



L-Università
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Domestic and European Response to Migration: Malta's moral dilemma

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Research scope



- Are **Maltese mainstream political parties**, that is *Partit Laburista* and *Partit Nazzjonalista*, driven by populist strategies when confronting irregular migration?
- How do the Maltese political parties treat the **European Union** on migration issues; as a collaborator to enhance their quest for political clout or as a blame shifter to mask their ineffectiveness on irregular migration?
- What are the **moral implications** of the political strategies at the domestic and European levels?

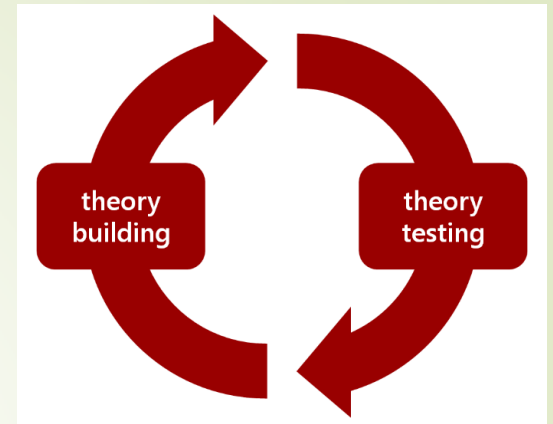
Research design

- Inductive method of inquiry
- Data collection tools:
 - Official statistics
 - Political manifestos
 - Newspaper output
 - Conversational interviews
- Its case study design does not adhere to anecdotalism but seeks transferability of results through knowledge claims

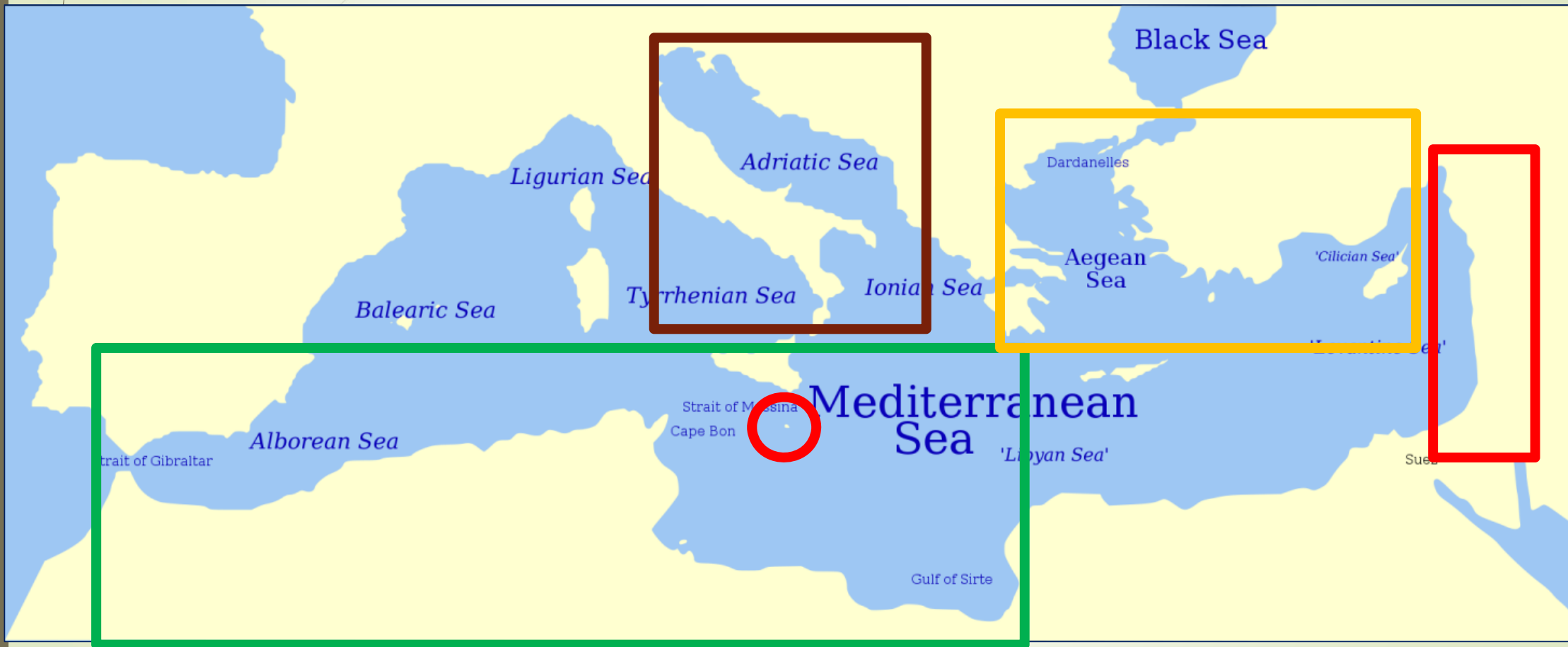


Theoretical framework

- Principal-Agent Theory
- Malta and other member states are deemed as principals
- EU serves as the agent that acts for, on behalf of, or as a representative of the principals
- This theory has the potential to understand the ever changing dynamics between domestic political parties on one side and the supranational institution on the other side.
- Following the inductive model, theory is only used in the second part of our research after establishing the time-line of events that shaped irregular migration in Malta between 2002 and 2016.

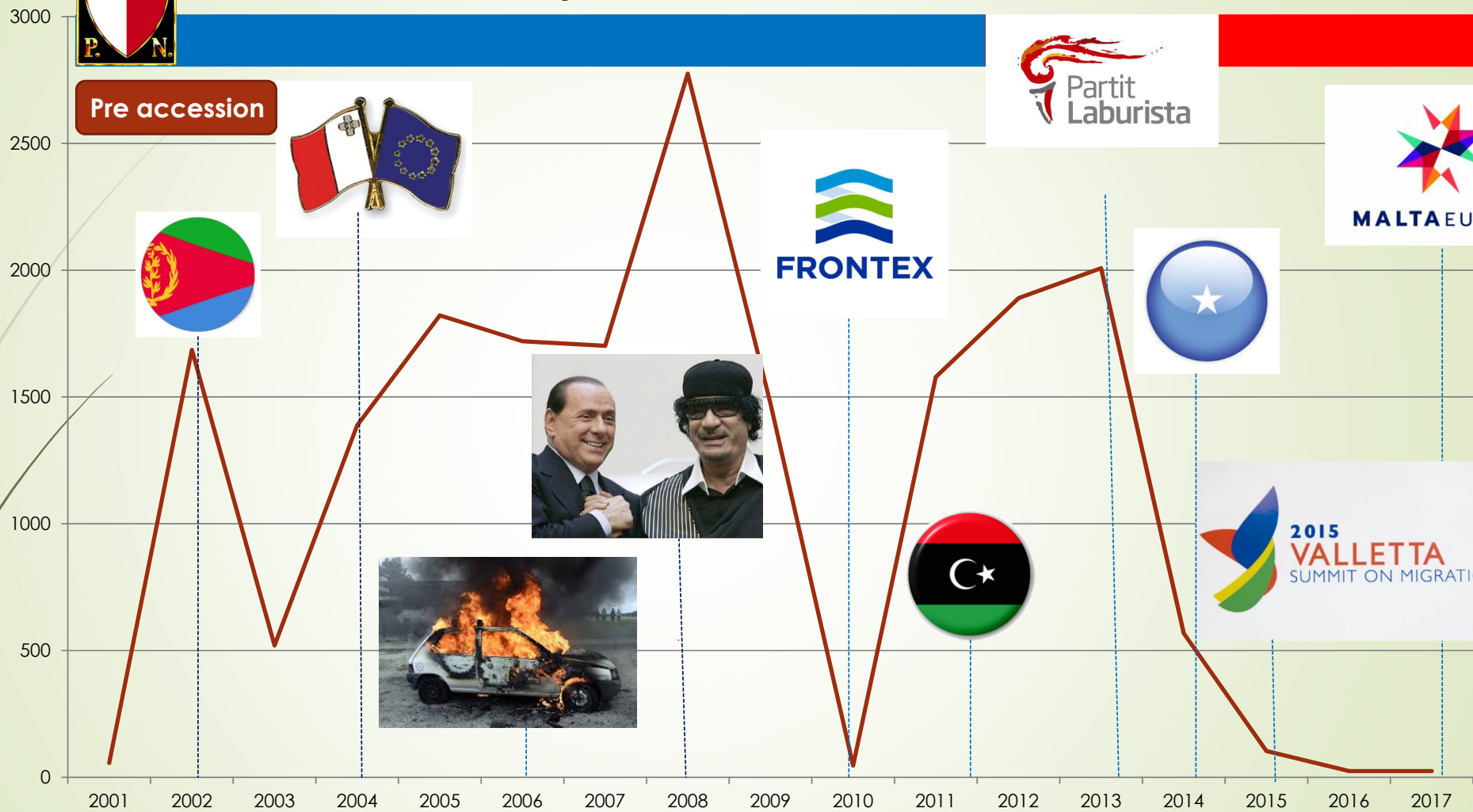


Research geo-political context





Number of Arrivals by boat and Time line of the main events



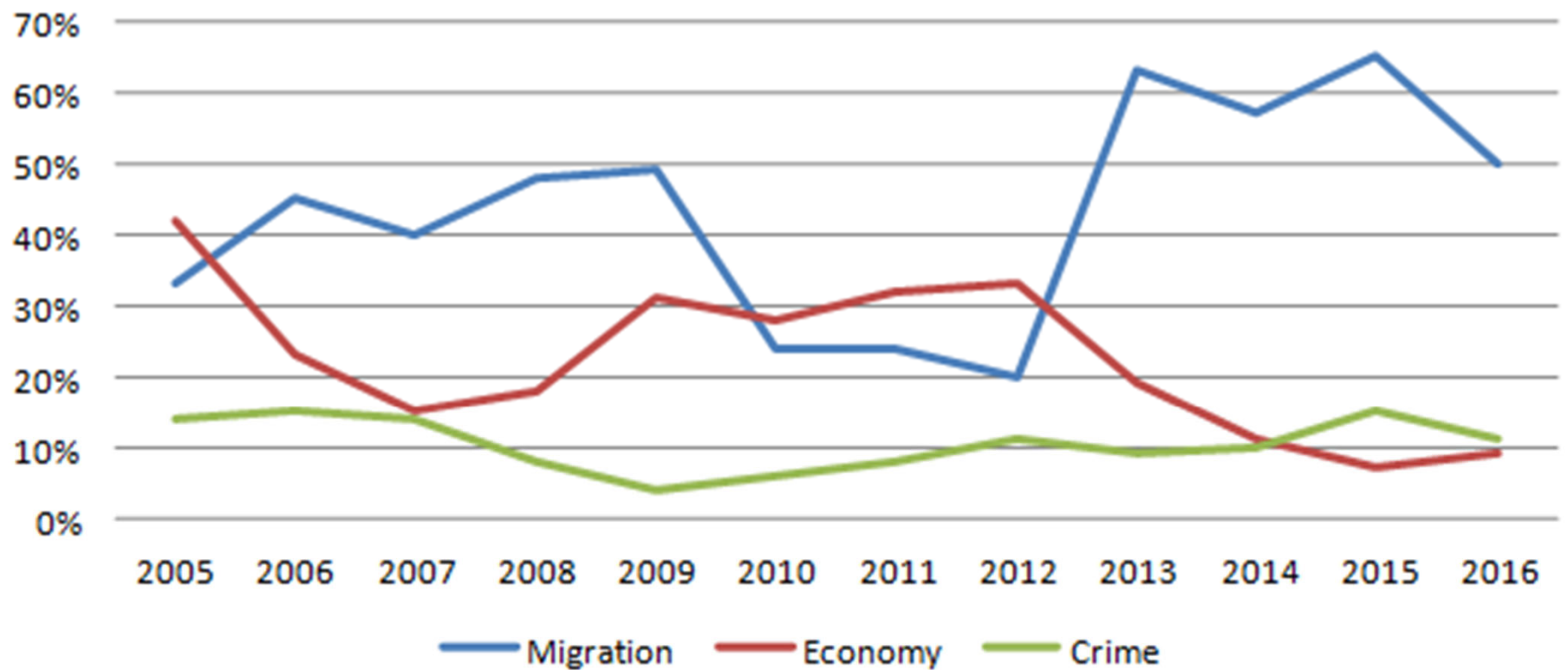
— Number of Arrivals by boat

The Maltese narrative

- Micro-state
- High population density
- Two party system
- An electoral system that fuels clientelism
- Fierce political polarization
- Small and marginalized political parties
- Active NGOs in the field of Human Rights
- Fear from 'invaders'

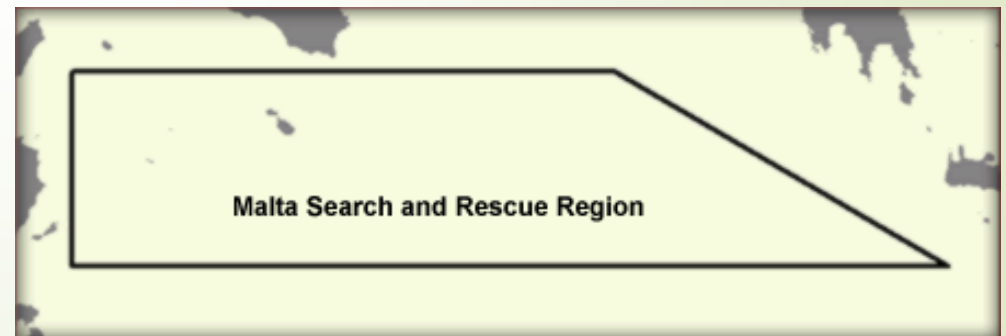


Figure 2: Most important issues for the Maltese Citizens



The EU Approach

- Search and Rescue Area
- Frontex
- Dublin Convention
- Burden Sharing



The EU narrative



- Short-term fixes to regain control over external borders
- Trying to end hasty unilateral moves by some member states
- Institutional incompatibility to instil solidarity among member states
- Bilateral deal with Turkey but likewise deal with Libya is impossible
- Not seen as independent variable for change or policy transfer
- Referred to as constraint, smokescreen and scapegoat by domestic politicians

Populism explained



it merely sets up a framework: that a corrupt elite (Muddle, 2008)

rive based on the split between 'haves and have-nots' (Sorice & De Blasio 2017; Inglehart & Norris 2005)

dealing with economic and social inequality between 'haves and have-nots' or the 'cultural divide' (Inglehart and Norris, 2005)

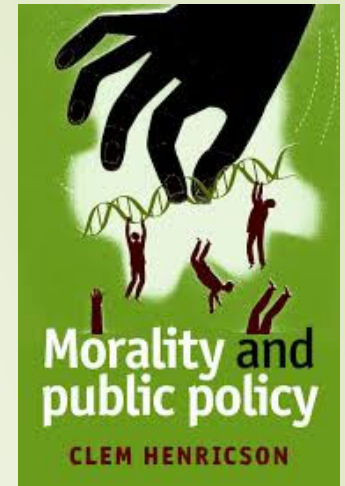
Populism from a moral perspective

► **Henricson (2016)**

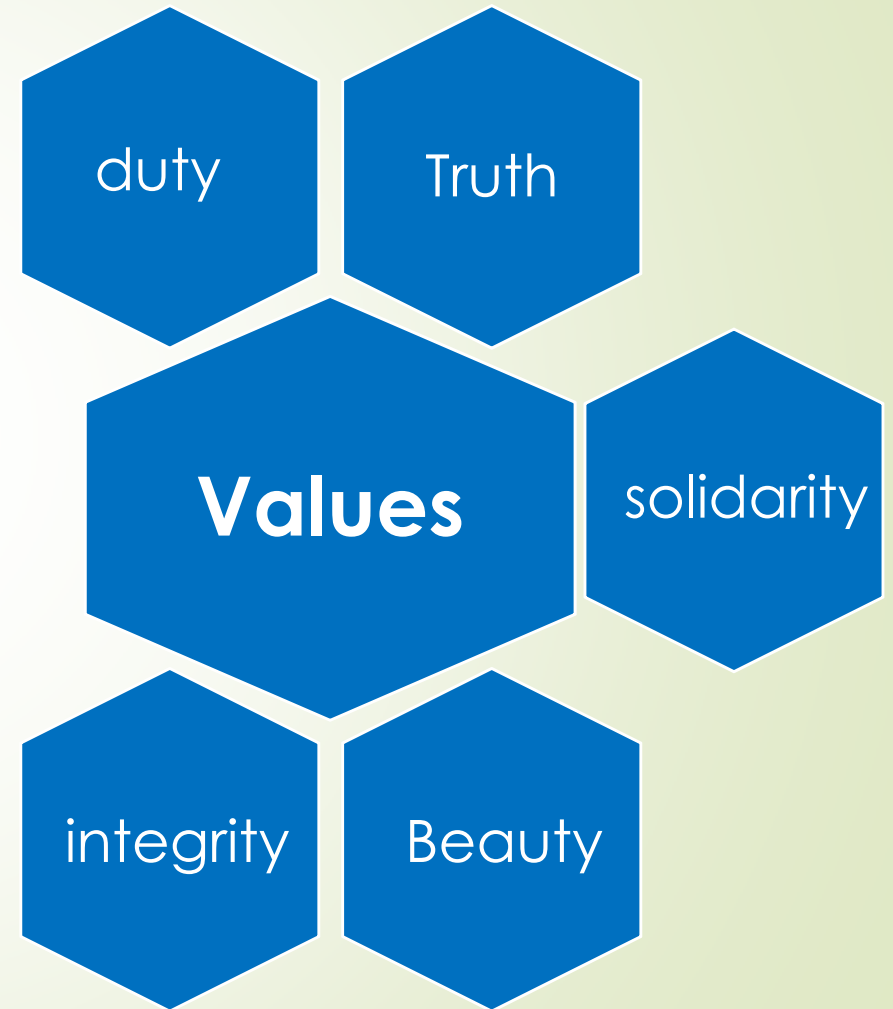
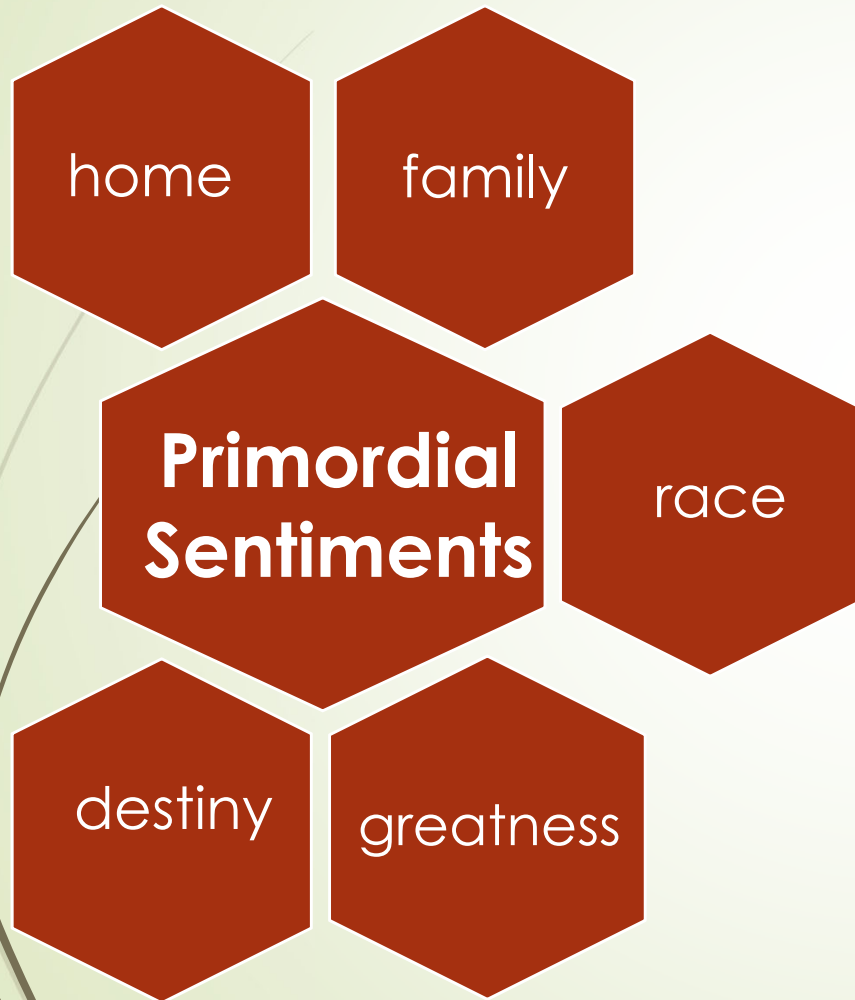
“The relegation of moral issues to some zone outside the mainstream of governmental concerns’ should not have happened.”

► **Pope Francis (2017)**

“For solidarity is not mere ideal; it is expressed in concrete actions and steps that draw us closer to our neighbours, in whatever situation they find themselves. Forms of populism are instead the fruit of an egotism that hems people in and prevents them from overcoming and ‘looking beyond’ their own narrow vision.”



Deciphering populism through the battle of conscience






Reflections on the battle of conscience

Because of its reliance on **primordial sentiments**, populism allows it to be appropriated by both the Right and the Left as a political strategy, as well as by political leaders in developed, transitional and under-developed countries. Sentiments have a universal appeal because 'home' is as important to an affluent middle class voter in London as it is to an aboriginal living in a hut made of sticks and grass.


Contrastingly, **virtues** are woven into the institutional fabric and politics of constitutional states, but they are volatile: prolonged, systemic crises see them displaced by the primordial sentiments, with their existential appeal.

Warrington, 2016

Weaving theory into empiricism (1)

Political Parties	Ideology	Year	National Approach on Irregular Migration	Domestic Perception about EU's role in combating irregular migration	Malta's Parties' demands to the EU
<p>Sduwlv Q d } }mrqdadvw +SQ ,</p> 	Leaning Centre-Right	2002-2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primordial Sentiments • Push Back • Prolonged detentions • Negligible integration policy 	Negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burden Sharing • Solidarity • Virtues
		2013-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solidarity 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-evaluate Dublin III Regulation

Weaving theory into empiricism (2)

Political Parties	Ideology	Year	National Approach on Irregular Migration	Domestic Perception about EU's role in combating irregular migration	Malta's Parties' demands to the EU
 Partit Laburista (PL)	Leaning Centre-Left	2002-2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primordial Sentiments 	Negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veto-playing
		2014-2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pushback 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtues • Securing Libyan Borders
		2015-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solidarity • Pushback – • Create asylum centres in Libya 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-evaluate Dublin III regulation

Conclusion 1+2



Answer
one

- Maltese Political parties use parallel approaches
- Populist discourse when addressing domestic electorate
- Migration confirms political polarization in Malta: which of the two parties is providing the most reliable guarantee of national security

Answer
two

- At domestic level, EU is blamed for its ineffectiveness and lack of sensitivity to Maltese vulnerabilities
- Thus EU serves both as a blame shifter and collaborator across the different strata of multi-level governance
- At the same time, Maltese political parties upload the 'virtues' of truth, duty, integrity and solidarity to the EU platform.

Conclusion 3



Answer
three

- ▶ Maltese political parties are pragmatic in the way they rely on the matter of conscience
- ▶ Their political strategies imply that whilst they implicitly promote primordial sentiments on domestic grounds, they project a political vision based on higher values when intervening with their European counterparts.
- ▶ Domestically, mainstream politicians shun far right groups by keeping the local population fairly satisfied with political action and/or inaction vis-à-vis immigration.
- ▶ On a supranational level, Maltese politicians constantly call for universal values to help ease local problems associated with immigration.



Thank you

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