

“Good” and “bad” immigrants: The economic nationalism of the True Finns’ immigration discourse

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Introduction

The populist radical right parties (PRRP) have received a considerable amount of interest in European politics during the last ten years. Their increasing popularity and electoral success has been debated both in the academic literature and in the wider society. While many PRRPs are now actively engaged in an anti-immigration discourse, many of them arguing against multiculturalism and the difficulties of integrating immigrant communities into native cultures (Eatwell 2004, 2), one central theme in the current debates has been the relationship between cultural and economic motivations the PRRP social and political discourse. Economic motivations have been emphasized by some (Betz 1994, Kitschelt and McGann 1995) while others have argued that the cultural motivations are primary (Betz 1994, Rydgren 2004, 2006, Mudde 2007).

This article follows authors, such as Zaslove (2009, 314) in arguing that despite the importance of the cultural explanations, we should not disregard the economic motivations or the link between the economic grievances of voters and the electoral success of the PRRPs. The

case study here is the True Finns (Perussuomalaiset, PS), still a relatively understudied party that has been often included in the PRRP cluster, and especially their immigration discourse and policy. True Finns is an openly populist and nationalist party and currently one of the two main opposition parties in Finland after gaining a “big bang” victory in the Finnish parliamentary elections in 2011. The central puzzle about the True Finns is that it seems to be difficult to locate it along the left-right continuum. Furthermore, more specifically on immigration, the party seems to have an internal tension between the rather moderate old populism of the mainstream of the party and the more radical politics of the nationalist anti-immigration wing of the party. Instead of arguing that the party is a chameleon or some kind of a continuous compromise, I argue that it is more coherent than appears at the outset. The glue that ties the party together is nationalism, more specifically economic nationalism. The contrast here is Mudde’s “nativist nationalism” (Mudde 2007, 19) that, as I will argue below, does not fit in with the True Finn approach to immigration. Economic nationalism could be seen as a useful compromise between nativist nationalism and “welfare chauvinism” (Andersen and Bjørklund 1990, Andersen 1992, Kitschelt and McGann 1995) as the core of the PRRP ideology, certainly in the case of the True Finns.

The argument in the chapter proceeds in three steps. First, the chapter begins by discussing the immigration discourse and policy of the True Finns and points at the interesting tensions between cultural and economic arguments that arise from their distinction of immigrants into two normatively opposing categories, “good and bad immigrants”. Secondly, in order to analyse this further, as a way of reconciling some of these tensions, I propose that economic nationalism is adopted as an approach in order to problematize this wider debate on PRRPs and immigration. It has hitherto been a rather underutilized approach within the literature. Concentrating on the nationalist ontology instead of the policy content of economic nationalism can provide a useful insight into the PRRPs. Indeed, this could be seen as particularly pertinent in the Nordic context where immigration could be seen as a catalyst for “welfare chauvinism” (Andersen and Bjørklund 1990, Andersen 1992, Kitschelt and McGann 1995).

However, I argue that welfare chauvinism only goes some way into explaining the True Finns' ideology and that economic nationalism could offer a more rounded and balanced view of what they stand for and what their discourse is centred on. Their economic nationalism is not only an approach to protectionist economic policies but also one that is essentially built on a nationalist ontology and, as such, it also fits as a coherent part of their overall ideology. As such, it also then reconciles some of the apparent tension between the mainstream party and its more extreme anti-immigration wing. Furthermore, approaching immigration primarily through economic justifications can also be a sound strategic choice, as this serves to de-politicize and de-radicalize their immigration policy, hence doing away with the more sensitive ethno-cultural arguments and accusations of racism and xenophobia.

Methodologically, the paper relies on discourse analysis of True Finns' party programmes and manifestos. They are also triangulated with speeches and blog entries from various key political actors within the party. As Mudde (2007, 256-276), argues, while the explanations concentrating on structural transformations and social upheavals are of value, the PRRPs also possess political agency and, as such, the parties themselves should be considered as a major factor explaining their success. Thus, the paper concentrates on an internal supply-side analysis and aims to understand how the party at the central level combines economic and cultural arguments founded upon a nationalist ontology.

From thin multiculturalism to “good and bad immigrants”

The True Finns emerged as a major player in the Finnish political scene in the 2009 EU elections and consolidated its position by gaining a “big bang” election victory in the 2011 parliamentary election. They more than quadrupled their share of the national vote from the parliamentary election of 2007 and became one of the two main opposition parties after refusing to enter the coalition government due to fundamental disagreements on the Euro bailout packages.

The True Finns have their foundations in “old” agrarian populism of the 1950s and 1960s when Veikko Vennamo founded the Finnish Rural Party (Suomen maaseudun puolue, SMP). While not often recognized as such, SMP fits quite nicely in the second phase of radical populist parties as described by von Beyme in his seminal article (1988, see also Andersen and Bjørklund 2000, 193-194). The central role of the charismatic leader Veikko Vennamo has led some to classify SMP as a “new populist” party (Taggart 1996, 37).

The True Finns had a slow start after they were founded on the ruins of the SMP but found their success through a combination of old Vennamo-style populism and immigration critical statements. This has meant that they have quite readily, especially outside Finland, been clustered in the PRR party family. However, there is not a clear consensus on what a populist radical right party looks like and, most importantly, if the True Finns actually fit that model.¹ Indeed, some commentators have argued that they are not a radical right party (Andersen and Bjørklund 2000, 193-4, Ignazi 2003, 60). Some, especially the Finnish commentators (see useful discussion in Arter 2010, 500) have also placed them to the left of centre due to their support of the universal welfare state, taxation, and the role of the state in general. However, in one of the most recent additions to this debate it is claimed that certain aspects of nativism in their politics and the way in which “Finnishness” has been put on a pedestal does, indeed, make them a populist radical right party (Arter 2010, 502). However, it seems from this that Arter is conflating the concepts of nativist nationalism and radical right. While Arter is correct in suggesting that national culture and national values are the “basic *geist*” of the party, these features alone do not make them into a radical right party. Indeed, pride in national culture and national values are not exclusive property of radical or, indeed, right wing parties.

¹ Indeed, while it is common to cluster a certain number of new parties into one new party family, a debate about the appropriate terminology is rife. The terms “populism” (Canovan 1999, Albertazzi and McDonnell 2007, Zaslove 2008b), “radical right” (Kitschelt and McGann 1995, Rydgren 2007), “extreme right” (Hainsworth 1992, 2000, 2008, Ignazi 2003) and combinations of these, such as “populist right” (Bornschiefer 2010), “populist radical right” (Mudde 2007), “radical right-wing populism” (Betz 1993, 1994), and “neo-populism” (Betz and Immerfall 1998) are only a few examples of the terminology used to describe, essentially the same broad group of parties that have emerged as a response to the new social cleavages that have challenged Lipset and Rokkan’s (1967) claims about the “freezing” of the European party systems by the 1960s.

The debate on the role of national culture and nationalism as the centrepiece of True Finn ideology is obviously linked to the popular discourse on immigration. The party has had its fair share of racist anti-immigrant controversy both before and after the 2011 election through statements made in blog entries and interviews by its members. One of the most documented examples is the court case of Jussi Halla-aho, an unappointed leader of the anti-immigration faction of the party and one of its most visible parliamentarians. He was convicted in 2009 of disturbing religious worship after making offensive comments about the prophet Muhammad and Islam in his blog. After appeals, the case was heard by the Supreme Court, which found Halla-aho guilty of both disturbing religious worship and ethnic agitation and increased the original fine given by the District Court (Helsingin Sanomat 2012). It is notable that at the time of the Supreme Court's decision, Halla-aho was already a True Finn MP and the chair of the Parliamentary Administration Committee that deals with immigration affairs and matters pertaining to the Church. He was forced to leave his position as the chair of the Committee as an outcome of the Supreme Court's verdict.

This and many other scandals relating to the conduct of some individuals within the party have led to rather widespread accusations of the party being racist and xenophobic. A major argument was propelled by an opinion poll that demonstrated that a quarter of True Finn voters recognized racist characteristics in themselves. The then President Halonen also publicly noted this and commented by saying that "people who recognize racism in themselves have ended up voting for the True Finns" (Mykkänen 2011). However, a close reading of the party documents demonstrates that the True Finn discourse and policy on immigration is less extremely nativist or hostile to foreigners in principle than one could assume based on both the popular understandings and the dominant academic, strongly cultural, explanations behind PRRPs.

The True Finn approach to immigration adopted in the first party programme was that migrants are welcome and treated as equals as long as they treat Finnish society with respect.

We also welcome foreigners to build our country and to live here but we won't allow any of them to come here to harm our people's home. They have to accept our social and justice system and we will in turn accept their different cultural point of departure and

worldview and give them the right to live as equal individuals with us (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 1995).

Notable here is the last statement about respecting the cultural differences, which could go as far as to advocate a thin form of multiculturalism (Baumeister 2000, 35-37, 2003).

In the following four party programmes and manifestos there were no statements about immigration (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003b). It seemed to be largely a non-issue for the party. However, immigration resurfaced again in the 2003 general election manifesto. In the manifesto one paragraph under a section on population and family policy was devoted to immigration and the tone was much harder than in the 1995 programme. The paragraph begins by stating that Finland's remote location has thus far shielded it from "the population and racial problems" that have emerged in the wider world (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 2003a). In other words, here the party began making noise about its scepticism toward multiculturalism. The party conditioned everything again by saying that foreigners should be welcomed but the condition for this is wholesale assimilation. This follows Eatwell's (2000, 413) "holistic nationalism" where assimilation into the "home" culture is acceptable. Here also they were much less understanding of cultural difference. Basically, all immigrants should have adopted a Finnish way of life and, more or less, become Finnish. They also made strong cultural hints about more specific cultural differences that might clash with their worldview:

In Finland we should not tolerate practices that are alien to our culture and traditions that insult human dignity, such as female circumcision, child marriage and cruel honour-based practices (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 2003a).

Most interestingly, however, the 2003 election manifesto is the first place where the party made a clear statement about the desirability of labour migration by claiming that "immigrants should give their professional work effort into creating our common welfare" (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 2003a). While it is not said aloud, the implication obviously is that refugees and asylum seekers, whose legal rights and possibilities for employment are more limited in any case, have become the unwanted group for the party.

The 2003 election campaign in general was a turning point for the True Finns, as Timo Soini was able to persuade the former show wrestler, boxer, and actor Tony Halme to stand in the election. Halme was a popular but controversial figure who stood as an independent

candidate on the True Finns list and ran his own campaign that was only loosely connected to the party (Soini 2008, 106). This strategy must have suited the party rather well, as they received his votes but had a “get out of jail” card in case his statements became too extreme for the party to handle. However, some argue it was through Halme that the True Finns were able to reach to a new constituency and to claim ownership of the immigration debate (Hannula 2011, 72-80, see also Kestilä 2006, Arter 2010). His political career was, in the end, very short due to a number of personal issues but his role for the party was undeniably important.

After the 2003 manifesto it took another four years before immigration resurfaced on the True Finns agenda in the 2007 election manifesto. This time the party devoted much more significant sections of the manifesto to immigration and it also clearly began consolidating its views on the issue. Between the 2007 and 2011 election, a more radical anti-immigration wing joined the party and this is when immigration really became a key issue for the True Finns. The main statement on immigration in the 2011 election manifesto was that Finland should remain strict “with regard to immigration that has negative consequences to Finnish society” (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 2011, 40). This was followed up by stating that “Finland should be open to immigration that has neutral or positive impact” (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 2011, 40). Negative and positive impact could be, of course, interpreted in a number of ways. This could easily relate to both economic efforts from the wider society on immigrants and the cultural impact of immigration. However, in the manifesto, this is primarily qualified by saying that “an immigrant who is able to sustain her/himself is welcome” (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 2011, 40). This would mean that the very least the party *tolerates* immigrants who have a job and who pay their taxes even if they represented a different ethnic or religious group. This, it could be argued, is a step away from the thin multiculturalism in the previous programmes. As such, Mudde’s nativist nationalism does not necessarily fit in with the True Finn immigration discourse.

However, the distinction between good and bad immigrants is an important one. It is suggested by the party that most asylum seekers are simply fleeing poverty and have no grounds to begin with for their asylum cases. The debate has its roots in the late 1980s and 1990s when groups of Somali migrants came to Finland from the disintegrating Soviet Union and when the

first groups of refugees entered Finland from the former Yugoslavia. These groups were quite widely labelled as “life standard refugees” (Hannula 2011, 18). This debate has continued since and in the anti-immigration discourse there is a constant suspicion of groups of migrants coming to Finland simply to abuse the system. And here the party has recommended a change in the processing of asylum claims and a 24 hour system for extraditing ungrounded asylum applications from applicants that have, for example, already been declined by another EU country (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 2011, 41).

The party is also very strict about the policy of reuniting family members and would want to include a work-based criterion also to these processes. They advocate a policy by which also family members who join their husbands, wives, parents etc. should be able to sustain themselves. One way in which this is to be done is through adopting the so-called “Danish model” according to which the person who applies for family reunification must not have been in receipt of income assistance for the last two years (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 2011, 43). The process of family reunification is one key item that has been fought by the more radical anti-immigration wing of the party and obviously there is a link here to the “life standard refugee” discourse as well (Hannula 2011, 18).

While the immigration policy of the True Finns at the mainstream party level is relatively moderate and often argued through economic discourse, there also is a more radical anti-immigration wing within the party. After Tony Halme, the wider anti-immigration movement emerged outside of the party and was then very much a movement in search of a political party (Hannula 2011, 74-76). Some True Finn members from this radical wing of the party belong to an organization called Finnish Sisu (Suomen sisu²), originally a youth organization of the Association of Finnish Culture and Identity (Suomalaisuuden liitto) (Hannula 2011). Finnish Sisu had to then leave the main organization, as claims about members of the organization having national socialist sympathies emerged. Recently, anti-

² Sisu is an untranslatable concept in Finnish language denoting courage, guts, strength, integrity and stubbornness. The term is widely used in national romantic literature and art.

immigration groups have organized online via an internet discussion forum *Homma*³, founded after the guestbook of Jussi Halla-aho's internet blog *Scripta* was not able to handle the increased flow of messages (Hannula 2011). The co-founder of the forum, Matias Turkkila, was appointed as the editor of the True Finn party newspaper *Perussuomalainen* and webmaster of the True Finn Party website in May 2012 (Perussuomalaiset 2012).

In the run up to the 2011 election, thirteen True Finn candidates came together and published their own election manifesto, the Sour Election Manifesto (Nuiva vaalimanifesti), which was specifically profiled to address views critical of immigration and multiculturalism (Nuiva vaalimanifesti 2011). Six of the candidates who signed the manifesto got elected to the Eduskunta. Their unappointed leader Jussi Halla-aho received over 15,000 personal votes, the sixth most votes given for any candidate in the whole election. The signatories to the Sour Election Manifesto received a total of around 60,000 votes, which is significantly more than the whole party received in, for example, the 2003 election. The 43,816 votes received by True Finns in 2003 were enough for the party to return three MPs to the Eduskunta. As such, based on the above, it could be said that this current anti-immigration faction of the party represents a "party within a party".

However, while the signatories to the Sour Election Manifesto emphasize the ethno-cultural more, they also use more economic arguments in putting their case forward. This is done especially toward the end of the manifesto, after the strong claims against multiculturalism. In the final paragraphs of the manifesto the signatories duplicate almost word for word the claims of the party election manifesto about not being against immigration but being against immigration that is not either neutral or positive for the Finnish society (Nuiva vaalimanifesti 2011). Similar views were voiced by Jussi Halla-aho, the leading anti-immigration voice of the party already a couple of years before the Sour Election Manifesto:

My supporters and I do not, of course, oppose immigration per se but only bad immigration. There is no problem at all with people migrating because of work. If a person has a sensible reason to come to Finland, then welcome to Finland (Ajankohtainen kakkonen 2009).

³ *Homma* is a colloquial Finnish word that means, roughly translated, a job.

So, after seemingly departing from the official relatively moderate party line they return back to the fold and make the good immigrants vs. bad immigrants argument and also do this by bringing back the more economic rather than the purely ethno-cultural claims. Hence, even here the party discourse cannot be explained purely through Mudde's nativist nationalism.

The immigration discourse on immigration provides also a direct link to what some have labelled "welfare chauvinism" (Andersen and Bjørklund 1990, Andersen 1992, Kitschelt and McGann 1995, Banting 2000, Andersen 2007). Much of the debate is built around Alesina and Glaeser's seminal work that raises questions about the possibility of reconciling ethnically diverse society and generous welfare regime (2004). The two hypotheses related to this are that, firstly, ethnic diversity challenges heavy redistribution toward the poor because it is difficult to generate feelings of national solidarity across ethnic lines. Secondly, it has been suggested that multicultural policies designed to accommodate ethnic groups further undermine national solidarity. This has also been coined as the "progressive's dilemma" (Kymlicka and Banting 2006, 283). The ethnic heterogeneity of the US, it has been argued, has been the reason for the reluctance to introduce generous welfare programmes across America. While some argue that the American experience is unique (Banting 2000, Finseraas 2012), some have now also demonstrated that it could be replicated in Europe as well (Larsen 2011). Indeed, contrary to the American roots of Alesina and Glaeser's theory, Menz (2006, 393) considers welfare chauvinism to have Scandinavian origins.

Welfare chauvinism could also provide a link between the True Finn immigration discourse and the wider responsabilization of social citizenship (Rose 1996). The "no rights without responsibilities" discourse advocated by neoliberal scholars, such as Mead (1986), and New social democrat politicians, such as Göran Persson, Paavo Lipponen, and Tony Blair, also fits in with the True Finns discourse. Third Way social democrats (see for example Giddens 1998) singled out "unconditional" social citizenship entitlements as promoting "moral hazard", called for conditionalities and responsabilization of social citizenship on the principle of "no rights without responsibilities", and put a premium on personal pension savings and workfare policy (Giddens 1998, Kuisma and Ryner 2012, see also Putnam 2000). However, the

difference in the line of argument between the Third Way social democrats and the True Finns is that the True Finns are advocating an ethno-national division for responsabilization of welfare and citizenship (Kuisma and Ryner 2012, 336). Obviously, their take on the responsabilization of social citizenship is obviously closely related to welfare chauvinism. Having said that, as I have argued above, welfare chauvinism alone does not explain the True Finns' immigration discourse and policy.

Economic nationalism and the Populist Radical Right in Europe

As I have argued above, both cultural and economic explanations could be used in understanding the motivations behind the immigration discourse and policy of the True Finns. Elements of nativist nationalism and welfare chauvinism are clearly present but neither of these approaches seems to be able to fully characterize the True Finns as a party and especially their stance on immigration. More importantly, both of these approaches continue to pull into two opposite directions, not reconciling the culture vs. economy tension in the current scholarship on PRRPs. The existing literature on Populist Radical Right has, of course, not neglected the political economy aspects of the PRR and this is not what I argue in this paper. On the contrary, rather a lot has been written about the political economy of the PRR (Rydgren 2004, Zaslove 2008a, 2009; Afonso in this volume). It is the *relationship* between cultural and economic arguments that I am mostly interested in exploring here, and economic nationalism can be a useful tool in that quest.

The mainstream approaches to (international) political economy could be divided into two broad categories. Despite representing otherwise a different worldview, both liberalism and socialism are founded upon a cosmopolitan ontology, against which prominent economic nationalists, such as Friedrich List were arguing (Abdelal 2005, p. 25, Hont 2005). It could be said that economic nationalism is the alternative to liberalism and socialism in political economy because it, due to its particularist ontology, cannot accommodate the

cosmopolitanism of neither liberalism nor socialism. In the literature on PRRPs political economy is generally rather understudied area but economic nationalism in particular is largely ignored, despite the explanatory potential it could offer to the study of the PRRPs.

Despite the mainstream of International Political Economy literature viewing neoliberalism and nationalism as antithetical (Harmes 2012), neoliberalism features as a crucially important aspect of Kitschelt's "winning formula", which essentially argued that the key for electoral success for PRRPs is in combining neoliberal economics with authoritarian politics (Kitschelt and McGann 1995, see also Betz 1994). Even after Kitschelt's slight revision of his winning formula to include more centrist economic positions of the PRRPs in the 1990s (Kitschelt 2004), this strand of literature emphasizes the economic liberalism, broadly defined, within PRRPs. Hence, at least in this formulation of populist political economy liberalism and nativism can coexist.

In addition to the liberal economics argument from Kitschelt, Betz and others, some have, however, pointed out that some populist parties have also adopted a clearly anti-liberal economic position. Zaslove argues that some parties within this party family belong to an anti-globalization movement (Zaslove 2004, 2008b). This would, of course, fit in well with their ontological critique of cosmopolitan liberalism. Hence, they reject at least the neoliberal worldview based on global capitalism. Indeed, in addition to rejecting global capitalism, True Finns could also be seen as belonging to the centre-left with regard their economic policy through which they support the welfare state, funded by heavy redistribution through progressive taxation (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 2011, 44). Therefore, it seems that within the PRRP family both liberal and socialist economic arguments could be used and appropriated through nationalism.

However, economic nationalism has often ignored its own ontological foundations and has tended to emphasize economic policy instead of the nationalism it is built on. Indeed, following Pickel (2003) and Helleiner (2002) I argue that instead of connecting economic nationalism primarily to its policy manifestations, such as protectionism or (neo-)mercantilism, we should concentrate on the nationalist ontology of economic nationalism. What we can

achieve through using economic nationalism as a vantage point is moving away from the more or less irreconcilable culture vs. economy debate toward a more holistic understanding of the ideology of the PRR. Through using economic nationalism as a theoretical framework it is possible to incorporate the economic concerns as a part of a wider nationalist ideology of PRR. Here the case in point is the True Finns but I suggest that this framework could be a more general approach to looking at the PRRPs in Europe.

What is significant here is that an approach to the political economy of the PRR focused on its nationalist ontology could incorporate liberal and socialist economic policies depending how they are linked through discourse to the nationalist project. Indeed, as Pickel recognizes

The economic dimensions of specific nationalisms make sense only in the context of a particular national discourse, rather than in the context of general debates on economic theory and policy (2003, 106).

Here, economic nationalism could have a liberal flavour if advocated in, for example, the context of the British political tradition, whereas in countries where the institutions of universal welfare have been significant in framing the boundaries of the national logics of appropriateness, the solutions could be more redistributive in nature but equally nationalist.

While Friedrich List appreciated liberal principles more than is often acknowledged, Istvan Hont also argues that Adam Smith, the most prominent economic liberal was, in fact, also an economic nationalist, be it a moderate liberal one (2005, 124-5). Furthermore, Levi-Faur points out that John Maynard Keynes was also an economic nationalist (1997, 367, fn30) and even contemporary examples could be found from the group of broadly moderate liberal politicians and economists. Therefore, another dichotomy that can be problematic to sustain is to present economic nationalism and economic liberalism as antithetical. Even for Friedrich List himself economic nationalism was a synthesis of liberalism and mercantilism rather than extreme protectionism. Other prominent economic nationalists, such as Hamilton also supported the principles of free trade (Harlen 1999, 734).

This is also replicated by the True Finns who buy into the principles of free market liberalism at home but see it necessary that international markets are controlled by nation-states

and not turned into a playground of global corporations and footloose capitalists. The EU is an example of where this is already happening and while the True Finns are not against cooperation between governments, they do oppose the common market and monetary union, as they go against their nationalist worldview and also they maintain that democratic decision-making at the supranational level is not possible and so the only outcome of transnational or global capitalism is the increasing power of the global financial sector over national political institutions (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 2011, p. 33) As such, economic nationalism could be seen as a very helpful way in which the cultural and economic grievances and the apparent tensions between liberal and socialist economic policy solutions could be reconciled and also through which it is possible to begin appreciating the nationalist ontology that lies at the heart of the politics of many PRRPs.

Economic nationalism of the True Finns

Hence, it is be appropriate to return to the True Finns and ask how economic nationalism can be used as a framework to further understand their immigration discourse and policy and also to problematize the apparent tension between the mainstream of the party and its anti-immigration wing.

True Finn Leader Timo Soini's own politics has maintained a strongly traditional SMP populist line that has been revitalized for the twenty-first century through what could certainly be labelled as economic nationalism. He openly and proudly describes himself as a populist (Soini 2008, 168). His variety of populism is as much about the "how?" as it is of the "what?" of politics. He is deeply influenced by the idea of the individual and of the people. And here the people represent the third way between the state and market. Populism is also about the way in which the political message is delivered. Soini openly admits to being a political dissident and maverick and this is one part of how the message is delivered to the people (Soini 2008, 149). He comes up with buzz phrases and one-liners that simplify a complicated political message

into easily accessible bite-size chunks that appeal to the average voter. However, the very meaning of the term “people” connects his populism with nationalism and, for the purposes of this paper, economic nationalism. The people Soini and True Finns talk about are members of the Finnish nation and the lines between those who belong and those who do not are drawn on national terms. It needs to be added that Finnish language offers good grounds for being ambiguous, even intentionally so, about this, as the word *kansa* in Finnish means both people and nation. In other words, depending on the purpose and the occasion, either interpretation of the use of the term *kansa* can be appropriated. However, it is important to add here that the True Finns do not see this as an exclusively ethno-national definition. Integration of immigrants to the Finnish society and even naturalization are a part of their policy (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 2011, 43). Here they seem to represent a happy compromise between the nativist nationalism of Mudde and holistic nationalism of Eatwell.

Soini’s politics is all about providing a third way between the power of capital and capitalism on one hand and on the other the power of what he calls society. “The power of money, crude capitalism, is as dark as the power of society that neglects the individual” (Soini 2008, 155). Here his approach departs from liberal and certainly from libertarian individualism, as he still sees a need for people to work together, to express solidarity to each other and to acknowledge shared interests. “It is about politics that consists of more than individual but that would not exist without individuals” (Soini 2008, 149). Through emphasising the role of the people and the individual he is able to demonstrate that he is in principle opposed to both the laissez faire capitalism of the political right and state centrism of the left.

The True Finns is a nationalist and Christian social party. We do not believe in right-wing power of money or in the left-wing power of the system. We believe in and build all of our expectations primarily on the human being (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 2011, 6).

However, it needs to be pointed out here that the True Finns are by no means advocating an illiberal economic model. They accept free market capitalism in principle but see its global and regional variants as deleterious for Finnish society. They certainly buy into the competition state paradigm (see for example Cerny 1990). “The True Finns think that it is in the Finnish interest to engage in free trade and cooperate across borders but still decide what kind of structures the

Finnish society is built on” (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 2009, 5). In other words, liberalism is adopted as the main economic policy model but through a nationalist discourse. The adaptability of the Finnish society to changes emanating from the outer world is one of its strengths and Finnish culture is one of the key resources for the competitiveness of the Finnish economy (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 2009, 5). This, to my mind, is a very clearly a strongly economic nationalist statement.

Crucially, many of their cultural and nativist statements are connected with their claims about socioeconomic issues. In the EU election platform 2009 the party claimed that the increasing European cooperation on immigration serves to worsen the taxation structures needed for sustaining a welfare state, as the willingness for citizens to pay taxes decreases as an outcome of the emergence of the side effects of immigration (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 2009, 3). So, here they effectively link the political economy of welfare to multiculturalism and other cultural issues and through this provide also a link to the literature on the relationship between multiculturalism and the support for the welfare state.

Another issue, which is given both cultural and economic importance, is work. The duty to work is clearly considered as an economic issue, as work removes pressure from welfare but at the same time it is also linked to national traditions. Working and the will to gain employment are also seen as those national customs and traditions immigrants need to be integrated to (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 2009, 4). The welfare state is, in general, something the True Finns staunchly defend but they put a heavy emphasis on the duty of all citizens to work and to express solidarity toward their community. The commitment to the welfare state is certainly made very clear in the party platforms. More than a third of the 2011 True Finn platform was dedicated to issues related to the welfare state.

The True Finns support the traditional Nordic welfare model where social and health services are guaranteed equally to all Finnish citizens. The health and welfare of the citizens is both a value in itself but also the pre-requisite for the success and competitiveness of Finland in economic competition (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 2011, 11).

Thus, also here in no unclear terms the party makes a very obvious connection between the cultural value of the welfare state and its economic importance in maintaining Finnish competitiveness. They go on to state later on that equality, both in terms of equality of

opportunity and the equality of outcome, achieved through income transfers, can have a positive effect on national unity (Perussuomalaiset r.p. 2011, 11). These issues and concepts create circles of cause and consequence in their ideology and manage to effectively integrate economic arguments with cultural narratives. They represent both nativist nationalism and welfare chauvinism, which could both be understood and tensions between which could be reconciled through economic nationalism and the nationalist ontology it is based on.

Conclusion

To conclude, the immigration discourse policy of the True Finns can be definitely understood and navigated with the help of economic nationalism. What epitomizes this broad and at times rather complicated discourse is the classification of immigrants into good immigrants and bad immigrants. Labour migration is at least neutral to the economy but in many cases it has positive effects as long as the immigrants attempt to integrate and follow national laws and norms. Hence, the True Finns view this kind of immigration rather positively. However, the case against bad immigrants is made through both economic and cultural arguments through using nativist and welfare chauvinist arguments. Non-work-based immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, for example, are seen to cost the economy and their effect in an economic sense is negative. From a cultural perspective they also have a deleterious effect on the community through not being able to integrate into the mainstream society, increasing the ghettoization within Finnish cities.

What I have argued here is a revival and reassessment of the theory of economic nationalism as a tool for understanding the political motivations and strategic choices made by populist radical right parties. I have argued that the ongoing debate between cultural and economic motivations behind the PRRP ideology and policy is not always helpful. This debate has separated two broad areas of ideology and policy and has also done this at the expense of the ontology of those ideologies. Here the apparent omission of economic nationalism from the

debates is rather surprising. I suggest that through reviving economic nationalism as a theoretical tool by which the PRRPs can be understood, we can also return to emphasising the nationalist ontology of the PRR ideology and policy and appreciate the interconnectedness between cultural and economic arguments under this ontological premise.

My discussion of the True Finns demonstrates that the party has adopted a position that could, indeed, be labelled as economic nationalism. Crucially, their economic and cultural arguments are intertwined through a broad ideology that is founded upon nationalism. Here nativist nationalism and welfare chauvinism are able to explain only parts of the puzzle. Emphasis on Finnish culture and Finnish values is clear and the role of the welfare state in this is undeniable. However, there is also a more socio-economic argument linked to the welfare state, which cannot be explained through nativism alone. The support of the Nordic welfare state and adoption of the competition state discourse are useful examples of this. However, as I point out in the final part of the paper, the best example of the economic nationalism of the True Finns is their immigration discourse and policy.

As such, the cultural effects can also become economic. For example, it has been argued that the economic side effects of bad immigration can lead to a decreasing social cohesion and, hence, a decreased willingness to pay taxes and contribute to the economy and, consequently a harming effect on Finnish competitiveness. All in all, while this demonstrates a dialectic and interrelational relationship between the cultural and economic aspects in the True Finns' immigration discourse, in the end what is shared between both of these is the ontology they share, namely that of nationalism. And the appreciation of the nationalist worldview is also a potential way of explaining why the mainstream and more moderate core of the party can rather happily tolerate the more radical anti-immigration wing.

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