



# The Transnational Patriot

## Celebrating Cultural Diversity Between Nation-States While Promoting Hostility Toward Diversity Within Nation-States

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**Abstract:** This article explores how the populist radical right manage identity talk on an international stage. Speeches from the Europe of Nations and Freedom conference held in Koblenz, Germany, on January 21, 2017, were analyzed using a rhetorical and critical discursive psychology approach. This occasion was a celebratory public display of international solidarity between political actors who privilege national interests, advocate stronger immigration control and are Eurosceptic. Results highlight two interdependent rhetorical strategies that construct an inclusive diverse transnational political community, built on the core shared ideology of exclusionary nationalist nativism. Firstly, “Constructing the Transnational Patriot” works up a superordinate political category often labeled the “patriots” that transcends individual nation-states. Temporal and spatial boundary work was done to construct the political collective as extensive, expanding and enduring. This capacity for the speakers to position themselves as prototypical members of a transnational political community facilitates and demands the second rhetorical strategy, “Ambivalent Diversity.” Here speakers acknowledge and celebrate the cultural diversity of their political collective through a precious “national diversity” between nation-states while simultaneously displaying hostility to cultural diversity within nation-states. Speakers present themselves, and their political collective, as courageous protectors of the segregated national diversity against the threatening collusion between the violent oppressive political “elite” and exploitative immigrants. The speakers hijack the liberal understanding of diversity and reconfigure it in support of an argument defending the victimized majority and national cultural homogeneity.

**Keywords:** Transnational populism, ethno-pluralism, cross national diffusion, political mobilization, political identity

A wealth of psychological research has explored the discourse of populist radical right politicians aimed at mobilizing the citizens of their home nation-state (e.g., Mols & Jetten, 2014, 2016). But little attention has been paid to the capacity of the populist radical right to mobilize a political collective at a transnational level, while paradoxically advancing their core ideology of inward-looking nativist nationalism. Hence, this article explores the populist radical right’s presentation of transnational solidarity on an international stage through the analysis of speeches from a historic international conference held by the Europe of Nations and Freedom Group (ENF, 2017) in Koblenz, Germany on January 21, 2017. This event was attended by eleven leading populist radical right members of the European parliament, offering rare insight into a public display of transnational collaboration and discourse aimed at an international audience. Furthermore, at the time of this conference, several occurrences had validated the populist radical right internationally. These included the UK voting on June 23, 2016 to leave the EU and Donald Trump’s victory in the US elections on November 9, 2016. We were particularly interested in the discursive identity work done, in an attempt to mobilize a transnational collective and how

this was managed alongside the contradictory core ideology of nationalist nativism.

### The Populist Radical Right Mobilize the Political Collective Through an Exclusionary Ideology

In the 1970s the French National Front, the largest membership of the ENF Group, rebranded their political image through an ideological shift from “biological racism” to “cultural racism,” which Rydgren (2005) refers to as the “new master frame.” After electoral success in 1984 other populist radical right parties emulated the “new master frame” through a process of “cross-national diffusion.” This transnational rebranding can also be recognized through the ideological shift away from racial superiority to ethno-pluralism – which advocates the preservation of incommensurable pure homogenous national cultures that require being kept separate through restrictions on immigration and rejection of supranational institutions, such as the European Union (Bastow, 2002; Rydgren, 2007; Spektorowski, 2000, 2003).

Hence, the populist discourse of the radical right presents them as possessing the political will to protect the interests of the majority homogenous “people” against culturally diverse immigrants, political “elites,” and supporters of multiculturalism (Rooyackers & Verkuyten, 2012; Sakki et al., 2018; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016; Wodak, 2013). Multiculturalism is constructed as a failed ideology (Mols & Jetten, 2014) that victimizes the “ordinary hard-working taxpayers” (Mols & Jetten, 2016) and is imposed upon the indigenous citizens (Bull & Simon-Vandenberg, 2014). Ethno-pluralism is a xenophobic discursive strategy that justifies the exclusion of Muslims from European nation-states (Kutay, 2015). Crucially, national economic concerns tend not to be at the core of the populist radical right manifesto, but the primary anxiety is the threat to the national community from cultural diversity (Golder, 2016; Jay et al., 2019; Mols & Jetten, 2016).

However, Sakki and Pettersson (2016) highlight the populist radical right’s construction of an enemy “other” is not unique to Swedish and Finish discourse but is a “transnational” phenomenon. Caiani (2018) also notes that the populist radical right is increasingly engaged in international networking and events. And they efficiently mobilize a transnational collective, based on a shared ethno-nationalist ideology, by employing social media to disseminate cartoons that humiliate immigrants and refugees (Doerr, 2017). Nevertheless, others dispute the radical right’s ability to convincingly perform transnational populism, because their concept of the “people” is dependent on the nation (De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017; Moffitt, 2017). Hence, an examination is warranted into the discursive and rhetorical identity work being undertaken to potentially achieve transnational mobilization of the populist radical right using a new sanitized political image.

## Politicians Construct an Inclusive Identity to Mobilize and Expand Their Political Constituency

Previous research indicates that social categories are not predetermined concrete phenomena drawn from the contextual backdrop to simply inform political debate. Instead, social categories are deployed in talk and do political work through the strategic construction of boundaries between “us” and “them” (Elcherroth & Reicher, 2017, p. 91). Social categories define who belongs and, importantly, what values, norms, and beliefs are significant to the members. Hence, social categories are a means to mobilize a political collective through the production of a shared social reality that informs how people can act within the world. They construct, consolidate, and reaffirm shared understandings

and representations of the social, political, and historical context.

Effective political speakers mobilize support through identity performance as entrepreneurs of identity (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). The skilful leader will present themselves as a prototypical member of an overarching common ingroup that draws together a diverse constituency. To extend the reach of their constituency they will proclaim their political project to be inclusive and reflecting the norms, values, and interests of all the members of the common identity category. Political speakers tend to construct the ingroup as all-encompassing and extensive, while the outgroup is presented as a diminished minority. For example, Barack Obama presented himself as the embodiment of a diverse America (Augoustinos & De Garis, 2012). While speakers on the political margins are unable to point to a cohesive overarching ingroup in the present, they may orient to an aspirational common identity located in the future (Condor et al., 2013).

Often political actors will invoke the national category and present themselves as prototypical citizens, because it appeals to the entire electorate (Augoustinos & De Garis, 2012; Reicher & Haslam, 2017). Politicians construct a version of the national character that aligns with their political project (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). However, political actors can also seek legitimization beyond the nation-state by presenting their political position as representing the whole world and being universally beneficial to all (Billig, 1995, p. 171; Haslam et al., 2010, p. 157). In a globalized world the presentation of a global political identity is increasingly important (Gleibs & Reddy, 2017) and the notion of “cross-national diffusion” (Rydgren, 2005) potentially indicates that a global identity is also important to the populist radical right. However, the identity work – and hence the construction of a shared representation of the social world – that underpins the internationally expanding populist radical right has received little exploration. To date, research has focused on the populist radical right’s construction of national categories, and their rejection of cultural diversity. The paradox of constructing an *inclusive* transnational political collective based on the core ideology of *exclusionary* nationalist nativism merits further consideration and is a core aim of this paper.

## Method

Videos of the eleven speakers at the Koblenz, ENF conference, January 21, 2017, were retrieved from online sources providing 140 min 48 s of transcribed speeches. We utilized publicly available English translations where speakers used languages other than English, because this captures the international online presence of the conference and the

multilingual nature of the conference itself. Where footage was provided with subtitles, we privileged these over impromptu spoken translations, with the rationale that the translator producing subtitles after the event had the benefit of knowing the full context of the speech.

The speakers were as follows:

- Markus Pretzell, Alternative for Germany (AFD);
- Marine Le Pen, French, Front National;
- Geert Wilders, Dutch, Partij voor de Vrijheid (Party for Freedom);
- Matteo Salvini, Italy, Lega Nord (Northern League);
- Harald Vilimsky, Freedom Party of Austria (FPO);
- Frauke Petry, AfD;
- Tom Van Grieken, Belgian Vlaams Belang (VB; Flemish Interest);
- Gerolf Annemans, (VB; no publicly available English translation therefore omitted from the analysis);
- Janice Atkinson, British, Independent;
- Tomio Okamura, Czech Republic, Freedom and Direct Democracy;
- Laurentiu Rebeaga, Romanian, Independent.

For more information see Electronic Supplementary Material, ESM 1.

## Analytic Framework

We employed a discursive psychology framework, because it considers discourse, not to be a mere conveyer of information, but a collaborative social act that constructs social reality, mobilizes social categories, and hence, explores the action orientation of discourse (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). This approach differs from other discourse analysis, because it focuses on fundamental psychological phenomena such as the social categorization of the self and others, but it avoids making assumptions about the speaker's inaccessible internal world by attending to what is being accomplished through the discourse (Augoustinos & Tileagă, 2012; McNamara et al., 2013; Stevenson & Muldoon, 2010). Furthermore, discursive psychology is strongly influenced by conversation analysis, and hence, employs systematic and fine-grained analysis of talk and text to show how people construct, debate, and contest shared understandings of the social world (Augoustinos & Tileagă, 2012).

Additionally, we took a critical perspective, which entails highlighting the hegemonic discourses that maintain inequitable power relations between social groups (Nightingale et al., 2017; Wetherell, 1998). Hence, particular attention is given to social category work done through the discourse, the drawing of boundaries between "us" and "them," and defining the values, beliefs, and norms that are important to "us" (O'Donnell et al., 2016). We also

drew on rhetorical psychology (Billig, 1987), which explores the argumentative strategies employed by speakers to counter and delegitimize the opposing position through the construction of an apparently rational and balanced argument.

Hence, extracts presented here are exemplars of identity performance and particularly identity entrepreneurship that mobilizes a political collective. Following from Reicher and Hopkins (2001), the entrepreneur of identity is seen to (1) construct a cohesive superordinate identity category that is inclusive of a diverse audience; (2) tie their political agenda to the norms and values prized by the invoked identity category; (3) position themselves as prototypical of the identity category.

## Results

The analysis exposed two interdependent discursive and rhetorical strategies deployed in the construction of a transnational political collective. The first strategy, "Constructing the Transnational Patriot," works up a unified superordinate identity, which transcends individual nation-states and is often referred to by speakers as "us patriots." The spatial and temporal work done constructs the "patriot" identity as extensive, expanding, and enduring. The "patriot" is presented as an aspirational and ambiguously inclusive political identity (Condor et al., 2013). This tendency for speakers to position themselves as prototypical members of a transnational political collective, the "patriots," requires them to also take up the second rhetorical strategy of "Ambivalent Diversity." Here the populist radical right speakers who are ordinarily hostile toward cultural diversity *within* nation-states orient to a precious cultural diversity *between* nation-states. This ambivalent position toward cultural diversity enables the populist radical right to construct an inclusive diverse transnational political community built on the core shared ideology of exclusionary nationalist nativism.

## Constructing the Transnational Patriot

A striking aspect of the speeches at the ENF conference was the considerable identity work that the speakers dedicated to constructing an inclusionary transnational political community and celebrating an expanding membership. The construction of this extensive, expanding, and enduring political category, often referred to as "us patriots," stands in stark contrast to the exclusionary nationalist nativism ideology that defines the political identity.

Atkinson declares a unifying political community, "us patriots," which she positions herself and the audience

within, using the first-person plural “us” (Table 1, line 1). She presents the “patriots” as being an expanding category, an aspirational identity (Condor et al., 2013), by declaring their recent transnational success, “what a great year 2016 was for us patriots” (line 1). She confirms the “great[ness]” of the “patriots” political reach by orienting to two concrete international victories, “Brexit Trump just to name a few” (line 1). This reference to the UK voting to leave the EU in the Brexit referendum and Donald Trump’s election as US president, extends the “patriot” boundary beyond the immediate audience to include supporters of these “patriot” victories. Furthermore, these two examples are embedded within an infinite three-part list culminating in “just to name a few” (Jefferson, 1990). Hence, the list has not been exhausted but is strategically unconstrained. Implying that there are too many undeclared examples of the “patriots” expanding international support to mention them all.

This expansion of the category boundary of the “patriot” collective is reiterated through the metaphor “the political pendulum . . . has swung” (line 2). Atkinson proceeds to claim that the weight of the “political pendulum” is not about to commence its return swing as, “more is yet to come” (line 3). The transnational political expansion is specifically evident “in Europe across and across the Atlantic” (line 2) but this is only the start of the rise of the “patriots” as the political momentum moves increasingly in their favor. Where these future victories will occur is ambiguously unspecified, “just to name a few” (line 1). The aspirational “patriot” identity is constructed as inclusive and the expanding transnational boundary is limitless.

The UK’s departure from the EU should render the alliance with Euro-sceptic members of the European Parliament redundant. But Atkinson reassures her fellow “patriots”, that “we” (line 5) [the British] are committed to an enduring transnational “patriot” collective, “don’t worry my friends we are not pulling up the drawbridge” (lines 4-5). This commitment is independent of the EU, which is portrayed as an oppressive tyrant, “we are merely unshackling ourselves from the unaccountable anti-democratic EU” (lines 5-6). Atkinson constructs the political collective as being an informal alliance of “friends” that will endure her having to leave the EU parliamentary group after Brexit. Even though the European “patriots” that she addresses as “friends” (line 4), will no longer be welcome to freely live and work in Britain. Atkinson rhetorically manages the tension between constructing an inclusive transnational “patriot” identity and the core exclusionary nationalist ideology by resorting to a paradoxical claim that “we are not pulling up the drawbridge” (line 5). But it is undeclared who or what passes over the metaphoric bridge. Presumably it purely serves to maintain ties between members of an enduring transnational “patriot” collective.

**Table 1.** Extract from Janice Atkinson

1	what a great year 2016 was for us patriots (.) Brexit, Trump just to name a few (.)
2	the political pendulum in Europe across and across the Atlantic has swung
3	and more is yet to come (.) UK will be leaving the EU
4	but don’t worry my friends
5	we are not pulling up the drawbridge we are merely unshackling
6	ourselves from the unaccountable anti-democratic EU

**Table 2.** Extract from Geert Wilders (Punctuation from subtitles)

1	There is, however, much positive news. There is reason for hope.
2	There is light at the end of the tunnel. Better times will come.
3	The wind started to shift last year. It brought us the victory of
4	– and from here, congratulations to – Donald Trump,
5	the President of the United States.
6	But not only in America. We also see it here in Germany, the Netherlands,
7	France, Italy, Austria, throughout Europe: The patriots are winning.
8	The time for a change has come. And that is why, my friends,
9	it gives me tremendous courage to see you all here today.
10	This room full of German patriots shows me something very important.
11	It shows me that Germany is not lost!

The use of “patriot” to invoke a political community by the populist radical right has not been highlighted in previous research, but it appears to be particularly useful for producing solidarity between nationalist speakers in this international context. Here, Geert Wilders also makes use of the “patriot” identity to construct an inclusive and expanding category (Table 2).

Wilders orients to the recent victories of the populist radical right, “There is, however, much positive news” (Table 2, line 1). “There is reason for hope” (line 1). He embeds this positive turn of events in an aspirational repertoire that offers “hope” (line 1) for the future and now “there is light at the end of the tunnel. Better times will come” (line 2). Equivalent to Atkinson’s reference to the swing of a “political pendulum” (Table 1, line 2) to indicate increased global support, Wilders draws on the metaphor, “the wind started to shift last year” (Table 2, line 3). His speech offers an ambiguously inclusive and aspirational political identity (Condor et al., 2013), declaring the political change last year “brought us the victory” (line 3) of “Donald Trump” (line 4). This political “victory” not only occurred in “America” (line 6), but it is also repeated in political events across a number of nation-states, “Germany, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Austria, throughout Europe: The patriots are winning” (lines 6-7).

In line 8 Wilders draws on the notion that political change is imminent and hence transnational support for the “patriot” political agenda is on the rise, “the time for



a change has come.” He then consolidates the “patriot” identity, “that is why, my friends, it gives me tremendous courage to see you all here today” (lines 8–9), by locating himself amongst “friends” (line 8) and “German patriots” (line 10) upon whom his position of “tremendous courage” (line 9) is dependent. He is the embodiment of “courage” (line 9) bestowed upon him by the “room full of” brave “German patriots” (line 10) who will fearlessly protect “Germany” from being “lost!” (line 11).

The brave “patriots” offers relief from the pervasive darkness, “There is light at the end of the tunnel. Better times will come” (line 2). Wilders consolidates and mobilizes the “patriots” through a victorious battle cry, “Germany is not lost!” (line 11). He constructs a shared position, characterizing the “patriots” as brave combatants against the forces of darkness that conspire to bring down the nation-state (line 3). Their “courage” offers hope (see also Reicher & Haslam, 2017), an end to the long suffered appalling situation. And, more importantly, those in opposition to the “patriots” are implicitly depicted as a threat who allow the dreadful situation to perpetuate and actively promote ruin.

## Ambivalent Diversity

Having established a transnational “patriot” identity, the populist radical right speakers use a rhetorical strategy that we refer to as “Ambivalent Diversity,” which constructs an inclusive diverse transnational political collective, while maintaining their core ideology of exclusionary nationalist nativism. Specifically, the speakers take both negative and positive positions on cultural diversity, through the celebration of a precious cultural diversity *between* nation-states, which is dependent on the implicit assumption of a monoculture *within* nation-states. This allows them to valorize diversity, while simultaneously advocating exclusionary anti-immigrant ideals. Frauke Petry orients to the “paradox” between these two modes of diversity (Table 3, line 1).

Petry constructs a clear categorical distinction between them and us – “the immigrants” (Table 3, line 2) and “our own people” (line 3) – which is utilized to outline a fundamental “paradox” (line 1). A “universality” is “offered” by the ingroup – “we” – to the outgroup – “the immigrants” – which “paradoxically” is being denied to the ingroup – “we are denying our own people” (lines 1–3). “Our own people” are represented as naively benevolent toward the other, “the immigrants” (line 2), because they are potentially becoming culturally overwhelmed, “serving the masses of immigration” (line 5), which is resulting in “Europe ... becoming very similar” (line 10).

Specifically, this “universality” offered to the other is a “diversity” (line 7), which is “dreamt up by European bureaucrats” (line 6). Here the repertoire orientates to a liberal understanding of “diversity” embedded in EU

**Table 3.** Extract from Frauke Petry

1	It's a real paradox we are
2	the universality that we are offering to these to the immigrants
3	is something we are denying our own people.
4	We are not recognising the differences between our European countries
5	and we are actually serving the masses of immigration
6	because this was something that was dreamt up by European bureaucrats
7	and sold to us as diversity.
8	But what is diversity? This continent has got cultural linguistic
9	culinary national diversity we have got so many different models
10	and yet in this world in Europe it is all becoming very similar.

institutional directives, promoting cultural recognition, free expression, inclusion, acceptance, and respect for individual and minority group uniqueness. However, “diversity” (line 7), which is institutionally sanctioned by “European bureaucrats” (line 6) to protect the rights of individuals and minority groups *within* the nation-state, is presented here as problematic and juxtaposed with “recognising the differences between our European countries” (line 4). “The immigrants” (line 2) are explicitly distinguished from “our own people” (line 3) and the “diversity” offered to them undermines the fundamental concern of “our own people,” which is the recognition of “the differences between our European countries” (line 4).

The liberal understanding of “diversity” deployed in arguments supporting “immigrants” (line 2) and “immigration” (line 5), is presented as imaginary, “dreamt up” (line 6) and a notion that necessitates being “sold to us” (line 7). “Our own people” (line 3) are ignorant of the actual (line 5) intent of the false “diversity.” The appeal to fact through the use of “actually” (line 5), is a rhetorical strategy that presents the speaker as objectively impartial and protects them from accusations of prejudiced for what is about to be said, “serving the masses of immigration” (line 5) (Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Dixon, 2017).

Evidently, the false diversity “actually” co-opts “our own people” into servitude (line 5) for the “masses of immigration.” “Masses” (line 5) is a common extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986), presenting the movement of migrants as overwhelming and out of control. The rhetoric works up a disturbing “actual” truth that opportunistic masses are taking advantage of “our own peoples” misguided benevolence (lines 6–7) and this is facilitated by the “European bureaucrats” (line 6). This notion of “diversity” presents the dominant majority culture as the victim (McNeill et al., 2017) and the liberal enemy within as colluding with the enemy immigrants from outside, which is a common rhetorical strategy used by the populist radical right (Kutay, 2015; Reicher & Haslam, 2017).

Significantly, Petry proceeds to ask the question “what is diversity?” (line 8). In answer the true diversity is defined, “this continent has got cultural linguistic culinary national diversity” (lines 8–9). The repertoire celebrates a precious genuine “national diversity” (line 9), which is in opposition to the “dreamt up” (line 6) diversity that requires being “sold to us” (line 7). Evidently, “national diversity” is the genuine “diversity,” because it is inherent within “the differences between our European countries” (line 4) on this “continent” (line 8), which is constituted through different cultural, linguistic and culinary practices (lines 8–9) of “our own people” (line 2) and not “the immigrants” (line 2). The “dreamt up” (line 6) diversity that is “serving masses of immigration” (line 5) is a significant threat to the cherished “national diversity” (line 9) due to its homogenizing influence, “in Europe it is all becoming very similar” (line 10).

The notion of “diversity” was not wholly discredited but was taken up as a valued commodity and celebrated when it was conceptualized as the “differences” *between* discrete monocultural nation-states, while the liberal understanding of “diversity” *within* the nation-state was condemned as imaginary (line 6) and self-sabotaging. In other words, the argument against immigration was not accomplished through simple dismissal of the notion of “diversity,” but “diversity” was hijacked and reconfigured in support of differences between discrete monocultural nation-states (Billig, 1987, p. 270).

In Table 4, Harald Valimsky orients to the fundamental shared principle of the populist radical right, “we all respect the character of our continent” (line 1), and skilfully positions himself as a superordinate spokesperson transcending national boundaries. He proceeds to depict the essentialist character of “our continent” based on an inherent cultural heritage reaching back into a distant time, which “has got thousands of years of history and culture” (line 3). Nostalgic repertoires, intended to mobilize a national identity based on an imagined shared history and culture, are common amongst populist radical right speakers (e.g., Mols & Jetten, 2014; Rydgren & van der Meiden, 2019). But here, a transnational position is taken up by invoking “our continent” and an inclusive diverse political identity is constructed through the first-person plural: “we are a continent of pluralism and diversity” (line 4).

Intriguingly, Vilimsky’s speech heads off the potential argument that this cultural diversity *between* nation-states is a potential threat to security (lines 6–9). He claims that Europe has managed to overcome its violent past and a nationalist ideology is not problematic. The present peaceful relationship between European nations is accentuated by presenting the nation-state as a person (Lakoff & Chilton, 1995; Stenvall, 2018), “all countries – rather stand friendly to one another” (line 6). They are relaxed informal “friends” and “neighbors” (lines 8–9) who no longer experience

**Table 4.** Extract from Harald Vilimsky

1	They see that we all respect the character of our continent
2	more than the other parties.
3	Our continent has got thousands of years of history and culture
4	we are a continent of pluralism and diversity.
5	A continent which has managed to ensure that all cities
6	– all countries rather – stand friendly to one another.
7	That we have managed to overcome the wars of the past.
8	No one no one is now looking jealously at their neighbors
9	to do something to harm their neighbor quite the opposite.

violent “jealousy” (line 8) desiring to inflict “harm” (line 9). This harmonious informal relationship metaphorically presents nations as cordial friends in a “diverse” neighborhood and plays down the institutional necessity of the EU to maintain peace.

In Table 5 Marine Le Pen’s speech also works up an ambivalent notion of diversity. She takes up a leadership position, through the first-person plural “we,” commanding the audience to follow her to “abandon the prison of the European Union” (Table 5, lines 1 – 2). The rhetoric positions the “European Union” as a serious threat to liberty by portraying it to be the most oppressive of disciplinary institutions. This is alarmingly threatening, but paradoxically the “European Union” is also presented as an ineffectual “prison” that can be effortlessly “abandon[ed]” (line 1). For the prison to be abandoned with such ease, potentially “we” (line 1) are both inmates and jailors, and the “prison” is of our own making.

Importantly, on leaving the European Union, “we will see the rebirth of the diversity of European cultures and the nations that compose it” (line 3). The disciplinary European Union is suppressing the valued cultural diversity between nations. The rhetoric emphasizes the urgency of the appeal through the repetition of short phrases, “from then on, from the moment when” (line 1) and presents the “rebirth of the diversity” (line 3) as being singularly contingent on leaving the EU “prison.” The freedom gained by release from “the prison of the European Union” is the freedom to defend the monocultures of individual European nations (Rydgren, 2007). Le Pen uses the first-person plural, “we” (lines 1–2) to work up a shared identity with the immediate audience attending the conference and also the extensive audience beyond (Billig et al., 1988; Reicher & Hopkins, 1996). In this international context “we” (lines 1–2) extends beyond the speaker’s individual nation-state, in an attempt to build political solidarity amongst all Europeans who are imprisoned by the “European Union” (lines 1–2).

Evidently the “rebirth of the diversity,” constituted by discrete bounded homogenous national cultures, does not pose a threat to security, (lines 4–5). On the contrary, the speech declares it will enable a renewed peace (lines

**Table 5.** Extract from Marine Le Pen

1	From then on, from the moment when we abandon the prison
2	of the European Union, we will see the rebirth of the diversity
3	of European cultures and the nations that compose it.
4	This diversity isn't synonymous with war, contrary to what years
5	of ideology wanted to make us believe.
6	War, on the contrary, is this Union in lock-step.
7	War is those disconnected elites who are calling for arming
8	against Mr. Trump or Mr. Putin! (.9) (audience clapping)
9	A different people isn't an enemy people. A different people
10	is one with which I am going to build a relationship.

9-10) and counters the argument that the EU has facilitated the longest period of peace within Europe. It dismisses the troubled legacy of European nationalism – “This diversity isn't synonymous with war contrary to what years of ideology wanted to make us believe” (lines 4-5). Although Europe's turbulent, violent, and at times genocidal history indicates the opposite, the speech reassures the audience that a diversity between nations does not facilitate antagonistic division and is not a potential ingredient for violent conflict (lines 4-5).

Conversely, the project of a “union” between European states, which marches forward in a “lock-step” of compliant conformity, is explicitly declared to be a state of “war” (lines 6-7). The “war” is between the EU institution and individual member states, which are locked into the prison (line 1). The “war” is also caused by the “disconnected elites” (line 7) who advocate, “arming against Mr. Trump or Mr. Putin!” (lines 6-7). The expressed security concern and transnational political alliance does not only have a Western reach, but it also extends east to “Mr. Putin” and Russia (line 7). A common populist rhetorical strategy is deployed that defends the victimized righteous pure people in opposition to a corrupt “elite,” who in this case alarmingly jeopardize peace (McNeill et al., 2017).

Crucially, Le Pen proceeds to position herself as a diplomatic peacemaker as she explains that, “a different people isn't an enemy people. A different people is one with which I am going to build a relationship” (lines 9-10). The talk clearly embraces diversity, declaring that she will not be hostile to people who are different, she will not make them her “enemy,” but on the contrary, she will reach out to them and “build a relationship” (lines 9-10).

## Discussion

Our analysis shows that the populist radical right speakers, in this public international context, position themselves as prototypical members of a transnational culturally diverse

political collective, which is extensive, expanding and enduring. Similar to centre ground politicians the populist radical right, construct an aspirational (Condor et al., 2013), inclusive (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001) and diverse (Augoustinos & De Garis, 2012) political identity, which is often referred to as “us patriots.” A unified political collective of victorious “patriots” is constructed and mobilized, which transcends individual nation-states. The “patriot” collective is often presented as limitless and ambiguously inclusive. The speakers draw on powerful metaphors to emphasize their extensive and expanding political support and orient to an enduring solidarity that is independent of the EU. The audience is to understand that “Patriots” reside everywhere and new support may well surface anywhere.

The superordinate transnational positioning of the speakers compels them to take up a discursive strategy of ambivalent diversity that acknowledges and celebrates their diverse political collective. In contrast to previous research highlighting the populist radical right's hostility toward cultural diversity (e.g., Mols & Jetten, 2014, 2016), here they orient to a valued notion of national diversity, the difference *between* national cultures. This repertoire of ambivalent diversity accomplishes two matters. One, it dexterously manages the ambivalent tension between the core political doctrine of exclusionary nationalism versus the mobilization of an inclusive diverse political community that transcends the nation-state. Two, it takes up the valued liberal notion of “diversity” and reconceptualizes it in favor of exclusionary arguments (Billig, 1987). While the liberal opposition are constructed as a disreputable and a diminished marginal group that nobody would wish to be a member of (Reicher & Hopkins, 1996).

The populist radical right's new sanitized ideology of ethno-pluralism is an effective means to distance themselves from their past tainted ideology of biological racism while maintaining an exclusionary xenophobic agenda (see Bastow, 2002; Kutay, 2015; Rydgren, 2007; Spektorowski, 2000, 2003). We expand on this, by highlighting how the ideology of ethno-pluralism affords a repertoire of “ambivalent diversity” that constructs and mobilizes an inclusive transnational diverse collective, often labeled “us patriots.” We note that De Cleen and Stavrakakis (2017) question the ability of the radical right to convincingly construct a populist transnational “people” due to the ambivalent tension with their core exclusionary doctrine of nativist nationalism. However, it can be argued that this ambivalent tension between the *particular* (the exclusionary nation-state) and the *universal* (a world made up of nation-states), which is fundamental to nationalism (Billig, 1995, p. 87), may actually facilitate the construction of a transnational “people” and render the ideology of ethno-pluralism universally acceptable. Nationalism accomplishes this contradiction,

between exclusion and inclusion, within everyday “banal” articulation and social practice. In order for a *particular* nation-state to be imagined, it has to be imagined within a *universal* world made up of nation-states. The discourse of nationalism is hegemonic as *all* “people” belong to a *particular* nation-state, at least in theory, and the world of nations is construed as natural and taken-for-granted – making the construction of a transnational “people” unproblematic.

Additionally, ambivalent diversity is a rhetorical strategy that presents the argument as balanced and rational by embracing the valued commodity of cultural diversity. Speakers undermine the liberal interpretation of “diversity,” used in arguments defending minority rights and celebrating multicultural societies (Spektorowski, 2000, 2003), by turning it back on itself through the construction of an argument in defence of the victimized majority and national cultural homogeneity. Evidently the speakers are not advocating multiculturalism, where individuals and minority groups of different cultures within the nation-state are afforded equal status (Pehrson et al., 2014). Quite the opposite, cultural diversity is to be protected through, the denial of minority and individual rights, restricted movement across national borders, and rejection of supranational political institutions, such as the EU. This taking up of fundamental elements of the opposing argument and reversing its normative liberal understanding is an effective rhetorical strategy (Billig, 1987, p. 270). Previous discursive psychology research has noted similar ambivalent reversal of liberal values such as equality, justice, and rights, to legitimize racial hostility and reject affirmative action policy (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 198). Importantly, “diversity” is not ineptly dismissed, but is skilfully redirected, because it is a prevalent cherished value that calls up a broad “collective commitment” to the ideological position being presented (McGee, 1980).

Significantly, the speeches celebrate the notion of “national diversity” *between* nation-states, based on valued cultural characteristics that have historic continuity. This provides supporting evidence that the ideology of ethno-pluralism acts as the foundation for nostalgic discourses celebrating a past golden age of discrete monocultural nations (Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019). National diversity is also akin to harmonious neighbors, compassionate friendships, respectful relationship building, and ultimately security. Conversely, diversity *within* nation-states, due to immigration, was depicted as false, dangerous, and having an overwhelming homogenising effect, which is harmful to the valued national diversity. The “patriots” position themselves as prototypical members of the political collective who singularly have the courage to defend the true idyllic national diversity, and the victimized majority, against a dishonest, violent and oppressive political “elite” that

conspire with the exploitive immigrants (Haslam et al., 2010). The discourse is reminiscent of Donald Trump’s identity work on the campaign trail, offering “hope” to the American people in dark times (Reicher & Haslam, 2017). The speeches consolidate political solidarity through mobilizing battle cries of collective courage. The reconfiguring of diversity unites and mobilizes the transnational “patriot” collective by declaring that dominant majority national cultures to be the *true* victims (also see McNeill et al., 2017; Rooyackers & Verkuyten, 2012).

## Conclusion

Paradoxically, the globalized interdependent world that the populist radical right is hostile toward, potentially compels them to position themselves as global actors and work up a transnational political identity. To stand as convincing, qualified, and competent political contenders within the contemporary global environment, their ideological position requires the appearance of widespread international support and legitimacy. This necessitates the populist radical right leaders to position themselves at a superordinate level and mobilize an inclusive diverse transnational political collective – us patriots – based on their core ideology of exclusionary nationalist nativism. Future research needs to extend this by paying increased attention to the transnational identity work done by the populist radical right to disseminate their exclusionary ideology and explore how grassroots supporters are engaging with this transnational mobilization.

This article reveals the discursive identity work done to facilitate the “cross national diffusion” of the populist radical right’s rebranded political identity, the “new master frame” (Rydgren, 2005). This shift of the core ideology from biological racism to cultural racism and ethno-pluralism, not only sanitizes the political image of the populist radical right but enables the transnational dissemination of the exclusionary ideology through the new capacity to construct and mobilize an inclusive diverse transnational identity. The populist radical right is no longer dependent on a notion of racial superiority, because the ideology of ethno-pluralism presents all ethnic cultures as equal but incommensurable and incompatible (Rydgren, 2007). Hence, these speakers, in this international context, can be seen to efficiently take up a position of transnational populism that speaks to a universal “people” (cf. De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017; Moffitt, 2017). The rhetorical strategy of ambivalent diversity hijacks the liberal understanding of diversity and redirects it in support of anti-immigrant and Euroskepticism by presenting minority diversity *within* nation-states, and the EU, as intrinsic threats to the cherished national diversity *between* states.



## Electronic Supplementary Material

The electronic supplementary materials are available with the online version of the article at <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000416>

**ESM 1.** Details about the eleven speakers

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