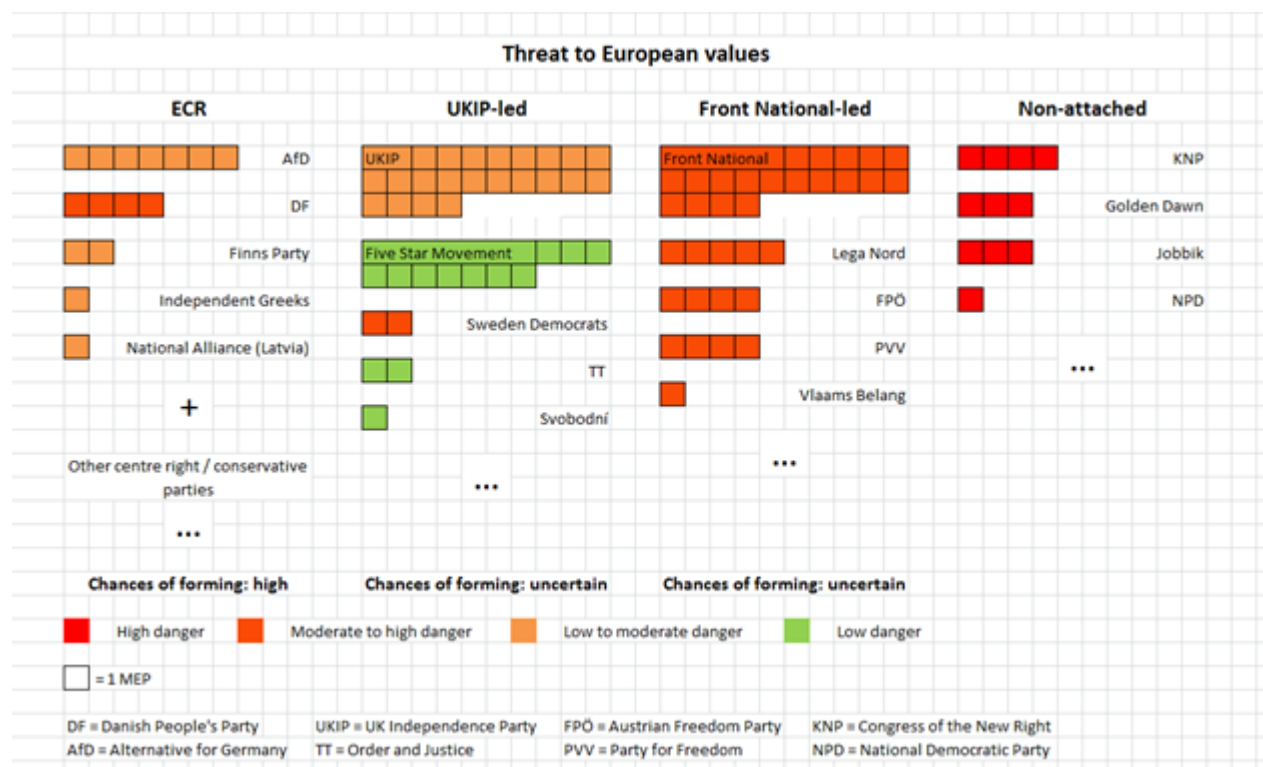# After the elections

Chart 1: potential populist groupings in the European Parliament (rated according to threat to European values)

Summary

- *A strong performance by some populist parties at the European elections means that there will be a significant increase in populist MEPs in the new Parliament.*
- *We have previously <u>warned</u> of the risk that the functioning of the Parliament will be hindered and disrupted by the incoming populists.*
- *Our charts (above and below) show that it is highly likely populists will be severely fragmented in the Parliament.*
- *Our charts explore one possible arrangement of populist parties, according to how they are currently clustering. We do not yet know whether each of these clusters of parties will be able to meet the requirements to form a political group. Our chart also includes parties that may not be considered populist but that have been suggested as potential allies for other populist groupings (notably the Czech Svobodní and the Polish Congress of the New Right).*
- *Both UKIP and the Front National face difficulties forming a political group, which would grant them access to more funds and influence in the Parliament. To form a group they need at least 25 MEPs from at least seven different EU member states. It is currently unclear whether either UKIP or the Front National will be able to meet this second requirement. If they worked together*

they would have a better chance of overcoming this obstacle, but UKIP leader Nigel Farage has ruled out an alliance with the Front National.

- *We have rated populist parties according to their threat to European values (openness, tolerance, democracy, etc.) The first chart (above) shows that some populist parties are far more dangerous on this measure than others.*
- *We have also rated populist parties according to their willingness to block and disrupt the functioning of the European Parliament (below). A high score on this measure does not necessarily coincide with a high score on 'threat to European values'. We give UKIP a relatively low score on the 'threat to European values' measure but a high score on the 'willingness to block and disrupt' measure.*
- *The more moderate populist parties – both in terms of their threat to European values and their willingness to block and disrupt – are more likely to have influence in the Parliament in comparison to more extreme forms of populism.*
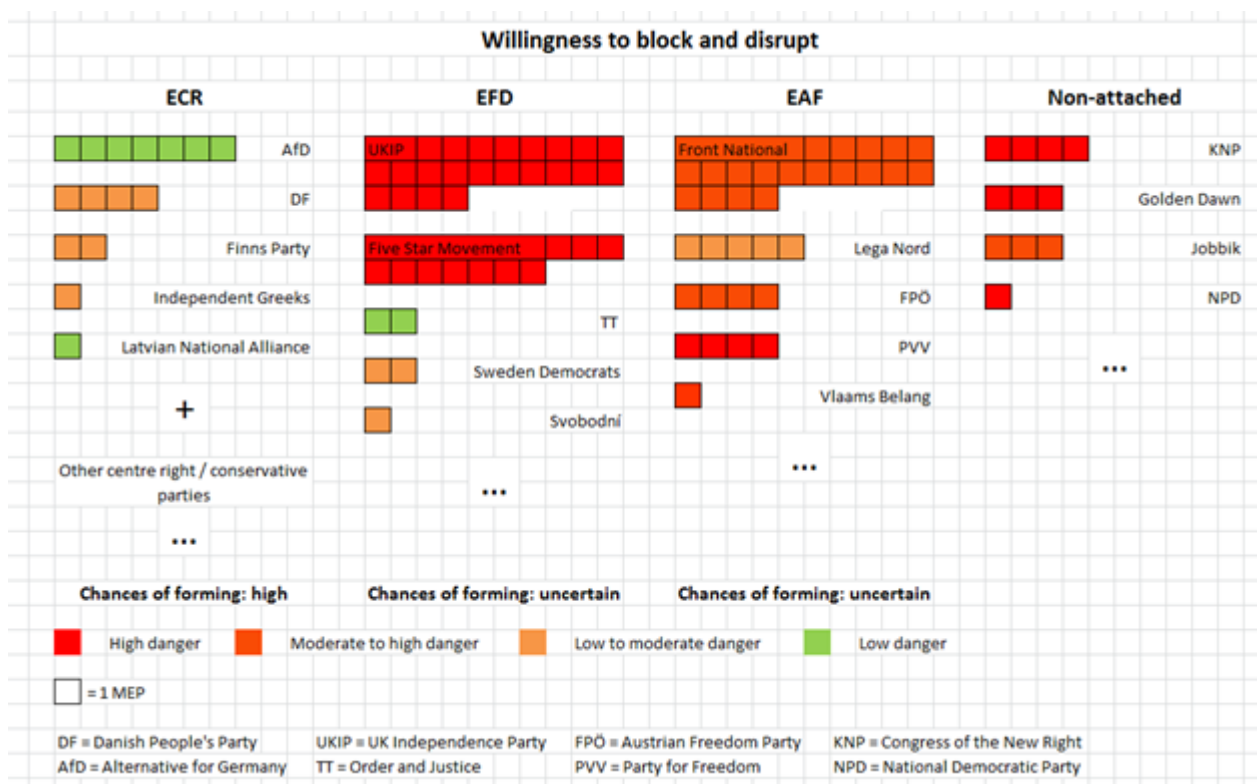

Chart 2: potential populist groupings in the European Parliament (rated according to willingness to block and disrupt)

In-depth analysis

Last month we released a matrix comparing Europe's different populist parties. With the European elections resulting in record scores for some (though not all) populist parties, it is worth seeing how these strong performances will translate into a populist presence in the European Parliament. The variations we charted clearly show that populists won't all band together in the Parliament – their priorities, histories and

strategies are too different for that to be an option. But there are some commonalities: here we try to chart them based on our analysis last month.

The charts shown here explore one possible arrangement of the different populist parties in the Parliament. We do not yet know how things will exactly turn out – but these are the clusters of parties that are currently emerging. (We go into more detail below.) The size of each of the party's blocks represents the number of MEPs they now have.

The danger these parties pose is twofold: a threat to open societies and European values but also a block to constructive policymaking and the functioning of the Parliament. The first chart rates the different parties on the first of these dimensions: 'Threat to European values'. The second chart rates them on the second of these: 'Willingness to block and disrupt'. We use a four colour scale, from green (low danger) to amber, orange and red (high danger).

So, for instance, UKIP is rated as red on the 'Willingness to block and disrupt' dimension but amber on the 'Threat to European values' dimension'. This is because UKIP MEPs tend to operate as a purely unconstructive force in the Parliament, tending to vote no to any proposal put to them, but the party still broadly upholds European values: in our matrix last month, it received mostly greens and ambers on measures such as racism, xenophobia, homophobia and anti-Semitism.

Below we explain in more depth the methodology behind the two charts, including both the reasons for our decisions on the composition of the different groups and the rationale behind our ratings. First, though, we summarise the key messages that these charts tell us.

Key messages

To form a political group in the European Parliament you need 25 MEPs from seven different member states. The mainstream political groups, in order of size, are the centre right European People's Party (EPP), the centre left Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats (S&D), the liberal Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) and the Greens-European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA), a group dominated by Green parties but also containing a few regionalists.

Then there's the radical left GUE-NGL, which will contain a number of parties that have performed well at the European elections, including the anti-austerity Syriza in Greece and, most likely, Podemos in Spain. With perhaps a couple of exceptions – such as the Dutch Socialist Party – parties in this group are not populist (see our analysis), so we won't focus on the group here.

This leaves us with potentially two groups led by populist parties – one led by UKIP and one led by the Front National – as well as the ECR and the parties that will not be part of any group (known as 'non-attached'). Populists will be present in each of these groupings – testament to their fragmentation and their differing priorities and aims. We look at each of these groupings in turn.

The ECR

The ECR is dominated mostly by the centre right British Conservatives and the Polish Law and Justice party. Despite rumours before the elections that the group would struggle to meet the requirements to form, it now looks as if the ECR will be a large group in the European Parliament: possible allies include former ECR members Latvian National Alliance, the Dutch ChristianUnion, the Croatian Party of Rights and the Czech conservatives ODS, as well as potential newcomers such as the Flemish regionalist N-VA, Bulgaria without Censorship, Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania, two small conservative Slovakian parties, the Independent Greeks – and, more controversially, the Finns Party and the Danish People's Party. In short, plenty of MEPs from plenty of different member states.

Only a few of these parties could be considered populist – specifically the Danish People's Party and the Finns Party, as well as possibly the Independent Greeks and the Latvian National Alliance. We have included these parties in our chart. (In fact, the Danish People's Party is considered by the political scientist Cas Mudde to be a populist radical right party; he treats the Finns Party as a borderline case.) Within our matrix of populist parties, they were on the more moderate end of the spectrum. But they still exhibit the typical traits of populism – and the Danish People's Party in particular has a record of xenophobia and Islamophobia. Its party programme from 2002, for instance, states: 'Denmark is not an immigrant-country and never has been. Thus we will not accept transformation to a multiethnic society.'

On top of this, the Alternative for Germany party (again a moderate populist party according to our matrix) has applied to join the ECR. An alliance with the AfD poses a problem for British Conservatives – as a rival to Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats, any alliance with the party could hamper UK Prime Minister David Cameron's attempts to agree on a UK-EU reform package with the support of the German Chancellor. But ECR MEPs seem supportive of AfD membership – and Cameron has no power to stop the AfD from joining if ECR MEPs vote in favour. For now, then we presume that the AfD will join the ECR.

What marks out these populist parties (i.e. the Finns, the Danish People's Party and the AfD) from most of the others in our charts is a willingness to participate in constructive policy-making. These are not just parties of 'no' – they have in the past shown an inclination to fight for reform rather than just block and hamper parliamentary activities. This is presumably one of the reasons the ECR is open to working them.

The effect of the move to include MEPs from parties such as the Finns Party and the Danish People's Party in the ECR is two-fold.

First, it could potentially help to moderate these parties – as Counterpoint author Martin Sandbu argued recently in the Financial Times, the inclusion of the populist Norwegian Progress Party in government has hastened its march towards respectability and reasonableness.

Second, it could help to legitimise more extreme and xenophobic voices. Other parties – for instance, the Sweden Democrats, which has an extremist past – may now have a better shot of forming an alliance with UKIP. And individuals within the Finns Party and the Danish People's Party – for instance, the controversial Finns MEP Jussi Halla-Aho, who was in 2012 charged with inciting hatred against ethnic groups, has been legitimised by the move.

The UKIP-led group

At the moment, it looks as if UKIP's group is being 'squeezed out' of the Parliament– on the left by the ECR snatching former allies such as the Finns Party, the Danish People's Party and most likely the SGP and on the right by the Front National winning over Lega Nord and potentially the Lithuanian Order and Justice party. But if UKIP does find MEPs from seven member states to form a group, what will it look like?

As of now, there are only a few potential names: former allies such as the Lithuanian Order and Justice (TT) – as well as new ones – such as the Czech Svobodní (and potentially the Polish KNP). The Sweden Democrats have also shown an interest and we have placed it with UKIP for now, though Nigel Farage may well be put off by the party's extreme past.

More surprisingly, it could also contain Beppe Grillo's Italian Five Star Movement, a populist party that promotes Internet-based direct democracy but that doesn't have a focus on immigration like other populist parties. In last month's matrix, we ranked it as one of the more moderate populist parties we included. But Beppe Grillo has showered praise on Farage, defending him from allegations of racism and stressing their commonalities. Still, the Five Star Movement may well not join – Grillo often asks Five Star activists to vote on decisions such as this, and given UKIP's reputation they may decline to work with them.

However exactly this group forms (if indeed it meets the membership requirements), it's likely to be dominated by moderate populists. This makes it only slightly problematic for upholding European values (the first chart) yet far more problematic when it comes to making a positive contribution to policy-making in the Parliament (the second chart).

What's interesting here is that, if the Five Star Movement does join forces with UKIP and if they do find enough members from other countries (they would need five more member states for the group to form), this group is likely to be remarkably diverse. This could make it similar to the EFD (Europe of Freedom and Democracy), UKIP's group in the 2009-2014 Parliament. That group had a very low rate of cohesion – its members voted in very different ways – and was held together ideologically by a critical attitude to the EU. (Even on this issue the different parties that joined with UKIP had quite different views – UKIP's fully-fledged anti-EU position was much more extreme than other members.)

But UKIP will not cooperate with violent or anti-Semitic parties, nor will it align with the stigmatised Front National. The purpose of this group would not be to pursue a populist radical right message: it would be, in the <u>words</u> of Nigel Farage, to 'have fun causing a lot of trouble for Brussels'. This is reflected in our two charts above: the parties currently under the 'UKIP-led' column are for the most part not fundamentally against European values, but they are willing to hinder the functioning of the European Parliament.

The Front National-led group

The next potential political group of importance is the alliance proposed by the Front National's Marine Le Pen and the PVV's Geert Wilders. The other parties that have signed up include the Flemish Vlaams Belang, the Austrian Freedom Party and the Italian Lega Nord. But they still need MEPs from two more member states to join to formally create a group. Before the elections it appeared that they were hoping to recruit the Sweden Democrats and the Slovak National Party. Neither of those options seems to have worked out. The Sweden Democrats have said they would prefer to ally with UKIP and the Danish People's Party, while the Slovak National Party won no seats at the election. So it looks like they'll have to work hard to find two more sets of members.

Supposing the group does form, it will be significantly more toxic than any we have mentioned so far – most of the parties in the alliance get consistent ambers and reds for racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and hostility to representative democracy in last month's matrix. On the other hand, these parties have their limits: they draw the line at violence and anti-Semitism, even if some have a history of extremism. (The Austrian Freedom Party gets an amber for anti-Semitism in our matrix, however, given <u>recent scandals</u> involving party leader Heinz-Christian Strache.) In our first chart above, we give these parties an orange, rather than a green or a red, on the question of threat to European values.

Therefore, if the group forms, we expect it to attempt to put forward a more cohesive front and a more resolutely populist radical right message than Nigel Farage's heterogeneous alternative. At the same time, forming a group will not necessarily help them to gain respect and influence in the European Parliament. Instead, these parties will most likely be ostracised by other MEPs and will struggle to make much impact at all, let alone form a robust block to EU policy-making from the inside.

The non-attached members

Finally, we expect the groups that are more openly racist, anti-Semitic, homophobic and in some cases violent – in other words, the most dangerous parties, most of whom have a number of reds in our matrix – to sit at the very edge of the Parliament, unattached to any other political group. These parties are simply too troublesome for the other populists to touch. Some of the parties in our matrix, as expected, failed to make it into the Parliament this time – the British National Party and Ataka – while

others not included in the matrix made it instead – notably the German neo-Nazi NPD, because of a change in the German electoral law. They will not have enough members to form their own political group (and in any case it is unlikely that all of them would want to work together). Instead, they will occupy a disruptive yet ultimately insignificant corner of the Parliament.

All in all, the encouraging message from our analysis is that, roughly speaking, the more dangerous populists will find themselves more likely to be marginalised in the Parliament than their comparatively moderate counterparts. Moderate populists such as the Finns Party and the Danish Peoples Party will, we expect, have more influence by virtue of their inclusion in the ECR; the most extreme parties won't be part of any political group. Few populists will be particularly influential in the Parliament – but the most dangerous will be completely ostracised.

Methodology

How does the rating system for 'Threat to European values' in the first chart work?

The four ratings (green, amber, orange, red) are based on the scores we gave in our matrix last month. Taking the first nine columns in the matrix as proxies for 'European values' (from 'violent?' to 'sexist?'), we scored each red light as 2, each amber light as 1 and each green light as 0. We then summed the scores according to this rule for each party. We found four clusters of parties:

- Golden Dawn, Jobbik, Ataka and the BNP scored between 16 and 18 – we rate these parties as red ('high danger')
- The Austrian Freedom Party, the Slovak National Party, the Front National, Vlaams Belang, the Sweden Democrats, the PVV, Lega Nord and the Danish People's Party scored between 6 and 15 – we rate these parties as orange ('moderate to high danger')
- The Finns Party, the AfD and UKIP scored between 4 and 5 – we rate these parties as amber ('low to moderate danger')
- The Five Star Movement and the Norwegian Progress Party both scored 2 – we rate these parties as green ('low danger')

Some of these parties are not in the European Parliament, however, and some parties currently in the Parliament that are included in our chart were not in our original matrix. For this latter group of parties, we have given an approximate overall rating based on our knowledge of the parties and our judgment of where they stand in relation to the others in the chart.

UPDATE 9/6/14:

Dr Ben Stanley has queried our inclusion of the KNP in our list of populists, an explicitly anti-democratic party. We have left the party in the chart because it allows for a valuable comparison with the other parties we evaluate, though it may be better described as extremist rather than populist. On the 'threat to European values' measure, we have, however, increased the rating from orange to red.

How does the rating system for 'Willingness to block and disrupt' in the second chart work?

The four rating (green, amber, orange, red) are based on the behaviour of populist MEPs in the European Parliament. Table 5 (pp. 27-28) of our report 'Conflicted Politicians' ranks parties in the European Parliament according to how often they opposed the consensus in the Parliament on a range of issues. According to our analysis, four clusters of parties emerge:

- 'Parties of no' – such as UKIP and the PVV – who tend to vote against proposals regardless of the issue. They are at the top of Table 5 in our report (red – 'high danger').
- Somewhat less contrary parties, such as the Front National, the Austrian Freedom Party and Vlaams Belang. They are at towards the top end of Table 5 in our report (orange – 'moderate to high danger'). (We have placed Jobbik here despite the fact that it is ranked fairly low in the table in our report, given that Jobbik's position in the table is partly due to a high abstention rate among Jobbik MEPs and given that the party has a record of antagonistic behaviour in plenary debates in the Parliament.)
- More cooperative parties, such as the Finns Party, the Danish People's Party and Lega Nord. They are in the middle of Table 5 in our report (amber – 'low to moderate danger').
- Parties that are most likely to align with the political consensus in the Parliament, such as the Latvian National Alliance and the Lithuanian Order and Justice party. They are towards the bottom of Table 5 in our report or do not appear in the table at all (green – 'low danger').

Of course, we do not yet have information about parties currently not in the European Parliament. Here we have made judgments based on our general information about these parties as well as how these parties have behaved in their respective national parliaments.