunteer economic alliance. Countries that are EU member states sometimes cannot express their independent foreign policy, as they are bound with the Common Security and Defense policy of the EU, and often have to support harmful decisions of the Brussels towards their national economies, such are for example the sanctions against Russia. Most of the parties examined in this thesis would like to change this kind of behavior of their countries, and if they stay true to their political programs and statements of leadership, they should be given full support for cooperation from the side of the Russian Federation.

In addition, it would be prudent for Russia to support those governments which are holding a negative or a neutral sentiment towards NATO. This could be done, for example, by giving support for creation of local alliances, which build the sense of security for the countries in question but potentially lack offensive capabilities against Russia. Another approach would be by creation of stable security environment which wouldn't trigger the need for deeper integration with NATO, or a desire for NATO membership among corresponding national governments.

As the examples around the Europe showed, the good election results of the right-wing parties are becoming more and more common, which was something hard to imagine at the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century. Therefore, the Russian Federation has to be prepared for any outcome in the changing political scene of the Europe, whether that be the increasing rise of right-wing and populist parties, or their return to political obscurity. In any scenario, it is most important that the Russian Federation capitalizes in the field of economy, security and diplomacy when dealing with future EU governments, and has reliable information on how to position itself towards potentially-friendly political options inside the European national state governments. The research presented in this thesis will hopefully be of help in such an endeavor.

Appendix

I Figures

These graphs will show the percentage of votes examined parties obtained during the last several national parliament elections. All parties except EKRE are represented, since EKRE participated only in 2015 Estonian Parliament Elections.

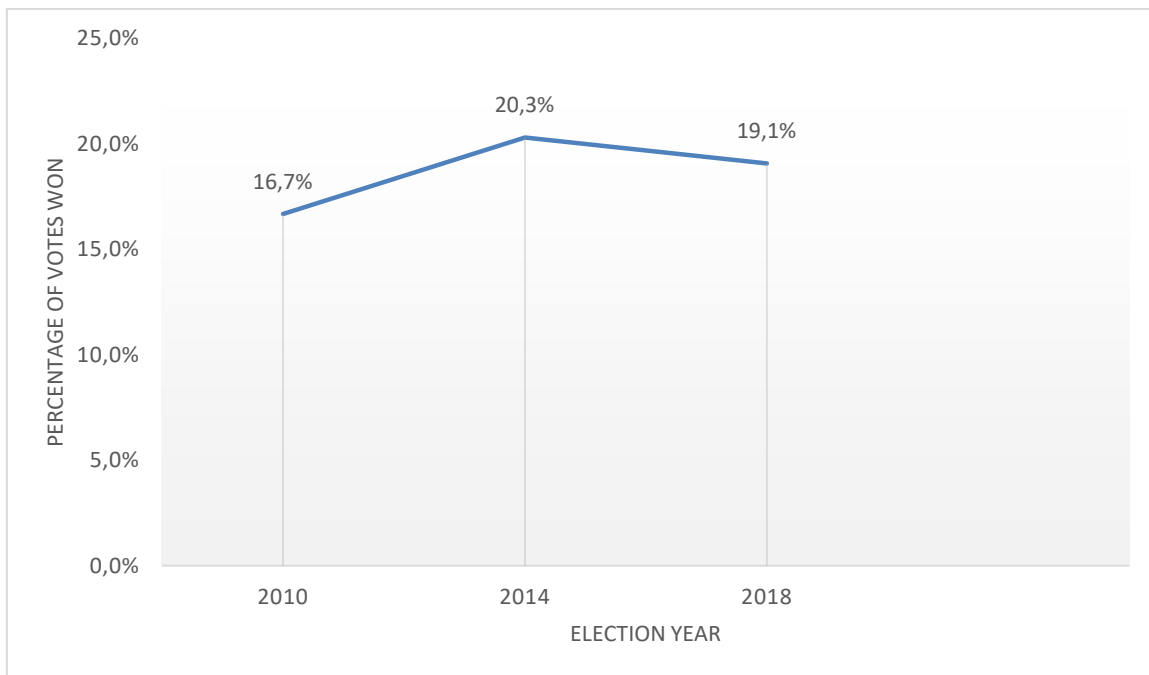


Figure 1 – Jobbik Support for Parliament Elections of Hungary

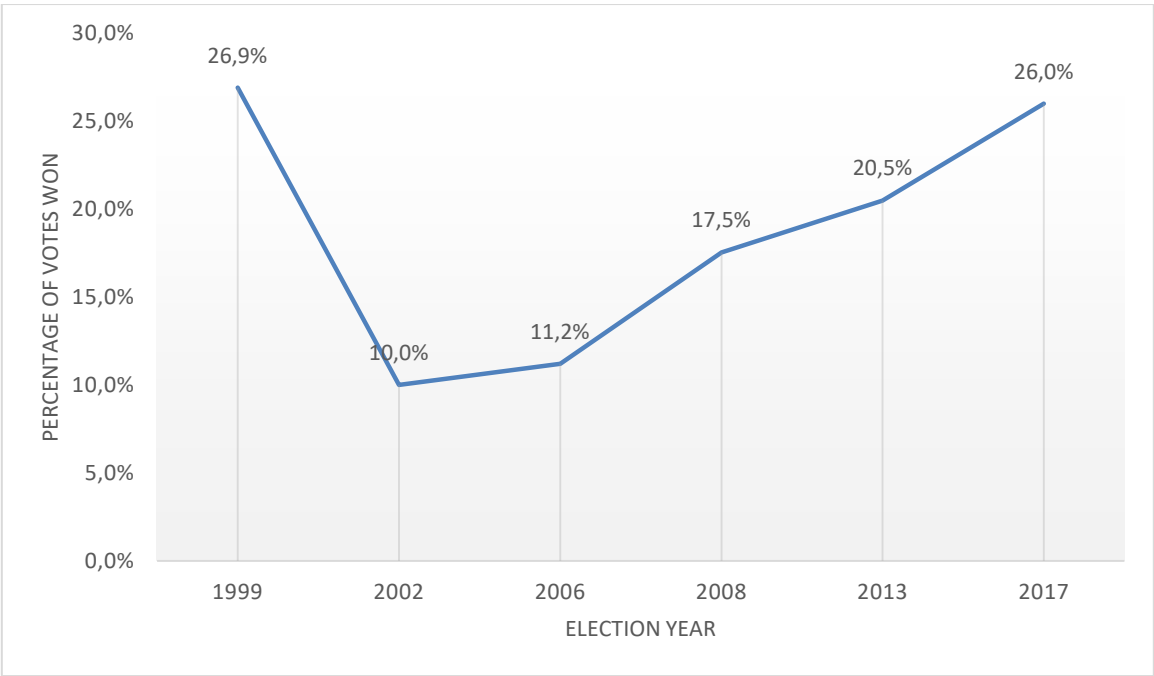


Figure 2 – FPÖ Support for Parliament Elections of Austria

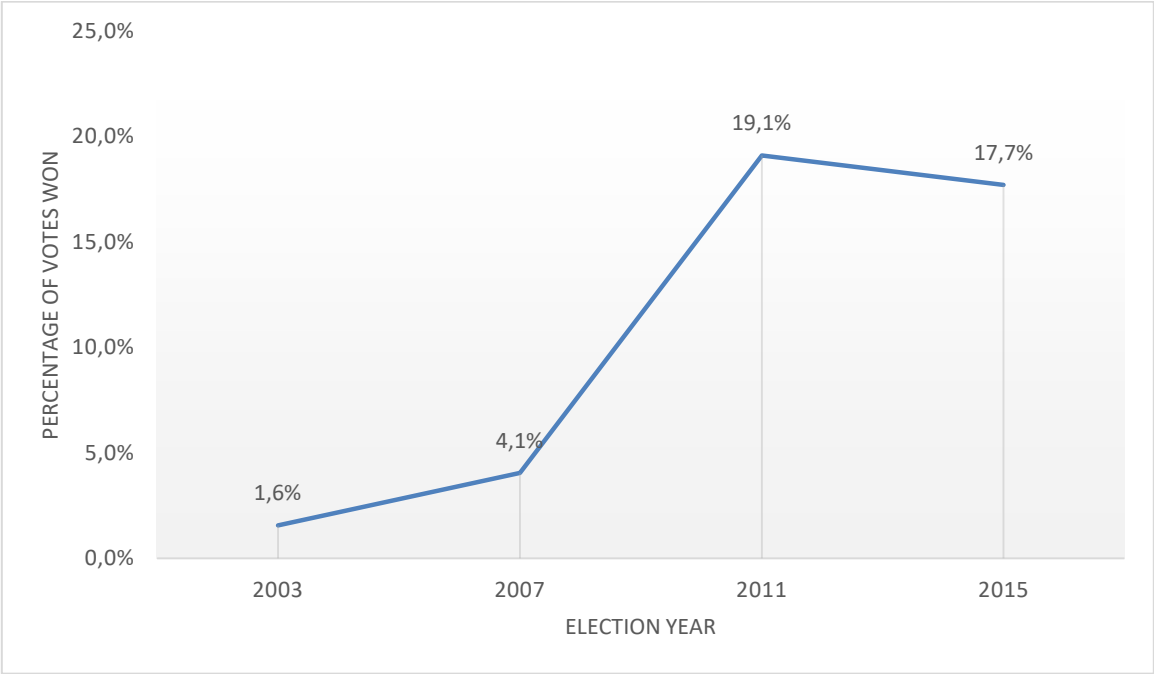


Figure 3 - The Finns Party Support for Parliament Elections of Finland

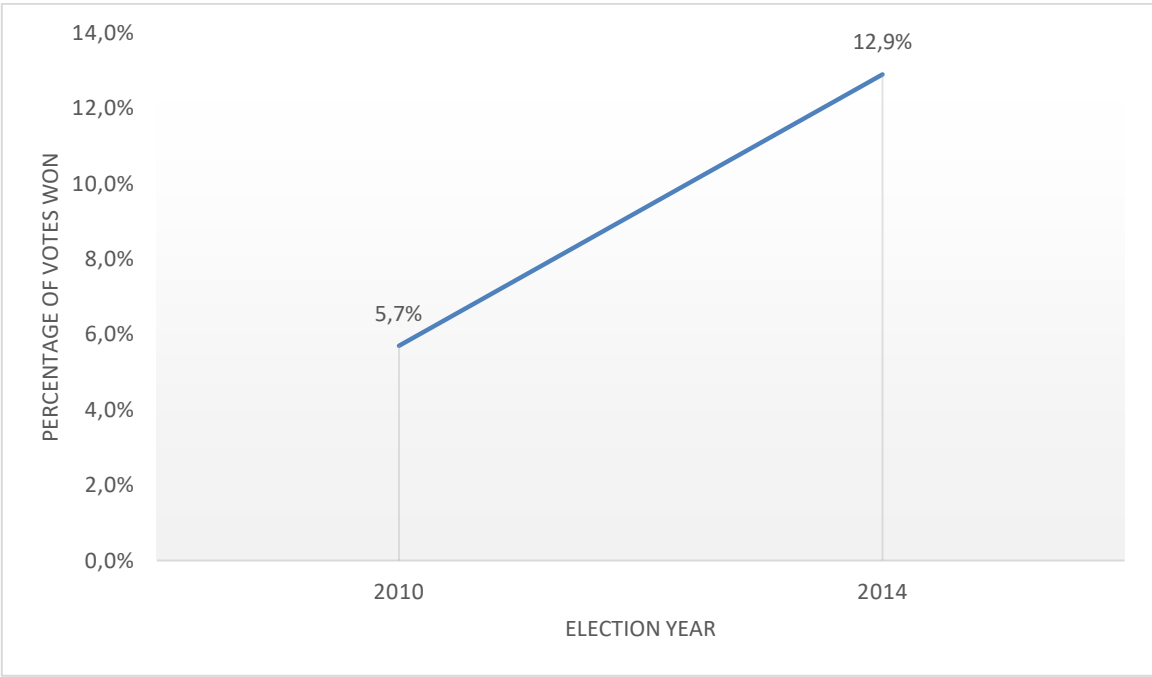


Figure 4 - Swedish Democrats Support for Parliament Elections of Sweden

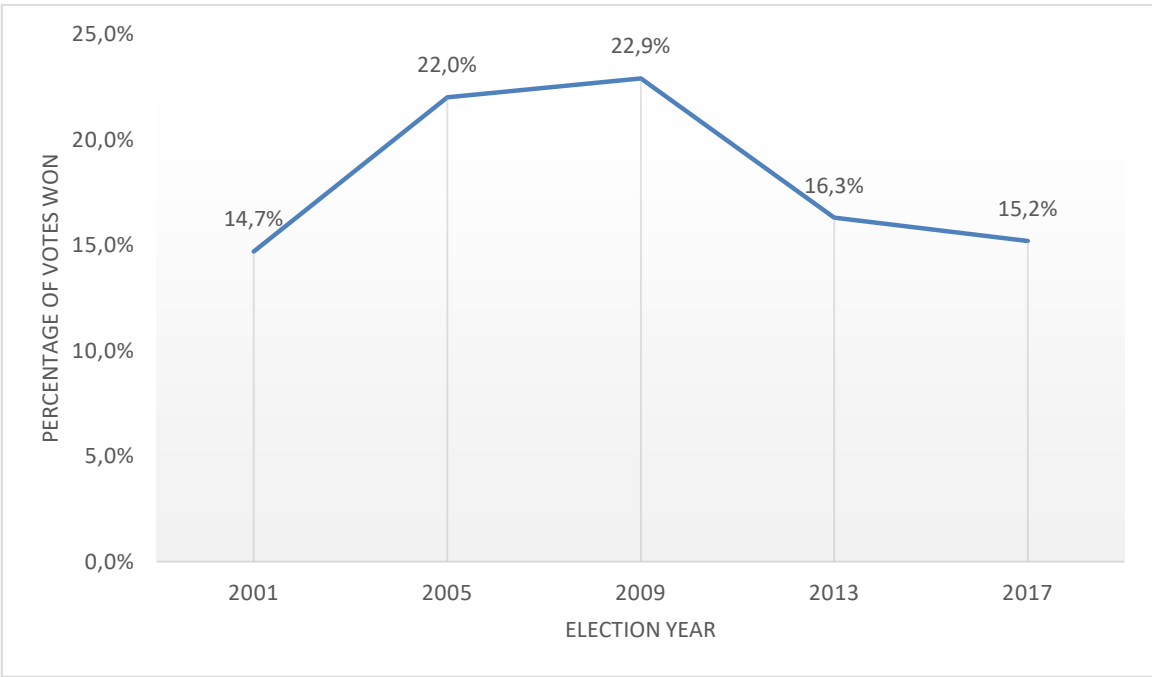


Figure 5 - The Progress Party Support for Parliament Elections of Norway

II Interviews

Interview I, Jobbik

Platform: Gmail

Sender: Aleksa Filipović

Date of sending the message: 08.04.2018

Receiver: Mr. Szabolcs Szalay (Jobbik)

Date of receiving the answer: 18.04.2018

Questions asked:

Questionnaire for Jobbik

1. What is the Jobbik's stance towards the EU – does Jobbik advocate referendum on the Hungary's EU membership, or is it more inclined for reformation of the EU (for example, moving EU away from federalization and more towards economic union of sovereign nations)?
2. What is the Jobbik stance towards NATO? Should be there referendum on Hungary's NATO membership, or is the membership in NATO desirable? Or should be there some re-negotiating of Hungary's participation in this alliance?
3. What is the Jobbik's stance on Russia? Does Jobbik see Russia as a potential partner for economic and political cooperation, or as adversary that needs to be contained for preservation of Hungary's own security?

Answers received:

“1. What is the Jobbik's stance towards the EU – does Jobbik advocate referendum on the Hungary's EU membership, or is it more inclined for reformation of the EU (for example, moving EU away from federalization and more towards economic union of sovereign nations)?

Jobbik sees the future of Hungary inside the European Union, although we think that certain reforms of the community are necessary. Jobbik has always been very critical towards the idea of further centralization and bureaucratization of the EU. Since we were not able to hear any other voice than the views of the federalists for a long time, earlier we had several critical statements, however we have always supported the idea of the cooperation of the European nations. In the last few years, political landscape of the European countries as well as the political discourse in the EU has changed. We think that Hungary should sit at the negotiation table and participate actively in the reforms, especially when it comes to the labor rights. We support the idea of Mr

Macron's consultation on the future of the European Union and we are very optimistic as regards the statements of Mr Juncker on the European Labor Authority.

2. What is the Jobbik stance towards NATO?

Should be there referendum on Hungary's NATO membership, or is the membership in NATO desirable? Or should be there some re-negotiating of Hungary's participation in this alliance?

NATO is the alliance that can guarantee the security of Hungary and we do not want to question this. At the same time, since we are in the border-zone of several countries' fields of interest, we find it very important that NATO should not take a provocative position towards other power blocs but find the way to ensure the security of its members.

3. What is the Jobbik's stance on Russia? Does Jobbik see Russia as a potential partner for economic and political cooperation, or as adversary that needs to be contained for preservation of Hungary's own security?

We see Russia as an important partner for economic cooperation. Jobbik appreciates the longstanding and good relations of our countries and we hope that we can develop them further in the future."

End of Interview I

Interview II, EKRE

Platform: Gmail

Sender: Aleksa Filipović

Date of sending the message: 16.04.2018

Receiver: Urmás Espenberg (EKRE)

Date of receiving the answer: 17.04.2018

Questions asked

1. What is the EKRE's stance towards the EU – does EKRE advocate referendum on the Estonia's EU membership, or is it more inclined for reformation of the EU (for example, moving EU away from federalization and more towards economic union of sovereign nations)?
2. What is the EKRE stance towards NATO? Should be there referendum on Estonia's NATO membership, or is the membership in NATO desirable? Or should be there some re-negotiating of Hungary's participation in this alliance?
3. What is the EKRE's stance on Russia? Does EKRE see Russia as a potential partner for economic and political cooperation, or as adversary that needs to be contained for preservation of EKRE's own security?

Answers received:

“All main information You can find in website of Estonia Parliemet

<https://www.riigikogu.ee/en/parliament-of-estonia/factions/conservative-peoples-party-estonia-faction/>

We never supported leaving NATO, NATO is our main security alliens.

We dont like federalisation of EU, we support strong national states, our views are very close to Fidez in Hungary or Poland goverment issues.”

End of Interview II

Interview III, Finns Party

Platform: Gmail

Sender: Aleksa Filipović

Date of sending the message: 17.04.2018

Receiver: Mr. Sakari Puisto (Progress Party)

Date of receiving the answer: 20.04.2018

Questions asked:

Questionnaire for the Finns Party

1. What is the Finns Party stance towards the EU – does the Finns Party advocate referendum on the Finland's EU membership, or is it more inclined for reformation of the EU (for example, moving EU away from federalization and more towards economic union of sovereign nations)?
2. What is the Finns Party's stance towards NATO? Should Finland join the NATO or no? And should the Finland rely more on some future local alliance than a global one?
3. What is the Finns Party's stance on Russia? Does the Finns Party see Russia as a potential partner for economic and political cooperation, or as adversary that needs to be contained for preservation of Finland's own security?

Answers received:

“1. What is the Finns Party stance towards the EU – does the Finns Party advocate referendum on the Finland's EU membership, or is it more inclined for reformation of the EU (for example, moving EU away from federalization and more towards economic union of sovereign nations)?

We do not propose a referendum on Finland's EU membership at least at the moment. A vast majority of Finns and younger people especially support the EU membership and the result of the referendum would be all obvious anyway.

Instead, for the time being we want to keep up critical discussion on the EU and advocate that Finland takes a stronger stance on various issues (for instance on burden sharing of economic liabilities and asylum seekers etc) and we are against further centralisation of power within the EU.

2. What is the Finns Party's stance towards NATO? Should Finland join the NATO or no? And should the Finland rely more on some future local alliance than a global one?

Our voters have mixed positions on this issue. As a party we do not propose that Finland joins Nato. We support closer collaboration for instance with Sweden.

3. What is the Finns Party's stance on Russia? Does the Finns Party see Russia as a potential partner for economic and political cooperation, or as adversary that needs to be contained for preservation of Finland's own security?

We favor international trade and economic cooperation, and good international relations overall. Russia is obviously of high importance to Finland. Related to the economic sanctions and current difficult issues, we acknowledge that Finland is a member of the EU and the western political system.”

End of Interview III

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