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Extreme Right, the Internet and European Politics in CEE Countries: The Cases of Slovakia and the Czech Republic

Manuela Caiani and Alena Kluknavská

This chapter focuses on extreme right (online) networks and discourses of opposition to Europe in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, investigating how they organise themselves on the Web and what they want from the EU. This appears as an interesting object of investigation for a book focusing on the many paths through which Internet-based media are potentially influencing the legitimacy of the EU, since tendencies of a 'renationalisation' of politics are observable in many member states, in particular in the form of increasing support for right-wing xenophobic parties and movements (Kriesi 2008), which usually also have a strong

M. Caiani (✉)
Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences, Scuola Normale Superiore, Firenze, Italy
e-mail: manuela.caiani@sns.it

A. Kluknavská
Centre for Nonprofit Sector Research, Faculty of Economics and Administration, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
e-mail: alena.kluknavska@econ.muni.cz

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anti-European profile (Caiani 2014) and skilfully use the Internet to spread their virulent anti-Brussels propaganda.

In fact, several studies underline that all over the world, right-wing extremists are using the Internet as a tool for communication and recruitment (Bartlett et al. 2011; Caiani and Wagemann 2009; De Koster and Houtman 2008; Ramalingam 2012). The new virtual means of communication offered by online media are considered to favour coordination among groups, the spreading of propaganda, recruitment and even transnational solidarity (Chase-Dunn and Boswell 2004; Whine 2012). Furthermore, as social movement scholars stress, the Internet can also play an important role in helping the processes of mobilisation by reducing the cost of communication between a large number of individuals (Della Porta and Mosca 2006). In Europe, hundreds of websites, run by neo-Nazi and skinhead organisations, have been identified (e.g. Caiani and Parenti 2013; Europol 2012), and Eastern and Central European countries are not an exception. However, to date, this topic is underexplored.

For what concerns in particular the extreme right (anti)-European propaganda, we can notice that whereas left-wing opposition to Europe is very well known and studied (e.g. Della Porta and Caiani 2009), the radical right criticism and mobilisation on the EU has been more neglected so far, although internationalisation processes are mentioned by many scholars as one of the main causes of the recent revitalisation of these political forces in Europe (e.g. Hermet 2001; Mény and Surel 2000). European integration has in fact restructured social and cultural cleavages, developing an opposition between the positions of trans- and supranational integration to those of national demarcation (Loch 2009), with extreme right parties and movements standing on the side of the defence of positions of demarcation through economic and cultural protectionism (Kriesi 2008; Mudde 2007). If, as a potential catalyser of political dissent, European integration has then provided the radical right with a new and powerful issue to compete on (Almeida 2010); this appears even truer in Central and Eastern Europe, where an increasing intensity of extremist right-wing activities, either in the social and political sphere, can be observed in the last decade (Minkenberg 2011). In fact, the issue of the EU and the prospect of joining the supranational organisation 'set the conditions for post-communist countries "return to Europe"' (Pirro 2014: 248) and at the same time created favourable

conditions for the extreme right to build upon nationalistic appeals concerning the EU membership and integration into this supranational organisation (Bustikova 2009). Since 2009, including European as well as national and local elections, radical right Eurosceptic parties gained more than 10 per cent of votes in 11 states, among which 3 in Eastern and Central Europe (Ferrari 2012). The 2014 European elections further boosted the success of a number of extreme right parties in Central and Eastern Europe (Treib 2014). In particular, in Slovakia, the Slovak National Party received 5.6 per cent and 3.6 per cent of votes in the 2009 and 2014 European elections, and the Czech Republic has been experiencing many right-wing extremist incidents and protests targeting the Roma people in the recent years (Europol 2012: 30). Racist extremist groups are present and increasingly visible in Slovakia as well (Mudde 2005: 211).

To date, however, existing research on the Internet and collective radical actors has primarily focused on left-wing organisations (for a review, see Mosca and Vaccari 2012). Attention to the extreme right and its political activity in the digital age has been episodic and mainly concentrated on the use of the Internet by political parties during electoral campaigns (e.g. Ackland and Gibson 2005). Furthermore, comparative works are rare (mostly focused on the American or Western European Right) and none concerning the Central and Eastern extreme right.

Against this background, in this chapter, we examine the online networks, which are built by extreme right organisations in Slovakia and the Czech Republic and their anti-European discourses (which can be potentially diffused through these networks, like many other topics of propaganda) elaborated in the last two decades. From the theoretical point of view, we shall address these issues by adopting some main concepts (and hypotheses and methods) coming from social movement studies (see Caiani et al. 2012). In particular, first of all, we will explore, with a *social network analysis* based on online links between more than 80 extreme right-identified websites, the *overall configuration* of the virtual communities of the Czech and Slovak extreme right, and their structural characteristics. Overall, we will look at how dense, how segmented or centralised these two extreme right sectors are, in order to identify the configurations of power within which the various actors operate and therefore their *mobilisation potential* (of the anti-European

discourse). Indeed, we argue that the analysis of how extremist groups use the infrastructure of the Internet can help us to better understand the groups themselves (Zhou et al. 2005). Relying on social movement studies and network theory, we expect that collective action will be easier in the presence of dense social ties, which facilitate the exchange of resources and the construction of a common identity, whereas weak links can lead to processes of pacification or laziness (Cinalli and Füglister 2008). We also hypothesise that the overall configuration of the extreme right network will vary across the two countries under study offering a different mobilisation potential to the far-right movement. Although we are aware that the analysis of Web links between organisations of the extreme right does not mirror the 'real' relations between these groups, nevertheless, in this study, we therefore treat the Web links between organisations as 'potential means of coordination' (Burris et al. 2000: 215). Moreover, focusing on the level of individual organisations, we will also examine which types of right-wing actors occupy a central (and therefore potentially 'influential') position in the network. Central actors are those who control the flows of communication within a network, acting, potentially, as 'opinion leaders' (Diani 2015) – it therefore becomes necessary to know what they think and say about the EU.

In the second part of the chapter, we conduct a *frame analysis* on various types of online and offline documents (Facebook pages, website documents, blogs, party programmes and newspapers) of the extreme right organisations which emerged as the most important (i.e. central or 'brokers', see next sections) within the online communities in the two countries. We investigate their *discourses on Europe* developed *in the last two decades* (1993–2013, for a total of 6484 frames coded). Our leading questions of this part will be: How important is Europe and European integration in comparison with other issues in the political discourse of extreme right organisations in the Czech Republic and Slovakia? To which specific aspects do they refer when they talk about Europe (cultural, economic, political)? What are the solutions suggested to stop and/or counteract European integration? And, who are the 'us' and the 'them', namely enemies and allies, in their view, in relation to Europe?

From an empirical point of view, whereas research on the extreme right has mainly focused on political parties, 'leaving aside highly important developments within non-party organisations and subcultures' (Mudde 2007: 5), our study includes, instead, non-party organisations and subcultural groups. Similarities and differences in the conceptualisation (i.e. framing strategies) of Europe between different types of organisations (extreme right political parties vs. political movements) and the two different countries will be showed, with a particular attention on reflecting whether there is a room for the development of a unified and coherent anti-European discourse able to unite these traditionally nationalist and 'plural' formations (Caldiron 2001).

In what follows, after having presented our methods and sources (Section 2), in Section 3, we will illustrate the results, at the level of the whole networks and the single organisations, concerning the structural characteristics of the Slovak and the Czech extreme right online. In Section 4, we will present the findings of the frame analysis, showing the features of the extreme right anti-EU discourse (the main issues, actors, allies and enemies, etc.) in the two countries. In the conclusion (Section 5), we will interpret the empirical results in light of our more general questions regarding extreme right (online) activism and Europe by linking them to the broader context of the CEE region.

The research: methods, sources and cases

For the *social network analysis*, although the use of social media (like Facebook, Twitter) appears on the increase among right-wing extremist groups (e.g. see Bartlett et al. 2011), in this study, we focus on extreme right organisational websites. The reason for opting for websites is twofold: we are mainly interested in the use of the Internet for extreme right propaganda at the meso-organisational level, and the use of social media among right-wing extremists is not yet as diffused in Central and Eastern Europe as it is in the West (Kluknavská and Hruška 2015).

First of all, in order to identify all extreme right organisations with a presence online (websites) in the two selected countries, we applied a 'snow-ball' technique. Starting from the most important and well-known

extreme right organisations in Slovakia and the Czech Republic (e.g. political parties) and focusing on 'friends' links explicitly indicated by these organisations,[1] we discovered the websites of minor and less known groups (for this procedure, see also Caiani and Parenti 2013). Through this, we have arrived at identifying approximately 40 extreme right organisational websites in each country (the lists of the extreme right websites included in the study are available upon authors' request). We have then classified them according to their websites content into broader categories[2] and extracted the relational patterns between them (hyperlinks among organisational websites) using the automatic software *Issue Crawler.*[3]

For the *frame analysis* of documents of the extreme right organisations in the two countries, we have used a standardised codebook, including qualitative and quantitative variables (for details about its construction see Caiani et al. 2012).[4] Focusing on selected extreme right organisations (emerged as particularly important from the social network analysis), we have analysed different types of offline and online documents (electoral programmes, party manifestos, party journals, Web pages) from 1993 to 2013 for a total of 6484 frames codified.[5] Offline written documents, in particular, allowed us to address the cross-time evolution of the extreme right anti-EU discourses. Frames (or cognitive 'schemata of interpretation', see Snow and Benford 1992) are another concept that we import from social movement studies to interpret the extreme right opposition to Europe

[1] Namely, a separate page or dedicated section specifically for links to other websites (Bruszt et al. 2005: 153).

[2] For the classification of the organisations, we have relied on the most common typologies that have been proposed for the study of the extreme right (e.g. Caiani et al. 2012; Mudde 2007), adapting them to the specificities of Eastern and Central European countries (see Minkenberg 2013a).

[3] This research tool was developed by Richard Rogers and the govcom.org foundation (Rogers 2013). We are grateful to Elena Pavan for helping us with this part.

[4] The codebook is available from the authors on request.

[5] Beyond problems of accessibility, the selection of different types of sources is due to the different communication strategies of the different kinds of groups (e.g. certain kinds of organisations do not have published newspapers or magazines as their main tool of communication, but only online written products). In all cases, we aimed, however, at selecting sources that are used to interact with the public, rather than for internal consumption.

in these two countries. They are defined as cognitive instruments that allow making sense of the external reality (Snow and Benford 1992) and are often produced by organisational leadership, which provides the necessary background, within which individual activists can locate their actions (Snow and Benford 1988; Snow et al. 1986). In particular, 'diagnostic frames' allow for the conversion of a phenomenon into a social problem, potentially the object of collective action (Snow et al. 1986); 'prognostic framing' also involves the suggestion of future developments that could solve the identified problems. In doing these, framing processes also allow for the definition of the self and the opponents, in short for the definition of the 'us' and the 'them' categories (Tilly 2003).

Inspired by that, our unit of analysis (the statement) was indeed broken down into the following analytical categories: 'subject actor', 'issue field', 'diagnosis' (what is seen as a problem), 'prognosis' (the proposed solution by the claimant), 'object actor' (who is affected by the problem) and 'ally and enemy actors' (who are seen as responsible for carrying out the solution and responsible for the problem). Moreover, for each variable, we also coded the so-called linguistic qualifiers, namely adjectives and qualitative descriptions. Frames have later been reaggregated by codified statements.

Regarding the case selection, we have chosen two organisations in each country, representative of the main areas of the extreme right milieu: a political party and a political movement. As for the Czech Republic, we have chosen the political parties 'Assembly for the Republic and Czechoslovak Republican Party' (*SPR-RSČ*) and the 'Republicans of Miroslav Sládek'. Although marginal after 2000, the SPR-RSČ was politically successful for much of the 1990s and therefore, it is considered important (Hanley 2013: 85). As for political movements, we have chosen the 'Workers' Party' and the 'Workers' Party of Social Justice' (*DSSS*), because despite their poor showing in elections (around 1.2 per cent), both organisations 'attained a certain degree of influence due to media coverage of its activities' (Mareš 2012: 1) and they have close contacts to the violent extreme right in the country (Mareš 2012: 1). For the case of Slovakia, we have selected the Slovak National Party (*SNS*) and the Real Slovak National Party. The former is broadly recognised as the most stable

and established extreme right party since the 1990s, and the latter was founded as a result of the struggle between two SNS wings (active in 2001–2002). We further selected the Slovak Togetherness – National Party (*SP-NS*) and the People's Party Our Slovakia (*L'SNS*) as political movements.[6] SP-NS is the best known and most successful example of initiatives in which right-wing forces with a neo-Nazi background tried to embark on political issues with local relevance (active in 2005–2006). L'SNS is the most rapidly growing, active and determined right-wing extremist party currently in Slovakia, building upon issues of high political relevance (mostly Roma, anti-establishment) in order to spread its ideology and more recently reaching the national level (Nociar 2012).

In terms of *case selection*, within a general tendency of radical right parties strengthening across the (Central and Eastern) EU, the Slovak and Czech cases appear as particularly interesting for analysis, since they are characterised by a number of features, relatively typical of CEE countries, that we assume can have an influence on the extreme right discourse on Europe (see also Minkenberg 2013b: 9). They are the legacy of the Communist Past that make these societies, as argued by Mudde (2002), particularly prone to right-wing anti-European populism because of the strong anti-political and anti-elitist sentiments which have been nourished under communism. Secondly, the importance of nation and nationalism in these societies may also, in our view, influence their opposition to the EU. The two selected countries indeed, similarly to the other countries in the CEE region, have dealt with four decades of 'dissolution of the nation state into an international socialist order' (Minkenberg 2002: 335) and for this reason, nationalism assumes here, at a political and societal level, a particularly positive connotation. In this sense, Slovakia can be considered a crucial case, as underlined, for its recent independence (Milo 2005). Thirdly, the fact that communist

[6] Though all these actors are formally officially registered as 'political parties', within the category 'political movements', we have included those parties that in terms of resources lack extensive party structure and in terms of mobilisation act more as social movements (for a similar classification, see Gunther and Diamond 2003). These types of organisations are usually referred to as 'movement parties' (Ibid.).

authoritarianism strongly limited the possibility to reflect openly upon the issue of human rights violation after WWII, which did not help the elaboration of an inclusive conception of the polity post-1989, giving the far right another cultural 'other' to fight against, namely members of national minorities. In sum, although we will draw only on data for the Slovak and Czech cases in this chapter, they can be taken as an illustration of more general dynamics (on the extreme right discourse on Europe) common to the CEE region.

The Structure of Extreme Right Online Networks

When looking at the overall cohesiveness (or segmentation?) of the online constellation of the extreme right in the two countries under study, first of all, we notice that, as previous studies have underlined for the extreme right in Western Europe (Caiani et al. 2012), also in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the far-right family is far from being homogeneous. Instead, our data show that in both countries, the galaxy of websites related to the extreme right is a complex sector including different categories of groups (Fig. 8.1 (a), (b)). The network for Slovakia is composed of 35 organisations with a total of 7033 hyperlinks, the Czech one of 42, connected through 15,641 links.

These two virtual communities ('networks') include various types of organisations ('nodes'), characterised by different ideological tendencies and mobilising around different issues (Fig. 8.1 (a), (b)). Some of them are characterised by neo-fascist or even neo-Nazi positions, while others have reduced these aspects to a sort of 'right-wing socialism' with anti-establishment, ethno-nationalist and anti-European (for instance, Worker's Party in the Czech Republic) and/or anti-liberalist traits (for instance, ĽSNS in Slovakia). They vary from *extreme right political parties* (such as the Slovak SNS and the Czech SPR-RSČ) to *extreme right political movements* (such as Slovak Togetherness or Slovak Revival Movement), in whose category we find those groups defining themselves as political movements that openly partake in

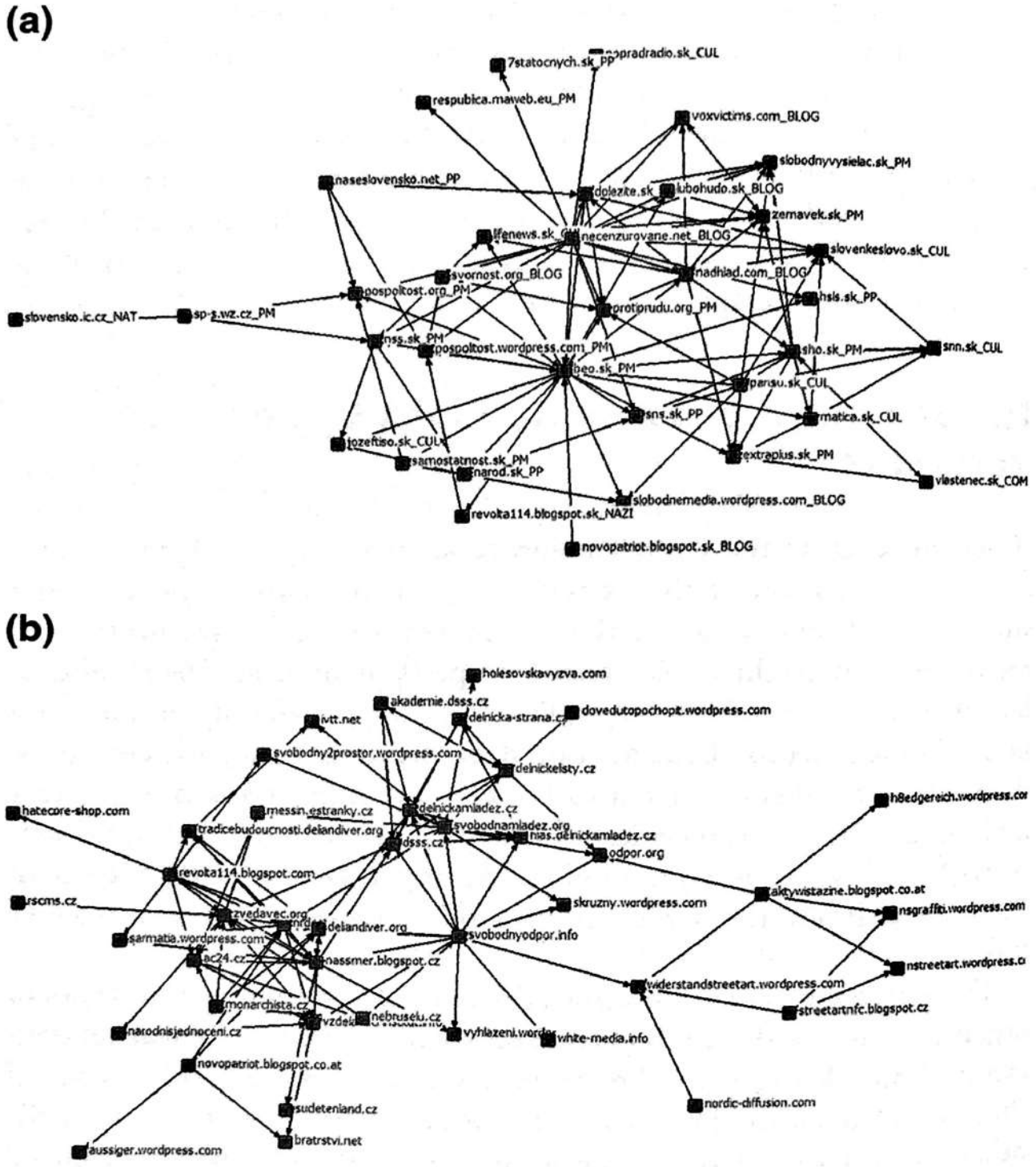

Fig. 8.1 (**a**) The network of the Slovak extreme right and (**b**) the network of the Czech extreme right

political activities (such as demonstrations, marches, political debates). Here, we also included youth organisations and political journals or magazines related to the parties, which try to mobilise public support but do not run for office (Minkenberg 2015). The organisations also range from *neo-Nazi groups* (such as the Slovak and Czech Autonomous Nationalists) – representing organisations that refer to the Third Reich – are apologists for Hitler and the German National Socialist ideology and, in our two selected countries, are mainly populated by subcultural youth groups, with links to hooliganism – to *cultural* and *civic extreme right associations*. The latter category contains cultural, historical or religious associations that are oriented towards 'culture' and society (their primary goal is not political). They usually act as traditional cultural associations or refer to historical eras, mainly the WWII and the Slovak state (such as the president Jozef Tiso). Catholic ultra-traditionalist organisations are also included, together with few revisionist and 'negationist' groups. Finally, from *nationalist-patriotic groups* – namely associations that behave as informal groups of people, sharing nationalist agenda aimed at protecting national interests or conspiracy theory thinking (e.g. references to the new world order theory or constant surveillance) – to extreme right *commercial sites* (that sell 'militaria') and *blog communities*, which are informal extreme right communities that centre their activity on a certain Web page or blogosphere. They are not in the hands of any political party, movement or cultural association, nor are they individual blogs. They are 'truly' virtual communities, usually run by young people.

Secondly, analysing the overall configuration of the two extreme right networks (Fig. 8.1 (a), (b)), by relying on some of the most common measurements in social network analysis (e.g. Scott 2000; Table 8.1), we see that the virtual community of the extreme right in Slovakia is less fragmented and more cohesive than the one in the Czech Republic. Indeed, although in the former case, the 'density of the network' (whose values can vary between 0 and 1, indicating the number of links actually activated among the actors of one network out of all possible links) is slightly smaller (6 per cent vs. 9 per cent of

Table 8.1 Measures of cohesion of the Slovak and Czech (online) extreme right networks

	Number of organisations	Density	Average distance	Average degree	Degree of centralisation
Slovakia	35	0.059	2.04	200.9	(Indegree) 50.26 (Outdegree) 46.7
Czech Republic	42	0.09	3.1	372	(Indegree) 142 (Outdegree) 162

possible ties amongst right-wing groups activated)[7], the 'average distance' between the organisations (which refers to the distance, on average, of the shortest way to connect any two actors in a network) is 2[8] for the Slovak case and 3 for the Czech case, meaning that the latter network is more dispersed and less easy to be coordinated since the smaller the average distance, the more cohesive a community is. The impression of a rather aggregated field for the Slovak case is reinforced by other social network measures: indeed, although the 'average degree' (which shows the average number of contacts which the organisations of one network have and that can be considered as signal of the degree of 'activism' in organisations' networking within one sector) is higher among the Czech than the Slovak extreme right, the degree of centralisation[9] is much lower in the Slovak network, indicating a more horizontal community where the exchanges within the network are not monopolised by some (few) specific actors. The high degree of centralisation in the Czech extreme right online community shows a situation of stronger inequalities within the sector since some actors engage in contacts more frequently than others and are, thus, in a better position to control the exchanges. In sum, the Czech extreme right network appears characterised by more obstacles for a fast and efficient communication among extreme right organisations.

[7] Although density is size sensitive, in networks with similar size, like our cases, it is comparable (Diani 2003).

[8] That is, the organisations of this network are three nodes (actors) away from each other.

[9] The 'degree of centralisation' indicates the extent to which a network is organised around one (or more) central actor(s).

In fact, looking at who the most central and important actors in the Slovak and Czech extreme right networks are, our data reveal that the higher cohesiveness of the Slovak extreme right online community can be attributed to the role played by some organisations, which stand for their centrality.[10] They are, as our analysis shows, some *political movements and cultural organisations* (such as Beo.sk,[11] indegree 54; the association Extraplus, which is a monthly nationalistic magazine, indegree 22)[12] and, secondly, the *political parties* (e.g. the SNS) that in general occupy a quite central position in the graph and are well connected, due to their levels of indegree (for instance, Národ, indegree 51), with the 'movement' part of the sector. In fact, as also our measures of betweenness show, political parties (especially the most important Slovak party, SNS) play an important role of brokerage in the Slovak network, connecting the blogs to the more traditional/cultural area of the extreme right milieu with political movements and parties. In the Czech case, the network is less horizontal than in the Slovak case and there are instead 'local heroes', which are represented mainly by *political movements* (such as 'deliandiver.org' or 'delnickamladez.cz', see their indegree values), that are able to centralise the communication power only within a specific portion of the sector, but not to unite all the community (as the general values of betweenness lower for the Czech

[10] Although there are many ways of measuring the prestige of an actor in a network and, therefore, its potential influence, we use here the 'indegree centrality' measure, the number of contacts which an actor receives from the others (those actors who receive information from many sources are considered 'prestigious', Diani 2003: 307) and the 'betweenness' (measuring where a particular actor lies between other organisations in a network). Actors with high 'betweenness' scores often serve as brokers between different parts of the community and are considered as having a particular influence on the flows of communication (Hanneman 2001: 68).

[11] This is not a surprise since Beo.sk is mainly organised as an information portal through which the Internet spread extreme right propaganda and political information on many crucial issues for the Slovak extreme right (i.e. NATO and USA, the EU, conspiracy theory, multiculturalism, media and freedom of speech, national identity and traditional values), and therefore, many organisations refer to this website.

[12] Others are the SNN Slovak national newspaper and Slovenkeslovo (indegrees 27 and 18), and the commercial website vlastenec.sk (indegree 27), which are mainly focusing on national identity and national history and history related to WWII, culture, patriotism, traditional values, 'state-building' and 'Roma problem', but also relations with Hungary and politics of the European Union and relations between the EU and Slovakia.

organisations than for the Slovak ones stress). In this sense, the important role of 'broker' is played by the political movement DSSS standing for its high point betweenness (11.9). Furthermore, '*neo-Nazi organisations*' (and not cultural ones as in the Slovak case) stand for their significant centrality (indegree values) in the Czech network. In sum, there is a more important 'formal', namely 'institutionalised', component in the Slovak extreme right online milieu.

Bringing together the various features emerged in our (macro and meso) analysis, we can characterise the Slovak network as a 'quasi-*clique*' (Diani 2003), namely a very horizontal structure where all the actors participate to the communicative flows/exchanges of the network. To the contrary, in the Czech case, the network of the extreme resembles what in social network analysis is called a *policephalous* structure (Ibid.; see also Caiani et al. 2012), namely a structure which is both relatively centralised and segmented, since the actors of the network can only communicate with each other via a long path. It is worth noting that the level of segmentation of a network reflects the level of the limits imposed on communication among the actors. It can be ideological whenever the relational distance between the actors increases with the differences in their respective (ideological) positions. What is sure is that this structural arrangement of the extreme right does not seem to be conducive to close cooperation (and therefore a common mobilisation on some issues, e.g. the EU) among different parts of the sector.

Extreme Right Discourses on European Integration

What is the place of Europe in the discourse of the extreme right networks in the two countries? Our analysis shows that, although domestic politics still represents the primary focus, European issues are a rather significantly debated topic in the extreme right discourse in the Czech Republic and Slovakia over the last two decades (Fig. 8.2). In addition, if we consider that in the discourse of the extreme right, Europe and European integration are often linked to

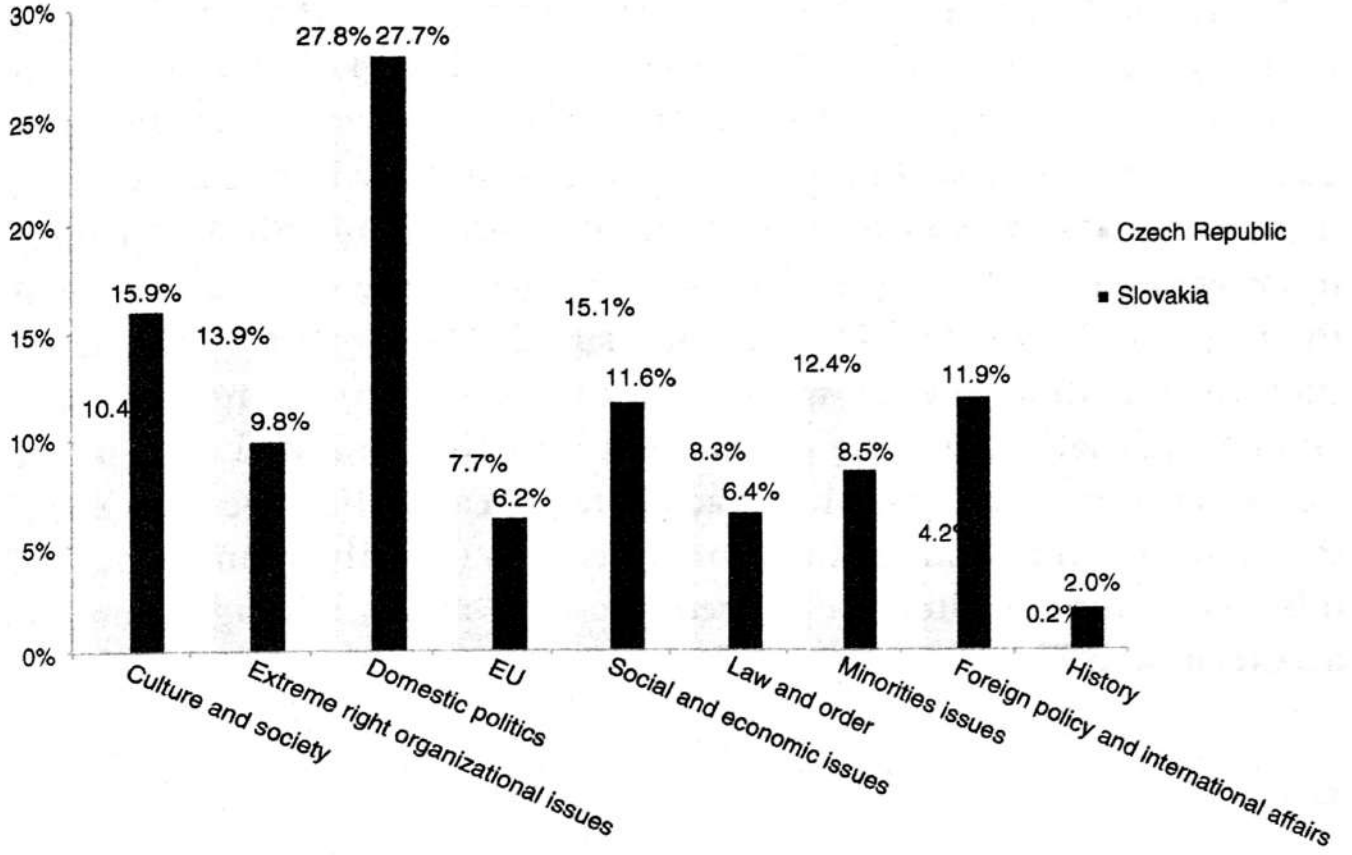

Fig. 8.2 The place of European issues in extreme right discourses in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (1993–2013)

'foreign policy and international affairs issues', it is evident that supranational issues play an important role in the rhetoric of this political area (European integration and foreign and policy issues together indeed account for 15.8 per cent of all frames codified from 1993 to 2013). Moreover, looking at the different strategic framing of the discourse among different types of extreme right organisations, our results indicate that both types of organisations devote similar attention to EU issues (addressed in 6.7 per cent of frames in the discourse of political parties and 7.1 per cent in political movements), which suggests that Europe is a concern for both institutional and the non-institutional side of the extreme right sector. In general, whereas political parties appear mainly interested in their propaganda in mobilising 'social and economic issues' (15.2 per cent) and 'international affairs' (13.1 per cent), political movements emphasise more 'minorities issues' (15.6 per cent) and extreme right 'internal organisational matters' (14.2 per cent).

However, the salience of 'Europe' in the discourse of the extreme right in the two countries varies a lot across time[13] (Fig. 8.3), following – it seems – a politicisation of the issue that increases over years. In particular, as our data show, European affairs are, similarly in both countries, marginal in the discourse of the extreme right until 2000, reaching, however, some peaks (e.g. in 1997–1998), when the discussions about the negotiations for the EU accession started. Shortly before the accession, the attention towards the EU increased in both countries, maintaining high levels after the countries joined the Union. Later, in the following years, it decreased but reached new peaks when the 'exogenous shock' such as the financial and economic crisis (and the management of it by the European elites) 'politicised' the issue again, reinvigorating the debate around it.

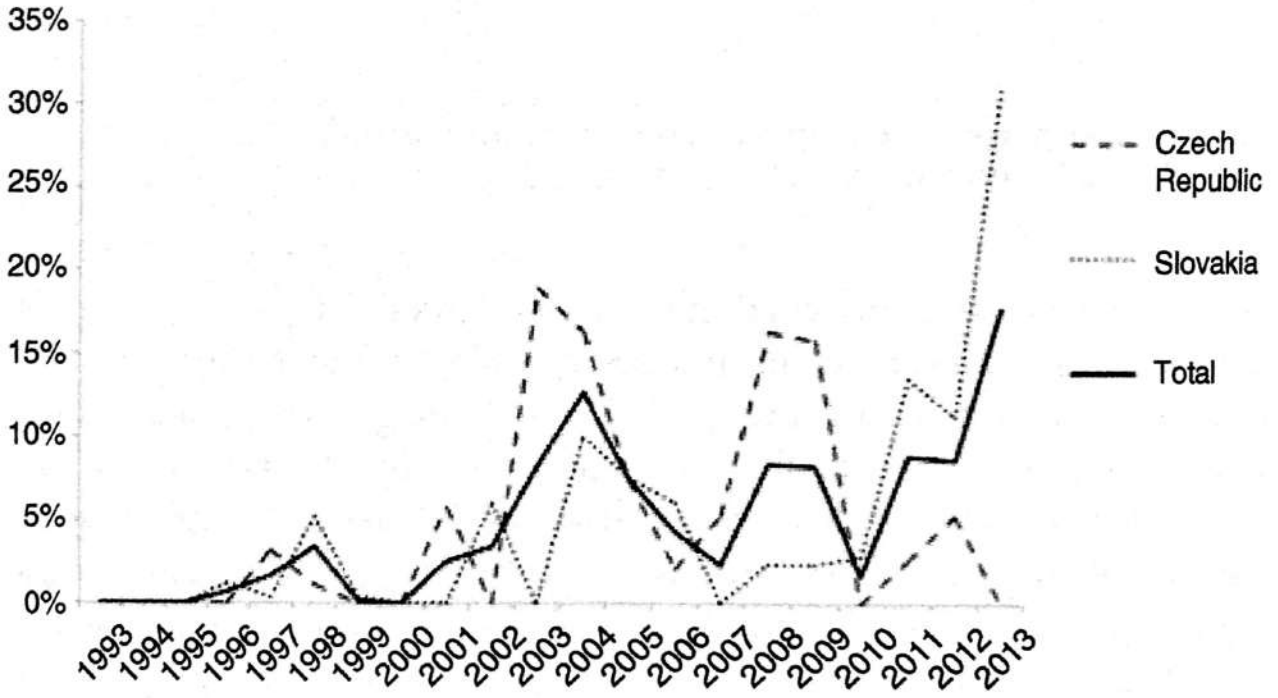

Fig. 8.3 The issue attention of the extreme right on Europe across time in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (1993–2013)

Note: $N = 441$ (only European frames selected)

[13] As also showed by the extremely high and significant values of the Cramer's V coefficient = 0.70***.

The attention on EU issues among different types of extreme right organisations also changed across years in the period under study (data not showed).[14] In particular, for both countries, whereas before the EU accession, mainly political parties emphasise European topics in their discourse, following the entry into the EU, also extreme right political movements increase their focus on Europe in their propaganda, almost equalising the number of 'European' frames of political parties.[15] After the beginning of the economic crisis, the saliency of EU issues increases even more for non-party organisations, that, especially in some years (e.g. 2008 and 2011)[16] monopolise the criticism towards the EU from outside the institutionalised arena. In the more recent years, however, the attention of the two types of organisations on EU issues is more balanced and similar, reaching almost one-fifth of overall frames in 2013 – in particular, 19.4 per cent of European frames for political parties and 15.2 per cent for political movements.

When looking at the *identity* and *oppositional frames*, through which extreme right organisations construct themselves and the universe of their allies and enemies, when talking about Europe, several similarities among the countries, as well as the different types of organisations, do emerge (Table 8.2). First of all, a clear differentiation, and a sharp conflict, is depicted between European institutions on the one hand (prominent among the main quoted 'enemies') and the 'nation/country' on the other (main quoted 'allies'), with the latter represented as victims of European integration. The EU is frequently represented, with similar tone in the two countries, as 'unnecessary', 'superior', 'bureaucratised', a 'European superstate'[17] or as '12 stars in a devil's circle' (SP-NS 2005). Opposed to European and supranational institutions are 'nation states' with their inhabitants ('proud Slovaks', LSNS 2011), which are depicted as 'destroyed' and 'oppressed' by the EU, but at the same time as 'strong' and 'sovereign'.

[14] As the value of the Cramer's *V* coefficient shows (0.51***).

[15] With, for example, 13.7 per cent and 7.2 per cent of frames on Europe for political parties and 11.2 per cent and 7.9 per cent for political movements in, respectively, 2004 and 2005.

[16] For example, we found 17.4 per cent and 15.2 per cent of frames on 'Europe' in the discourse of political movements in 2008 and 2011 vs. 2.3 per cent and 4.6 per cent of cases for political parties in the same years.

[17] Sources: for example, the SNS website 2013; SNS written sources 2004, 2005, 2008; RMS, 2005; DS, 2005; SPR-RSČ, 2008; SNS, 2010-2012; DSSS, 2012.

Table 8.2 The 10 most quoted 'enemies' and 'friends' in the discourse of the Slovak and Czech Republic extreme right organisations when talking about Europe (1993–2013)

No	Enemies	Per cent	Friends	Per cent
1.	EU and European institutions	36.3	No actor	29.7
2.	No actor	23.4	Nation states/Nation	17.9
3.	Political elite	17.2	Country/Inhabitants	17.5
4.	Immigrants and foreigners	6.6	We/Us	13.8
5.	Foreign countries	5.9	The people	7.4
6.	Ethnic/National minorities	3.6	Europe/Europeans	7.3
7.	Political adversaries	2.7	The people (specific categories)	4.3
8.	Cultural elite	2.0	Extreme right and nationalists	1.1
9.	Economic elite	1.6	Society	1.0
10.	Sexual minorities	0.7		
	Total	100 (441)	Total	100 (441)

Note: $N = 441$ (only European frames selected)

Secondly, Europeanisation is also portrayed and explained, mainly in the Slovak case, with references to *conspiracy theories*, which are typical for the old extreme right ideological framework. In fact, in one-quarter of frames (which increases to 35 per cent in Slovakia), the problem attribution is not referred to any specific actor, rather the target remains vague and ambiguous ('someone is behind all of this').

Thirdly, with reference to a *populist* appeal, besides European institutions, 'political elites' emerge, similarly in both countries, as the second most important enemy in relation to Europe. Especially political movements emphasise this anti-elite frame (in 27 per cent of frames vs. 10.6 per cent for political parties), denoting politicians with a strong emotional language as 'corrupted', 'greedy', 'rotten', 'compromised' or 'incompetent'. Accordingly, the second most important victim of the EU is identified – as the table shows – in 'the people', usually pictured as 'ordinary', 'decent', 'honest' or 'impoverished' by the EU. In sum, the typical antagonistic populist rhetoric that distinguishes between (corrupted) elites and the (pure) people (Mudde 2007) is translated at the EU level, with the extreme right ('the us') defined as another 'friend' of

the people against the attacks of the EU. Finally, another frequently referred enemy when talking about Europe is found in 'immigrants, foreigners and foreign countries' (occupying the fourth and the fifth position among the 10 most recurring enemies in the discourse), pictured as 'parasitic immigrants' (DS 2006), 'immigrant tsunami wave' (DSSS 2012), bringing a 'foreign identity' to the country (SNS website 2013). All these dichotomies suggest that the nativist component of the old extreme right's rhetoric is still strong in the anti-European discourse of the extreme right in the two countries.

Coherent with what emerged so far, also when analysing the main *diagnostic and prognostic frames* related to Europe (tables not showed, but available from the authors on request), we find that the most important problem is identified in the (1) 'destruction of independence' (43.3 per cent of all diagnoses found from 1993–2013), linking a political and cultural vision of Europe. Indeed, politically, the extreme right mostly fears the loss of sovereignty through the 'gradual federalisation of Europe' (DS 2003), 'further restrictions' (ĽSNS Website 2010) and consequent 'loss of state power and national integrity' (DS 2006). On the other hand, culturally (especially in the Czech Republic and in the discourse of political movements), they point to the risk of 'denationalisation' coming from the European integration process and the 'threats' that the EU poses in terms of hampering 'the free development of the nation' (DS 2005) and the deterioration of 'the culture and the national identity of European nations' (DS, 2008). The second and third main important problems diagnosed in relation to the EU are (2) the 'oppression of people', recurring in 17.5 per cent of all frames and (3) the 'abuse of power' recurring in 8.9 per cent of cases. They mostly refer to the failure of authorities in defending the (national) people, because the EU 'does not care about people' (ĽSNS Website 2011), it 'enslaves' (SPR-SRČ Website 2008) them and treats those coming from the new member states as 'second class citizens'. Finally, also the (negative) cultural consequences of the European integration are emphasised in the discourse of the Czech and Slovak extreme right as the (4) risk of 'destruction of society' (in 7 per cent of all diagnostic frames) and (5) the 'menace of immigrants' (in 5.9 per cent of cases).

Here, the dangers concerning the destruction of 'national traditions', as well as 'Christian values' and the 'traditional family', are pointed out, since, it is claimed, the EU integration ignores 'Europe's unique character and its unique spiritual dimension represented by Christianity' (SP-NS 2005) and forces the EU enlargement outside the historical and cultural territory of Europe.

The main important and recurring *solution* against the perceived menaces related to the EU emerged in the discourse of the extreme right organisations (similarly in both the countries and type of group) is the 'protection of the independence' – with recurs in 19.7 per cent of all frames. Within this general frame, some specificities have been, however, found with the extreme right in some cases stressing the need for a full sovereignty restoration (e.g. 'withdrawal from the EU and the return to the old currency') or calling for the preference of state integrity but with concessions towards the Union. In the second type of discourse, which is mainly found in Slovakia and within the political parties' documents, the extreme right, more moderately, accepts the EU membership, defending, however, the reinforcement of member states power, wishing a Europe that 'consists of sovereign states which cooperate as equals' (SNS Website 2013).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we looked at the relation between the extreme right and Europe in the digital era, by looking at the networks built online by (Eurosceptic) extreme right organisations in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and investigating their public discourses on Europe in the last 20 years. Indeed, we argued that frames, as well as norms and values, are diffused through 'acts of communication', and the Internet is among the strongest communication tools available today (Burris et al. 2000; Tateo 2005). First of all, as it has emerged from our data concerning the *social network map and analysis*, our research confirms that extreme right organisations (also in Central and Eastern Europe, as it has been stressed for the West, Caiani and Parenti 2013) are aware of the advantages of the Internet and skilfully use the Web to connect each other, giving birth to a dense net of ties among them (Bowman-Grieve 2009: 1003).

However, beyond this general trend, we found that the overall configuration of the two extreme right virtual communities is different in the two countries, therefore, embodying a *different potential for mobilisation* of the anti-European discourse. The Czech extreme right network appears to be more sparse, highly diversified and split by cleavages from within, whereas the Slovak one is more cohesive and horizontal, indicating a structural arrangement, which seems more favourable to close cooperation within the sector also in relation to the main focus of this chapter, namely EU matters. Furthermore, our study also indicated that different types of extreme right actors play a prestigious role within these right-wing online sectors, with a more formal component in Slovakia and a more informal (also made by blog extreme right communities and neo-Nazis) in the Czech case. These findings are important for the potential implications in terms of the anti-European discourse elaborated within these networks, as far as one considers that the nature (more confrontational vs. more moderate) of their mobilisation and propaganda might depend on the identity and ideology (e.g. more or less violent) of these prominent organisations (Caiani and Parenti 2013).

In this respect, in terms of the content of the European discourse of the Czech and Slovak extreme right networks, our research has shown, with the *analysis of frames*, that (1) despite being an understudied aspect of right-wing radicalism, Euroscepticism appears to be a common trait of current radical right-wing formations, as a stance (similarly in the Czech Republic and Slovakia) of both political parties and non-party organisations. It is even more important than issues such as history and law and order, implicating that the extreme right is giving increasing prominence to European issues over some traditional core values of its ideology. Moreover (2), as our longitudinal data have pointed out, the process of European integration brings a politicisation (contestational from the extreme right) of the issue, which – as our two case studies have showed – after the accession and even more with the economic crisis is increasingly discussed by the extreme right (and not only by political parties).

Finally (3), if the negative attitudes found towards the EU are common also to the extreme right in the West, our data showed that in the Czech and Slovak extreme right anti-EU discourses, there is something specific, which can be related to the CEE context. In

particular, they mostly pinpointed the unfavourable and discriminatory circumstances deriving from the EU membership putting together in the process a specific political and cultural vision of Europe. Its political dimension comes through the criticism of what these parties perceive as the destruction of the recently gained sovereignty and national unity, as well as the perpetration of inequalities and injustice by the EU. The cultural dimension is found on their critique of the damages to national traditions and to family and moral values brought about by the EU, through immigration, multiculturalism and liberal, Western values. In sum, the Eurosceptic discourse assumes, together with an anti-elite (almost anti-system) tone, an openly ethno-nationalistic and xenophobic character. Also, we found that this type of discourse (in the many elements analysed, i.e. diagnosis, prognosis, representation of allies and enemies) is rather coherent among extreme right parties and political movements. This might suggest, at least in the two countries under consideration, that many factors seem mature for a common issue mobilisation around European topics – that can be enhanced, as for any other collective actor, through the use of online media (Bennett and Segerberg 2012: 13).

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Manuela Caiani is Associate Professor at the Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences at the SNS (Scuola Normale Superiore) of Florence (IT). She works on social movements and collective mobilisation in Europe and right-wing extremism in Europe and the USA. She has published in the journals: Mobilization, Acta Politica, European Union Politics, South European Society and Politics, RISP and for the publishers Oxford University press, Ashgate and Palgrave.

Alena Kluknavská holds a PhD degree in Political Science and is a postdoctoral researcher at Masaryk University (Brno, the Czech Republic). Her research topics include right-wing extremism and social movements in Central and Eastern Europe and the media discourse on the extreme right and the Roma minorities.