Emotionality in Right-Wing Populism Security Discourse and Its Impacts on Information Processing

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Abstract

Emotions tend to be considered in a presumed antagonistic relationship with rationality and increasingly associated to current discourses on populism for this reason. Reconsidering such an approach - one that clearly confuses and downgrades the role played by emotions in information processing, with the consequence of missing out on some still unexplainable aspects of the populist appeal – is thus necessary. By looking at the interconnections between populism and securitisation, this paper argues that the way individuals *feel* about a message affects the way they will *think* about the issue. By means of a theoretical exploration, I first show how key aspects related to populism, namely its innate sense of crisis, salvation logic and moralistic ideology, reconnect with the politics of emergency and the concept of existential threat, at the core of securitisation. Building on the theories of political psychology, I then discuss the emotional components of the 'populist securitisation narrative' to show that 1) fear and anxiety should not be regarded as the exclusive emotions associated with the debate on security and insecurity, 2) that different emotional responses are possible and 3) that these affect citizens' internalisation of the securitised phenomena.

Keywords: right-wing populism, securitisation, emotions, information processing

Introduction

In this paper I provide an examination of populism through the lenses of the securitisation theory (Buzan et al. 1998) to argue that key aspects of the former intertwine so profoundly with the logics behind securitisation, that might talk about a securitising potential for populism. Furthermore, I discuss how the securitisation discourse emerging from a right-wing populist source – that I refer to as a *populist securitisation narrative* - has peculiar emotional components with wide ranging psychological implications.

The appraisal theory, one of the leading contemporary approaches to the study of emotions, suggests that emotions emerge from our appraisal of the surrounding environment and help our brain process information accordingly; emotions do not arise from a situation

per se but from the way we interpret and appraise the stimuli (Smith and Ellsworth 1985). Emotions can thus be regarded as the display of feelings; at the unconscious level, individuals experience the environment stimulations, interpret their sensory impressions by developing general feelings and express the latter through emotions (Capelos 2011). As consequence, a message that elicits one emotion rather than another eventually influences our overall evaluations. To put it differently, the way we *feel* about a message is going to determine the way we will *think* about the issue.

A securitisation process (that is, the construction of a phenomenon as an existential threat and the call for emergency measures to deal with it – Buzan et al. 1998) already entails a strong emotional component. Indeed many times references to 'fear' have been made in the securitisation literature, to point at the primordial association of this emotion with issues of danger, risk and threat. Nonetheless, the study of emotions in processes of threat construction has not received due analytical attention. As Van Rythoven (2015: 460) has noted, "at the core of securitisation theory is a distinct incoherence (…) Emotions have no formal status in the social and linguistic ontology of the theory, yet analysts persistently refer to them in empirical research". The theory seems to have developed a tacit understanding that emotions are crucial in facilitating processes of securitisation; yet it has denied any further and systematic elaborations on their role that could explain, for instance, how collective emotions may help building the audience's consensus over the proposed emergency measures or how emotional responses different other than fear may affect the individual's perception of the securitised phenomena.

It is therefore particularly useful looking at the interconnections of securitisation and populism, a phenomenon that, as Margaret Canovan (1999: 6) noted, entails an "extra emotional ingredient". Triangulating the study of securitisation with the literature on emotionality and the scholarship on right-wing populism presents two main advantages. First, it contributes to advancing our knowledge of how security is constructed in the vision of right-wing populists that in the current political landscape, marked by electoral victories and increased visibility for their discourse, have assumed a pivotal role in articulating security issues to the public. Second, applying the lenses of emotionality studies particularly useful for unpacking the role that right-wing populist narratives play in the intersubjective processes of security construction and internalisation. Indeed, for Buzan et al (1998), securitisation has to be understood as an intersubjective process or, to say it in their words, an "intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects" (p. 25). Their claim is that what we think of as security is the result of processes and

dynamics that are both socially and intersubjectively constructed. We cannot think of and explain security in purely objectivist terms, because of the mere impossibility of identifying clear and unambiguous threats. Both at the state and individual level, threats can be perceived and thought in significantly different ways for a wide variety of reasons, including but not limited to, differences in culture, context or priorities.

In the sections that follow, I will first show how key aspects related to populism, namely its innate sense of crisis, salvation logic and moralistic ideology, reconnect with the politics of emergency and the concept of existential threat, at the core of securitisation. Building on the theories of political psychology, I will then discuss the emotional components of the right-wing populist securitisation narrative, their effects on information processing and, ultimately, the implications for populist support.

Populism and Securitisation

Populism is here regarded, in line with Mudde (2004) as a 'thin-centred ideology', that is to say, a system of beliefs holding a simplified ideological core that can be easily combined with other worldviews. My focus is specifically right-wing populism (RWP), intended as an ideology counterposing "a virtuous and homogenous people against a set of elites or dangerous 'others' who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice" (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2015: 5). The focus on RWP is grounded on the traditionally privileged position that law and order play in a conservative understanding of reality, which thus profoundly link the phenomenon with the concept of security.

I will now discuss how populism (in general) and securitisation share several core aspects, namely the construction of threat images in alarmist terms, the dramatisation of survival and the prioritising imperative of emergency action.

Existential Threats and Salvation

In the late 1990s, the securitization theory (Buzan et al. 1998) came out as a groundbreaking approach to rethink the study and understanding of security. For the authors, identifying

'security' is easy for traditionalists, who simply equate it with military issues and the use of force; but what happens when security is moved out of the military sector? In order to truly understand what 'security' means, Buzan et al. suggest looking at the understanding of security as survival. They claim a security problem emerges when an *existential* threat is posed to a referent object. This special nature of securitising threats, which undermine the *very existence* of a referent object, find a complementary narrative in right-wing populism's (RWP) 'salvation logic'. As Canovan (1999) noted, populism revolves around a secular vision of 'redemption', that is, the promise of a better world through action by the sovereign people; along the same lines, Albertazzi and McDonnell (2008) argue that one of the main mobilising factor in the RWP message is the promise of salvation. The redemptive impulse is thus structural in the populist ideology and perfectly fits the dramatisation of survival that guides a securitisation move.

Crisis and Emergency Actions

As Taggart has pointed out, populism is not the politics of the stable. On the contrary, it usually reacts to a sense of extreme crisis, whose origins will "always spill over into a critique of politics and into the sense that politics as usual cannot deal with the unusual conditions of crisis" (Taggart 2004: 275). The case for abandoning normal politics, in the name of an impending doom, reconnects to the politics of emergency, at the core of securitisation: securitised issues go *outside* the realm of normal politics to enter that of extraordinary measures, conceived as the exclusive means to tackle the threat (Buzan et al. 1998).
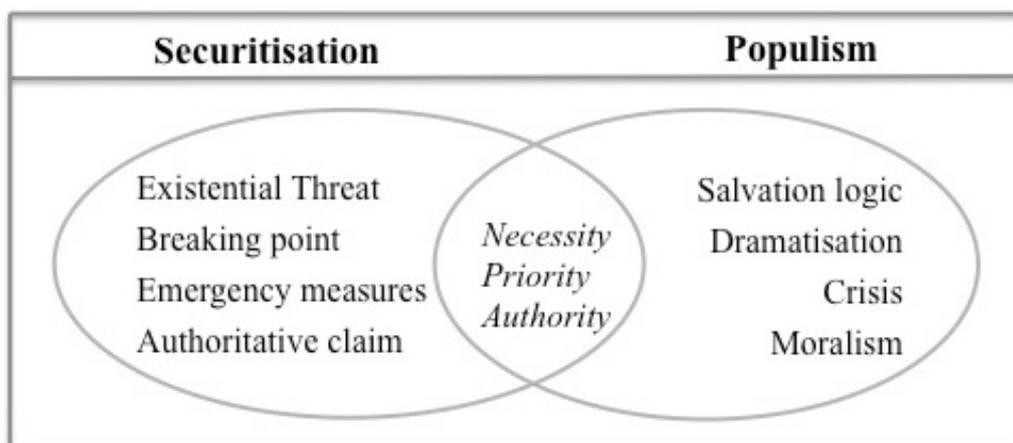
Populism's inherent sense of crisis and its tendencies to dramatisation, provide the perfect recipe for a configuration of alleged threats images as issues of supreme and absolute priority. The 'necessity' of action, expressed by the existential nature of the threat, is further characterised by the populist discourse with the inclusion of an interesting time factor, the 'priority' of action. Indeed, populism frames political actions on a "soon it will be too late" rationale (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008) and by invoking a sense of crisis, it automatically injects extreme urgency to its message (Taggart 2004). Interestingly, the "priority of action" is also regarded by Buzan et al. (1998: 26) as a distinguishing feature of the language of securitisation, which has a specific rhetorical structure precisely based on it.

Moralism and Authoritative Claims

Security is for the securitization theorists a rather 'structured' field, because of the asymmetrical power of actors in 'speaking security'; the 'social capital of the enunciator' is therefore one of the facilitating conditions of securitisation listed by Buzan et al. (1998: 33). The securitising actor needs to hold a position of power in society and a certain ability to provide guidance for citizens, as this increases the likelihood of the audience accepting an instance of securitisation. As Williams (2003: 514) argues, securitisation needs an authoritative claim, as the process is "structured by the differential capacity of actors to make socially effective claims about threats".

Populism grounds the legitimacy of its authoritative claims in morality. Populists claim their rightful position in society originates from speaking and acting on behalf of 'the people', the community, the nation. But, essential to the populist discourse is then the *normative* distinction between the people and the elite: populism *morally* evaluates the ordinary people as inherently good and the elites as pure evil rather than empirically observing differences in behaviour or attitudes (Mudde 2004). By constructing a moral divide in society and placing itself in the domain of what is right and common sense, populism may claim to be in a position of moral superiority capable of providing 'guidance' to citizens. Therefore being an intrinsically moralistic ideology, it may not only be able to make such an authoritative claim but also to ground its legitimacy in doing so.

Summary Table:

Securitisation		Populism
Existential Threat	*Necessity*	Salvation logic
Breaking point	*Priority*	Dramatisation
Emergency measures	*Authority*	Crisis
Authoritative claim		Moralism

Emotions and Affect in the Populist Securitisation Narrative

As we have seen, populism and securitisation share several core aspects and building on such premises, I argue that the populist ideology may hold a "securitising potential", which I perceive as a latent ability to prompt a sense of crisis, threat and danger into the phenomenon taken into account. The populist discourse may inherently tend to securitise issues simply by articulating security through its core logics.

What does a 'right-wing' populist discourse add to the narrative of securitisation, which, as we know from Buzan et al. (1998: 25), takes the form of existential threat, point of no return and necessity? What I call the 'populist securitisation narrative' is the construction of a threat image that follows the securitisation structure, in terms of existentiality, breaking point and emergency, but with a particular populist flavour and a mix of affective components, as explored in the sections to follow.

Very often the role played by emotions is linked to populist discourse, although predominantly in negative terms. For long time, scholars across social sciences disciplines have been united on the front of rationality against emotionality, with the latter conceived as some sort of dysfunction to decision making. As Jenkins (2018) argues with reference to the literature on political disenchantment, there is an unfortunate tendency to consider 'fast-thinking' as influenced by emotions and 'slow-thinking' as less so. Indeed, emotions keep being considered in a presumed antagonistic relationship with rationality and increasingly associated to current discourses on populism for this reason; as Freeden (2013: 2) recalls, "emotions are believed to reflect intellectually inferior and often socially and morally irresponsible attitudes and forms of conduct". It is therefore necessary to reconsider such an approach, one that clearly confuses and downgrades the role played by emotions in information processing, with the consequence of missing out on some still unexplainable aspects of the populist appeal. Emotions are necessary to any type of political engagement: without the first the latter wouldn't exist (Alvares & Dahlgren 2016: 50).

Looking at the affective components of the populist securitisation narratives is very important, because this form of threat construction constitutes a powerful affective mix with specific potential effects on information processing. Also, emotional dynamics in general may help us unravel the meanings and experiences of security that, as Wilkinson (2011)

argues, have remained largely unexplored and unarticulated in securitisation analysis.

Belonging

First of all, the populist securitization narrative constructs security within the framework of its Manichean vision of society. Populism uses enmity and the constructed 'other' to narrate the collective identity of 'the people' as being a singular, unitary actor.

The populist 'common identity discourse' seems to build on two narratives: the commonality of values and the commonality of experiences. The first narrative builds a sense of cohesion by harnessing the positive power of values such as honesty, hard work and ordinariness, which bring 'the people' together. This positive self-construction is complemented by the negative narration of exploitation and deception that unite the people against its enemy. By directing positive and negative affect both inwards and outwards, these narratives perform the important function of building and consolidating the sense of community. Identities are indeed constructed both internally – by self-representation and alignment with others – and externally by the discourse of institutional gatekeepers who set the criteria for entry (Jones and Krzyzanowski 2008). To put it differently, identity is both sameness and difference; it denotes who we are in relation to what we are not (Rumelili and Todd 2018). This dynamic is perfectly exemplified in this latest tweet by Marine Le Pen, where she narrates what free men and women are allowed to do in France (choose their religion, dress up the way they wish, shake each other's hands), to implicitly point out the differences with the 'Muslim enemy'.

Marine Le Pen ✓ @MLP_officiel · 11 mar
« En France, on peut choisir la religion que l'on souhaite et la quitter si l'on veut. En France, les femmes s'habillent comme elles veulent. En France, un homme peut serrer la main d'une femme ! » #CongrèsFN2018

The sense of belonging is crucial here in that it reconnects identity, security and threat perception. Feeling a certain attachment to an in-group is a prerequisite for the formation of a collective identity (Jones and Krzyzanowski 2008). This 'we-group' feeling consequentially heightens threat perception: the stronger the sense of belonging, the more intense will be the emotions generated by membership, especially when the identity group faces threats (Preston *et al.* 2010). As we know from Mudde (2004), RW populism relies on a Manichean vision of

the world, in which there are only friends and foes; its core conflictual logic inherently needs an 'other', as the 'we' can only be constructed through opposition. But as Albertazzi and McDonnell (2008, 2015) further observe, the 'other' not only does not belong to the community - it is a *danger* to it. In the populist discourse, negative evaluations of the 'other' are not suspected, but assumed and anticipated by default.

RW populism's collective identity narrative rejects the assumption that identity change might be an inevitable part of social progress and builds a state of *societal insecurity* that, in the words of Buzan et al. (1998: 119), "exists when communities of whatever kind define a development or potentiality as a threat to their survival as a community". Peculiar to the RWP securitisation of identity is the role of culture, customs and tradition that, in the populist narrative, have become 'victims' of progressive change and cultural transformation. As Inglehart and Norris (2016) argue, there are sectors of society, such as the older generation, men, the religious, ethnic majorities and less educated, that are most likely to feel that they have become *strangers* from the predominant values in their own country. The feeling of being left behind by progressive tides of cultural change is what leads us to the next affective component in this examination: the sense of loss.

Sense of loss

The alteration of values priorities, occurred during the last half-century, seems to have left sectors of Western societies with a feeling of displacement. The shift towards post-materialist values has those who hold strong traditional views feel like they have become out of step with the changing cultures, with this displacement generating resentment and a sense of loss (Inglehart and Norris 2016). This sense of loss is often accompanied by feelings of deprivation, that is, the perception that predominance and privilege have not simply eroded but have been *taken away*. Recent empirical studies have found confirmation that feelings of deprivation are indeed associated to sympathy for populism (e.g. Marchlewska et al. 2017; Pettigrew 2017). These dynamics are also often intergroup-based, in that there is a feeling that an outgroup is responsible for taking advantage and threatening the alleged deprived ingroup (e.g., Cramer 2016; Doosje et al. 2013; Mols and Jetten 2016). A clear example of the populist tendency to narrate threats as attempts of deprivation, and thus in terms of

intergroup-based competition, may be seen in Italian radical right leader Matteo Salvini, who claims the presence of immigrants reduces both rights and salaries of Italian citizens.

Matteo Salvini ✔ @matteosalvinimi · 16 feb

#Salvini: Qualcuno ha bisogno di tanti nuovi immigrati per abbassare i DIRITTI e gli STIPENDI dei cittadini italiani. #Kronos

The societal security sector is particularly susceptible to this kind of narrative precisely because it is structured around the concept of 'identity' as its main reference object. A social identity entails the incorporation of group membership as part of the inner Self and the development of feelings that culminate in a sense of 'psychological attachment' (Huddy 2013). As a consequence, what is existentially threatening the group and what ties its members together, is very much taking away something from ourselves.

The populist construction of the 'dangerous other' further fuels these feelings of grievances through the mechanisms of blame attribution, as described in the next section.

Blame

Blame attribution is one of the main manifestations of populism's Manichean outlook of society. To say it with Vasilopoulou et al., populism may be understood as "a fundamental dichotomy between the 'blameless us' and the 'evil others'" (2014: 389), likely to be expressed in the forms of a blame-shifting rhetoric. For the authors, "by highlighting the purity of the people and by referring to the establishment as culprit, populism is inherently about attributing blame to others while absolving the people of responsibility". The populist blame attribution has also a specific normative component, that makes it different from other forms of blame attribution: its emphasis on a moral divide between 'us' and 'them' actually goes beyond causal interpretations to enter the domain of injustice (Hameleers et al. 2017). Indeed, populists do not only blame the elite for inability but rather for reluctance and complicity, instilling a sense of deliberately caused injustice.

The blame shifting rhetoric also serves securitisation purposes in that it 'actorises' the causes of the threat. In other words, the practice of blame attribution depicts a security problem as originating from an agent with choice rather than from a series of events. We can

see this in the way Marine Le Pen describes 'physical and cultural insecurity' in France as 'Macron's world'.

Marine Le Pen ✔ @MLP_officiel · 11 mar
« Le monde de #Macron, c'est celui de l'insécurité physique avec l'explosion de la délinquance ; de l'insécurité culturelle avec la submersion de notre pays par de grandes migrations incontrôlées et l'importation de moeurs contraires à nos valeurs. » #CongrèsFN2018

Blame attribution also helps narrate security in a simple and linear perspective. This dynamic is exemplified in this tweet by Matteo Salvini's, where he argues that less arrivals (of immigrants) and more expulsions means more security.

Matteo Salvini ✔ @matteosalvinimi · 1 mar
#Salvini: Il mio obiettivo è avere MENO SBARCHI e più ESPULSIONI. Questo significa avere più SICUREZZA. Ogni giorno 700 reati commessi da stranieri, lavorerò per ridurre questo numero. #dallavostraparte

For Buzan et al. (1998: 44), the attribution of responsibility factor amplifies threat perception and "assists in pushing an issue across the security threshold". There are probably several reasons why Buzan et al. make such point. First, being a form of causal attribution of responsibility, blame attribution provides a causal analysis and interpretation of events that help individuals make sense of the world (Higgings 2000).This may provide a simplification of a more complex reality that helps generate support for a securitisation move. Moreover, these cognitive processes of attribution have the power to shape threat perception, in particular the 'fundamental attribution error', which leads individuals to exaggerate the importance of dispositional over situational factors in explaining the behaviour of others (Nisbett and Ross 1980, cited in Gross Stein 2013).

Having reviewed the affective power of the populist securitisation narrative in articulating how the community comes together, how it can be profoundly threatened and by whom, we need to look at one final aspect, that is the construction of the necessary measures.

Nostalgia

As we know from Taggart (2004), populism generally identifies itself with a 'heartland', an idealised and romanticised conception of the community, and it is from this territory of the imagination that it constructs 'the people'. The heartland is discursively derived from the past and projected onto the present, with the not so veiled assumption that the world was better 'as it was' (ibid.). The populist depiction of the heartland thus evokes a certain sense of nostalgia for a better and idyllic past (Kenny 2017). As Inglehart and Norris (2016) note, populist slogans such as *Make America Great Again* or *Take Back Control*, appeal nostalgically to a mythical golden past, when societies were allegedly less diverse, political leaderships unrivalled, parliaments sovereign.

The proposed emergency measure, as presented via the populist securitisation narrative, may potentially come with an emotional baggage that Boym refers to as restorative nostalgia (cited in Kenny 2017: 262). This idealised attachment to the past usually involves "attempts to reinstate a particular vision of a neglected, forgotten or defeated set of cultural or social arrangements" (ibid.). Contrary to 'reflective nostalgia', which engages more critically with the past, restorative nostalgia fosters "a pathological drive to reclaim the imagined past" (ibid.). In the populist securitisation narrative, the proposed emergency measures may thus be constructed and perceived as a dam to change. Populists problematise the present by means of what Kriesi et al. (2006) call the politics of demarcation and use the powerful imaginative force of the threatened heartland to build a sharp boundaries and further legitimise exclusion; but it is with their specific discursive emphasis on the glory of the past that they build a narrative of security 'restoration' rather than action. This may be noticed in the constant use of the verb 'ripulire' by Matteo Salvini, which in Italian means 'clean *again*', when talking about the presence of foreigners in the country. In a similar fashion, Marine Len Pen often refers to need to 'récupérer' (take back) sovereignty, as famously did UKIP during the Brexit campaign. These verbs clearly denote restorative actions directed backwards, as to when the country was allegedly free from the immigrant 'invasion' or from the impositions of 'global elites'.

Emotional Implications and Information processing

The reaction of the audience marks the distinction between a securitising move and an actual securitisation. To say it with Buzan et al. (1998: 25), "a discourse that takes the form of

presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object does not by itself create securitisation". It is both acceptance and legitimation of the emergency narrative that allow us to talk about a successful securitisation. Emergency measures might not even take place, but their approval and support represent clear indicators of how successfully the narrative of necessity has resonated with the audience. Whether exposure to a right-wing populist securitisation narrative increases the likelihood of securitisation acceptance has yet to be tested empirically, but the political psychology literature suggests it may be the case. The emotional components of this narrative have in fact powerful implications for information processing, that is, the cognitive psychology of opinion formation.

First of all, the sense of belonging shapes threat perception. The latter has been found to be particularly heightened in cases of group-related threats (Preston *et al.* 2010). The stronger the identification with a group and thus the internalisation of membership as integral part of the inner Self, the stronger the sense of insecurity will grow, should the identity group face a danger (Huddy 2013). Moreover, threat perception increases the levels of cognitive narrowing and rigidity, even though scholars disagree on whether this is caused by people under threat clinging to their preexisting ideologies (Greenberg, Pyszczynski and Solomon 1986; Greenberg et al. 1990) or because threat systematically produces more conservative thinking via cognitive narrowing (Jost et al., 2003) (all cited in Taber and Young 2013).

Second, the reassurance of control and familiarity, evoked by nostalgic appeals, is very likely to provide a certain intra-psychic comfort to those individuals who averse both risk and complexity. Narratives of the past are in fact often used to provide ontological security in the present (Kinnvall 2014). For Taggart (2004), the populist vision of the world being better 'as it was' has as its core essence the acknowledgment that life 'before' was not only good but also "already been lived and so shown to be feasible" (p. 274). To say it with Steenbergen and Siczek (2017), populist actors may be viewed as providing *reassurance* against the woes of globalisation, perceived by some segments of the voting population as a risk that threatens their culture and way of live. By building a narrative of 'alleviating risks', the populist securitisation move may be received more persuasively, and thus find a natural audience, in risk and complexity averse citizens.

Complexity is further reduced by the practice of blame attribution: populist discourse, in fact, tends to provide causal interpretations of events that favour agency instead of chains of events and circumstances, in a way that may be helping citizens make sense of complex political issues. In addition, populists place straightforward responsibility on clearly identifiable actors that, not only misbehaved, but also did so *unfairly*. The dimensional model

of emotions shows us how emotions can be predicted depending on the 'dimensions' that are primed by external stimuli originating from the environment; in this case, the combination of controllability, willingness and injustice of action, emerging from the narrative, is very likely to elicit an angry emotional reaction (Brader and Marcus 2013). Furthermore, blame attribution enables citizens to bolster their positive self-concept, because it absolves their in-group of any responsibility (Dixon 2008), pointing at a potential role for positive collective emotions.

My argument is thus that anxiety and fear, the emotions primarily associated with threat and insecurity, are likely to be accompanied by different forms of affective reactions to threat perception, via the populist securitisation narrative. How would this happen?

The populist representation of threats as attempts to 'deprive the people' of something that intimately belongs to them, such as their identity or social status, may be a key dynamic in reinforcing the mechanisms of *shame repression*, outlined by Salmela and von Scheve (2017). According to these authors, insecurities in contemporary societies encompass cultural, physical and economic uncertainties that, although social and global in nature, are still internalised as individual experiences. Threats perceived as *déclassement* thus lead to actual or anticipated shame, because the individual blames himself for his inability to maintain the social status, standards of living, and so on. This happens because shame signals an expected loss and the more individuals feel insecure, the more they come to anticipate the unpleasant and negative consequences for the Self that might follow. Shame is a very painful emotion to experience because directed to the *core* conceptions of the Self; for this reason, it is often repressed by turning blame away from the Self and towards perceived 'enemies', thus generating *anger* – which becomes the only *visible* emotion. The populist securitisation narrative probably further feeds into this anger with the implicit call for action embedded in the 'point of no return' discourse. Indeed, anger is an 'approach' emotion and holds strong motivational tendencies, usually translated into need for action (Brader and Marcus 2013).

As we have seen, the idea that 'we have reached a point of no return' can be a powerful motivational force; in the populist narrative, this may be further combined with the hopeful prospect that 'the right order of things will be restored'. Individuals who feel threatened by the present tend to look at the future with a sceptical perspective, but this discomfort may be alleviated by a vision of the future that engages with the familiarity and feasibility of the past. Uncertainty towards the future does not disappear, as it is a key component of hopeful affect (Smith & Ellsworth 1985); however, it may be met with stronger desires for attention and expending effort.

These emotional reactions may help moving on from the traditionally defensive emotions linked with threats (fear and anxiety) to include approach emotions, such as anger, hope and enthusiasm. Both populist exposure and populist support are thus highly complex affective experiences that cannot be summarised, let alone understood, by looking at one emotional perspective. Claiming that 'populist supporters are just afraid' or 'populists fuel angry people' is not totally wrong, but it does not make us entirely right either. Populist affectivity is characterised by a complex cocktail of emotional, whose underpinning mechanisms Salmela and von Scheve (2017) have only preliminarily tried to unpack.

The inclusion of approach emotions into the defensive emotions mix, usually associated with threats and insecurity, has interesting implications for information processing. What approach emotions have in common is their connection to the 'fast' system of information processing (Marcus et al. 2000). Both the disposition and aversion systems prompted by, respectively, positive emotions such as enthusiasm and hope, and feelings of anger and disgust, process information less carefully than the surveillance system (activated by fear and anxiety). The latter prompts individuals to make careful evaluations of the surrounding environment, in order to reduce the uncertainty arousing from the external stimuli; the surveillance system is therefore linked to a deliberative mode of decision making. The disposition and aversion systems, on the other hand, are connected to a less thoughtful information processing keeping individuals more closely tied to their predispositions or attitudes and making them disinterested in disconfirming them. Indeed, research has shown that individuals who experience both anger and positive emotions such as enthusiasm, pride and hope, cling tightly to and strengthen reliance on prior convictions" (Brader and Marcus 2013).

The way individuals feel about a message is thus going to determine the way they will process information, whether they will make use of careful evaluations or disregard conflicting thoughts, eventually polarising to the directions of previously held views.

Conclusion

By means of a theoretical exploration, this paper has outlined the securitising potential that the populism may hold and has discussed the psychological implications of its security talk to the public, with particular reference to its right-wing manifestations. The populist

securitisation narrative does not differ substantially from securitisation construction as we know it. However, it displays some peculiar emotional facets and nuances that have the potential to increase its approval, as it strike chords particularly sensitive to some sectors of contemporary societies. As we have seen, the populist securitisation narrative tends to inflect nostalgic affect, deploys blame-laden causal explanations, fuels perceived grievances and sense of loss while building a strong 'we-discourse'. By boosting social identity, addressing grievances and externalising their causes, and offering comforting visions of the future, populists engage in what has been called "emotional governance" (Richards 2013). 'General' securitisation narratives do not seem to display such components: the securitisation of migration in Europe was mostly built on an institutional debate increasingly linking migration with the destabilisation of public order, labour markets and social cohesion (Huysmann 2000); this resulted in a construction of migration as a security issue and in a call for restrictive approaches, but without a narrative of deprivation, blame or restoration. The sense of belonging may be the only affective component that the two types of narrative share, because, as Buzan et al. (1998) put it, securitisation always entails a threatened 'we'.

This examination has consequentially shown that fear and anxiety should not be regarded as the exclusive emotions associated with the debate on security and insecurity; that different emotional responses are possible and, finally, that these may affect citizens' internalisation of the securitised phenomena.

As Buzan et al. (1998: 26) remark, an essential quality of security is the "staging" of existential issues; in order to grasp securitisation, one should not analyse 'objective' threats but rather focus on understanding "the processes of constructing a shared understanding of what is to be considered and collectively responded to as a threat". It is here that narratives provided by the right-wing populist discourse on security play a pivotal role: to say it with Kinnvall (2014: 321), "people internalise, process and interpret the information that is provided by and to them through narratives". The populist security construction tells a linear story of citizens as victims, outgroups as enemies and threats as attempt of deprivations, that has emotional consequences. As we have seen, the narrative may potentially 1) prompt the transformation of fear and uncertainty into anger, 2) provide powerful blame cues likely to be activated anytime similar issues are primed, 3) heighten and maintain perception of threat.

These emotional components and their psychological implications require further empirical analysis, as does the role of positive emotionality, which is often neglected in the security field of study. As examined by Stoker (2006) in the field of political disenchantment, positive emotions and affects, complemented by feelings of inclusion, reinforce attachment to

the wider community and foster engagement with the political cause, contrary to negativity that leads citizens to become frustrated and detached with politics. Positive emotions may thus play a strong role in securitisation approvals that needs unpacking; by knowing what triggers securitisation support, we might be able to also define what avoids it, as normal politics is to be preferable to breaking point narratives and panic politics.   In conclusion, it could be argued that this paper broadly aims at highlighting the responsibilities of talking security and framing issues via securitisation discourse.

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