Panic and the Perpetuum Mobile of Populist Right-Wing Propaganda:

An Ontological Perspective of Political Security Communication

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Glasgow Student Number: 2409522P

Dublin City Student Number: 18114598

Charles Student Number: 50023595

Marijn Elle Pronk

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Abstract

The rise of polarizing narratives being spread online, and the successes of various Right-Wing Populist Movements and parties illustrate a seemingly causational tie to the change in the media landscape. Capturing the ontological zeitgeist, Populist Right-Wing movements use fears and hesitations of groups to trigger anxiety, consequently bottling the political energy generated for their own political gain by populist framing. By combining the Ontological Security Theory (OST), framing populism as a style of political communication, and the technology-political communication nexus as highlighted in the Political Communication Cycle, the aforementioned developments are tested to see how ontological insecurities based on identity rhetoric are weaponized against the backdrop of a new technological communicative reality. Using historical empirical case studies of the Second KKK and their propagandic tactics, and the rise of Dutch Right-Wing populist Forum for Democracy Party, concluded is that indeed there are spaces offered in specific Political Communication Orders where anxiety can be more easily triggered for political gain through new technological communicative means. From a content perspective as analysed through OST, polarizing, identity-heavy fear rhetoric, and populist framing is used to gather support by securitizing a perceived out-group, while framing themselves as the only capable actor to defend the *populus* (the 'people') against this theat. Most importantly, Populist Right-Wing actors purposefully make use of the stabilizing communicative order to spread these propagandic messages, in that they use the vacuum provided to profit of a subsequent emerging new elite (i.e. new online influential actors), combined with the purposeful destabilization of traditional sources of political communication and other trust systems that are subjected to established norms and values (newspapers, government agencies, etc.). This thesis therefore further illustrates why these tactics are so effective and explains how certain periodic technological communicative realities better allow for these narratives to spread than others.

Keywords: Ontological Security, Political Communication, Right-Wing Populism, Anxiety, Propaganda

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Introduction

"Language is the foundation of civilization. It is a glue that holds people together, and it is the first weapon drawn in a conflict" (Villeneuve 2016).

Language is a political tool of which the means seemingly justify the ends, which makes communication a powerful political asset. Discourse and narratives can tap into emotions, spurring political action, and causing political power to work through emotional framing. According to the Ontological Security Theory (OST), states, groups, individuals are all inherently construct certain identity signifiers through both physical routines as well as metaphysical memories and narratives. Any threat towards that established identity structure, whether legitimate or not, causes so-called ontological insecurity. The legitimacy of that threat is one of the defining factors in the appropriateness of the use of crisis-speech on that perceived threat. Political actors, whether social movements, politicians, or influential social actors can use their platforms to highlight threats and securitize them to catalyse political action. Creating a space of ontological insecurity is a powerful tool to get that done. These tactics are not new, various social movements and political parties have relied on highlighting systematic inequalities or the securitization of certain issues using populist framing. Right-Wing Populist parties and movements also often rely on these tactics, focused on securitizing identity belonging to the perceived a out-group, to both legitimize their own political goals as well as further strengthening of ingroup identities an naturalize social hierarchies (Brewer 1999). Rhetoric spread based on both fear and populist thinking create a two-pronged political strategy for the political actor by combining ontological insecurity and populism. The framed existence of an immediate threat that the ingroup has to be defended from and situating themselves as the (only) defenders to counter that threat since the status quo elite is not countering the threat, sometimes even causing it. From the KKK situating themselves as a Social Movement as to protecting the 'white

lifestyle and traditional morals', to more recent inclusion of various Right-Wing populist parties in governments. The successful rise of Right-Wing movements and parties illustrate a seemingly causational tie to the change in the media landscape. But how exactly has the changed media and communicative technology environment affected the aforementioned two-pronged communication strategy? To test this hypothesis, this thesis will therefore analyse the nexus between Right-Wing Populist communication tactics based on Ontological Security and the new media landscape, to answer the question of how ontological insecurities based on identity rhetoric are weaponized via (new) political communication technologies by Right-Wing Populist actors.

In order to answer the posed research question, three sub questions will be discussed. First, how can fear rhetoric and populism be used as strategic political communication tool? Second, how do political actors use these strategies to garner support? Thirdly, how have new communicative technologies affected these strategies? The first chapter will reflect on the theoretical underpinnings of the Ontological Security Theory in the Literature Review and its possible empirical suitability for studying issues regarding populism and the weaponization of identity-security nexus, together with the theory's shortcomings regarding research in Political Communication and Populism, by which the methodology will further fully solidify the theoretical framework used in this thesis. The second chapter will discuss the first sub-question, by introducing a framework to analyse political communication strategies, to subsequently analyse the effect of populist fear rhetoric as a political communication strategy. The third chapter will revolve around answering the second sub-question of how these tactics are used to garner support, through an in-depth analysis of the propagandist strategies of the Second KKK in their height of power (from 1915-1925). This will provide an empirical body to the aforementioned theoretical framework, and will serve as an example how political outsiders, especially radical far-right ''social movements''

frame their grievances with specific political communicative strategies based on populism and fear-rhetoric. Following, the fourth chapter will further excavate the connection between the current Political Communication Order and the perceived rise of ‘elected populism’, taking Dutch populist far-right party Forum for Democracy as a second case study to analyse how new communicative technologies have changed these aforementioned political tools. Taking a political party as a subject of study, it will be highlighted that certain characteristics of Social Movement Political Communicative Strategies -inherently securitizing grievances of a social group through populist rhetoric- are hijacked and used for increased political coverage and support. Lastly, a model will be proposed to illustrate this seemingly constant populist political communication strategy design with the Ontological Security Theory, to illustrate that the goal of political communication has not changed, however how the mode of production, penetration into society, and the fervent use of catalysing narratives have periodically created spaces in history where anxiety is triggered for political gain.

Methodology

In order to answer the proposed research question on how ontological insecurities based on identity rhetoric are weaponized via (new) political communication technologies by Right-Wing populist actors, a new perspective of the Ontological Security Theory (OST) will be applied. A triangulation of OST, populist discourse analysis, and the political communication cycle (PCC) will be applied to study the method, tools, and effects of populist fear rhetoric by political actors.

The conceptual framework used combines OST, populist literature on the conceptual understanding of populism as a *mediated political style* framing unsatiated (security) demands by Laclau, Moffitt, and Wodak, and Ben Epstein's Political Communication Cycle. Firstly, OST in this regard offers a framework to illustrate why specifically fear rhetoric based on identity is such a potent propagandic catalyst for securitization. Secondly, populist discourse analysis highlights how the political energy created from the securitization move is repurposed in specific political actions that needs to be taken according to the populist political actor, by arguing that supporting the populist political actor is the only way forward to create change filling the security demand. This is partly done by discrediting the securitization authority of the ruling elite. Therefore, by combining OST and populist discourse analysis, the perspective granted by OST will not solely revolve around the ontological security seeker, but also around the ontological security provider. Populist rhetoric frames agents as ontological security providers through the use of crisis situations by both triggering and continuing feelings of anxiety, and subsequently legitimates the act of posing themselves as the only solution to the alleviation of that anxiety. Following, Epstein's Political Communication Cycle provides a framework to further highlight the connection between the media environment that 'outsider' political actors participate in, and how especially populists are more likely to innovate their use of communication technology compared to the established political elite. The OST theory, populist discourse analysis, and the PCC framework

will be subsequently applied in Chapter 3 to the historical case study of the propagandic strategies of the radical Right-Wing KKK movement of the 1920s. This analysis fleshes out the narrative and discourse strategy of using ontological insecurity as a political communication weapon. Furthermore, the case study offers empirical evidence towards the specific use of new communicative technologies that the KKK made use of. Lastly, in Chapter 4 this framework is tested against a case study of the rise of the Dutch Populist Right-Wing 'Forum for Democracy' party, to analyse if the seemingly recent rise of these (radical) Right-Wing movements are a result of the Media status quo of political communication technologies. A model of analysis will be proposed to illustrate the inertial political power of the securitization move, that can lead to a process of normalization using this rhetoric. By triangulating these theories and frameworks, the commonalities and differences of Populist Right-Wing actor's political communication strategies historically and in the current media climate are analysed to understand the effect of technological development on Right-Wing Populist communication strategies and the weaponization of identity narratives.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

The Theory of Ontological Security finds its base in psychoanalysis and sociology, and with its inherent constructivist and realist elements, OST is subsequently applied as an interdisciplinary theoretical framework to international relations. The theory suggests that (state) identity and security are interlinked and in permanent symbiosis by confirming, legitimizing, and influencing each other's existence. This influences the behavioural patterns of actors and political outcomes. Hence, OST turns the security dilemma on its head by suggesting that when conflict confirms the identity of the actor, this relationship is continued to satisfy this perceived role in the global order (Mitzen 2006, 242–43), albeit continuing the state of (physical) insecurity. When this cycle of conflict is broken, the actors in this relationship see their identity roles as being threatened, rendering them 'ontologically insecure'. The actor perceives itself as unable continue their stable sense-of-of self, which was rooted in their subjective identity and the subsequent performance of that role through behaviour. The theory of itself therefore lends a fruitful framework to study security issues with the identity-security nexus in mind. This literature review will explore the empirical and practical application of OST by the major academics working with the theory and highlight the various caveats and gaps in current that should be considered in order to solidify research boundaries of this thesis.

Since the roots of OST are not set in International Relations Theory, rather extensive background literature will be laid out to fully illustrate how the theory has been developed and has transcended from the field of psychology to sociology, and eventually to International Relations and the field of Security Studies specifically. These psychological and sociological underpinnings are of the utmost importance to understand the theory's application and methodological legitimacy with regards to its application on the case studies in this thesis. Afterwards, a critical evaluation of its use in IR will be discussed, structured according to the three main criticisms of OST that are important to consider to justify

their appliance in this thesis: its historical empirical applicability, the problem of state-centrism, and the use of identity as signifier possibly securitizing subjectivity. These questions are significant to answer, since the questions posed in this thesis are of a trans-historical, non-state centric, and identity-heavy nature. Therefore, further critical research of literature will be concentrated on OST as a framework to study the weaponization of identity, in order to show the significance of its possible use to understand far-right populist political narratives. Lastly, current OST research analysing the rise of Right-Wing populist communication strategies, and a possible cross-fertilization with the field of political communication will be discussed in order to highlight the gap in research of the aforementioned practical use of OST. Through this process the groundwork that this thesis will build on will be laid down, thereby further extending the field of Ontological Security to broaden its practical use for studying contemporary issues regarding the use of anxiety and fear rhetoric by political actors.

1.2 Ontological Security: A Historical Review

The psychoanalytical underpinnings of OST are laid out in the work of R.D. Laing, a psychologist whose work focused on the existential sanity of individuals. In his book, 'The Divided Self: A Study of Sanity and Madness', he deviates from the usual clinical frame of reference often used in psychology. Laing applies the terms 'schizoid' and 'schizophrenic' in a more phenomenological and existential setting. This perspective is expressed in analyses such as relating the nature of an individual with schizophrenia having been disconnected from the sense-of-self/the body as well as the world, to that individuals' behaviour in-this-world (Laing 1960, 17). The goal of a psychiatrist is thus to find out what the cause of this disconnect of self and the world in an individual is, and subsequently help the individual ground themselves back into reality by analysing the actor's behaviour in an existential context. He coins the term 'ontologically secure' to illustrate this state of perceiving oneself as continuous and real by having a sense of presence in the world. ''Such a basically *ontologically* secure

person will encounter all the hazards of life, social, ethical, spiritual, biological, from a centrally firm sense of his own and other people's reality and identity'' (Laing 1960, 39). Important to note is that here Laing appropriates the term 'ontological' in an empirical sense by repurposing the concept as a proper adverbial derivative for the state of 'being' (Croft and Vaughan-Williams 2017, 15), sidestepping the philosophical application of 'being' and 'existing'. Consequently, he argues that the ability to feel security is a *need*, taking the concept of security from the outside (i.e. physical threats) to a subjective feeling that originates 'inside' an actor preoccupied with survival of being.

Importantly, based on those reflections Liang is trying to understand an actors' behaviour. Laing states that ontologically insecure persons concern themselves more with personal preservation rather than gratification (Laing 1960, 42), thereby connecting ontological security to Abraham Maslow's understanding of *needing* security to be able to achieve self-transcendence (Maslow 1969). Being ontologically insecure therefore renders a person with low flexibility to properly react to uncertain environment, constituting ordinary circumstances of everyday life as threatening their low threshold of security. Thus, preoccupied with a permanent state of risk and threat analysis, the person renders themselves paralysed in their own psyche, absorbed to find signifiers and behavioural routines to ground their reality again. Consequently, the person ties deep significance to familiar ordinary events, insofar they confirm or threaten their reality. A dichotomic perspective is taken to sort threat from non-threat (1960, 43), already highlighting the created psychological space of increased acceptance for a securitization move. Another self-defence measure pertains the cognitive restructuring of the hierarchy of everyday notions, connotating different and more absolute meanings to everyday notions. As a result, the person could have more extreme reactions to uncertainty and change in routines than the ordinary person would have to protect their continued identity, tied with these subjective hierarchies and dichotomies. What could be argued in this sense, that the person has

‘securitized’ their own cognitive reality by heightened identity signifiers and performance. With these explanations to why an individual might create us vs. them dichotomies, one can already notice the analytical benefits that the psychoanalytical work of Laing can offer to the fields of Sociology and International Relations.

British sociologist Anthony Giddens has taken the concepts and arguments laid out by Laing and appropriated them to fit a sociological context. In his book ‘Modernity and Self-Identity’ he dedicates a chapter on the aforementioned coined term of ‘ontological security’. He argues that a person’s behaviour is being dictated on one hand by practical consciousness, and on the other hand unconscious modes of cognition and emotional governance (Giddens 1991, 36). According to Giddens, practical consciousness is the emotive as well as the cognitive anchor of feelings of ontological security. In other words, the subjective emotive and cognitive groundings that determine the state of ontological (in)security depend on the boundaries presumed by the perceived natural attitude in everyday life, set by the actor themselves. Beyond those boundaries of set discourses and anticipated daily activities; chaos lurks. Therefore, the robustness of this subjective framework of reality constructed by the actor depends on the ‘’[..] level of reliability of the contexts of day-to-day social interaction, as they are produced and reproduced by agents’’ (1991, 36). These familiarities transcend to physical as well as psychical spaces, such as national history or memories (Mälksoo 2015; Subotić 2018). In previous works of Giddens, emotional familiarities are also translated in material environments called ‘locales’, in which individuals attributing meaning to spaces, ranging from street corners to national borders (Giddens 1984, 118). Breaches in the boundaries of familiarity can be subsequently appropriated to be dramatic and immediate threats, i.e. securitization of ‘migration waves threatening land borders’. As a consequence, uncertainty and perceived threats create anxiety by triggering the actors’ cognitive ontological bases. The difference with anxiety and fear should be noted, in that fear has a designated object

(i.e. arachnophobia; a fear of spiders) and a response to a specific threat, whilst anxiety is considered a generalized state of repressed emotions which has lost ties to an external threat (1991, 43–44). These ideas are also highlighted in Ulrich Beck's conception of 'risk society', where he argues that the obsession with future security creates 'risks' in the present that require immediate action, even though they might not constitute as a security threat (Beck 1992). An over-focus on ''[..] the anticipation of future catastrophe in the presence'' (Beck 2009, 3), creates space for *over-securitization* of perceived risks, and opens up narrative vacuums that can be hijacked by identity rhetoric.

With Giddens' understanding of ontological security describing the emergence of such an ontological insecurity, then how would an actor react to counter these subjective anxieties? Often they revolve around cognitive and emotional disorientation, and a general tendency to revert back, in any way possible, to the aforementioned familiar hierarchies, relations with people, and emotional aspects that are perceived as 'anchors of reality', i.e. routines in daily life being used as coping mechanisms. Therefore, in order to avoid this situation of anxiety, a certain degree of reflexivity, flexibility, and basic trust in other agents is necessary to counter the perceived challenges posed by crossing of brackets of secure reality, and are paramount to experience a stable external world and create a coherent sense of self-identity able to resist the challenges brought to them by external forces (1991, 38–51). On a societal level, notions such as hierarchies, familiar relationships, and basic trust systems can be translated into imagined communities and trust systems, i.e. national identities, to ground their beliefs in a stable cognitive base (Anderson 1991). As mentioned, a sense of shared reality is confirmed and reproduced by continuous symbiotic interactions with other agents. When these trust systems and imagined communities fail to provide a sense of security, this anxiety-induced energy could act as a powerful tool for political mobilization, noting the room created for populist rhetoric based on perceived corrupt elite-*populus* divide.

The apex of the book revolves around Giddens arguing how globalization is challenging all of these set routines, familiar relations, and emotional hierarchies of people. Specifically, argued by Giddens is that precisely the nature of globalisation -with its inherent tendency for chaotic and multidimensional developments- adds to the existential anxiety felt by society as a whole. One of these developments often raised as the culprit is communicative technologies, artificially amplifying individual information intake and increasing the flow of knowledge in greater detail and volume. Thus, in order to understand the correlation between these concepts of perceived increased ontological insecurity and technology, the inherent oscillatory analytical power of OST with its referent object ranging from personal narratives to the societal level is imperative to use to its full extent in order to holistically understand contemporary societal issues pertaining technology, security, and globalisation. A tension which was understood by Giddens, adding to Laing's arguments that globalization itself creates chaos in the status quo by threatening established 'old orders' of the world, heightening ontological insecurity. Giddens also takes Laing's concepts out of their static perspective of the individual by applying them to society as both an ontological security seeker and provider. On both levels, state and individual agents create an in- and out-group based on similarities and differences of identity signifiers, since the biographical continuity of the individual/community is sustained through the routines that one engages with those other agents.

1.3 The Ontological Security Theory in IR: Critiques

In the field of International Relations, OST has been appropriated to be used as a lens to study political behaviour since the mid-2000s. Shedding light on the security subjectivities and transferring different referent objects throughout the spectrum, highlighting the importance of identity as factor in political outcomes and behaviour. For the purpose of the use of OST in the context of this thesis, a primary focus will be laid on its analytical appropriateness on case studies revolving around

historical and contemporary non-state political communication strategies based on identity driven narratives. Hence, three important critiques will be discussed and highlighted: its historical empirical applicability, the problem of state-centrism, and the use of identity as signifier possibly securitizing subjectivity.

A critique of OST was highlighted by questioning the historical empirical applicability of OST, since Gidden's tied the increased need for ontological security to the recent rise of globalization and emergence of a liquid-modernity (Bauman 1991). However, empirical historical cases such as the work of Brent Steele, in which he applied the OST lens to British neutrality during the American Civil War (B. J. Steele 2007), to more a more contemporary application of the theory by Jennifer Mitzen on as a possible EU collective identity based on security through cooperation (Mitzen 2006; 2018), show the applicability of OST throughout history. With a historical rethinking of ontological security seeking states, Ayşe Zarakol provides a new dimension to OST by arguing that one can derive ontological security from both institutionalized and non-institutionalized sources (Zarakol 2017, 51). Zarakol takes the example of religious institutions as ontological security-providing agents, therefore observing that there is a nuance between actors and their perceived role in society.

Actors both seek and provide ontological security. However, nuancing the empirical applicability of OST regarding the different referent objects is necessary, with Croft and Vaughan-Williams arguing that the reflexive capabilities of states of their own subjectivities and self-consciousness of narratives are more static compared to the dynamicity of smaller communities (Croft and Vaughan-Williams 2017, 16). In previous work, Croft has argued that the key elements of the framework of ontological security is the individual need for biographical continuity, which is built upon those aforementioned notions of trust-relations and dichotomic perceptions of the cognitive 'outside', but that those intersubjectivities constitute as a network that make up a community, thereby less statically connecting the individual to the

grand narrative and staying more true to the psychological and sociological roots of OST (Croft 2012; Croft and Vaughan-Williams 2017). This return to the ambivalence of the referent object is also reflected in Croft and Vaughan-William's use of Huysman's concept of security as 'thick signifier' to illustrate this fluctuation (Huysmans 1998). The fluidity of security perspective again adds to its theoretical applicability and does not necessarily have to be a liability.

This transhistorical applicability on various referent objects leads to the second critique, which revolves around the level of analysis of OST. In the work of Anthony Giddens, the state as an actor is not referred to for a reason, namely arguing that discussions about security does not have to revolve around the state. Hence, it could be argued that his approach constituted as part of the paradigm shift away from the dominant physical-security and state-centred perspectives prevalent before the end of the Cold War. Regarding the first critique of realism-physical security- Giddens' structuralizing of the psychoanalytical concepts of ontological security in individuals was not meant to impact the field of International Relations specifically, but does fit in the timeframe of the IR paradigm shift, such as influential IR theories such as Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde's securitization theory, by both challenging established traditional realist theories and their points of analysis, and solidifying security subjectivities in IR (Pettiford and Curley 1999, 53). Therefore, it could be argued that the multi-faceted applicability of OST and the analyses by scholars varying from individual and group violence to state level and back give a more holistic understanding of security issues. Cynthia Enloe's feminist take on traditional security contests this stance as well by arguing that an ontologically gendered perspective is vital show the inherent connection between the everyday politics and the international political continuum, arguing that the 'international is personal, and vice versa' (Enloe 2014). Furthermore, OST scholars have not elaborated on a timeframe of routines and identities, i.e. how long does an agent/community/state have to perform a routine before it is being

called as such? Academics of the OST field have often taken core values of that community as normative, such as Mitzen and Kinnvall's taking EU norms and values as identity signifiers constituting a (security) community to protect those notions in a routinely liberalist relational manner (Kinnvall, Manners, and Mitzen 2018). However, this notion of community routines still remains opaque. Granted, it could be argued that is exactly the vagueness that illustrates the strength of OST as lens; that is the theory highlights subjective and relativity of the performative elements of (state) routines.

Parallel to the critique against the trans-historical applicability of OST, by arguing that the state is only one form of an ontological security provider Zarakol discerns that OST constitutes as a general model of analysing ontological security provision, one which can be applied to a range of forms of political authority throughout history, bearing in mind the individual search for ontological security is transhistorical (Zarakol 2017). This argument adds on Steele, Mitzen, and Croft's work regarding the fluctuations of referent objects and securitizing actors throughout history, highlighting the pluralistic applicability of OST. This to avoid confining OST to a ''single overarching Ontological Security Theory of World Politics'' and urge cross-fertilization between disciplines, honing true to the origins of OST (Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017, 5).

Thirdly, notions such as nationalism creating an imagined community can also be viewed from the OST perspective as identity signifier. This new perspective grants one the opportunity to understand identity formation and the connection to, for instance, political violence in a more nuanced way relative to conventional security theories (Rossdale 2015). However, recent critiques that have been put forward with regards to this inclusion of identity in Security Studies, is the inherent politicization of identity by the observing scholar. Catarina Kinnvall takes religion and nationalism as 'identity-signifiers' which can constitute as ontological security providers (Kinnvall 2004a, 742). Relating such notions to be inherently the signifiers of identity assume

that they are single identifiers. Presuming a hierarchy of security-identity signifiers, Kinnvall takes Jeff Huysman's concept of 'thick signifier', which highlights an intersubjective ordering of relations and structural bases of power (Huysmans 1998). Rossdale argues that this argument rests on political discourse, which in turn has political effects. Thus although inherently opaque, a reflexive stance is necessary since it questions the politization of the ontological narrative and a presumed hierarchy in identity signifiers (Mitzen 2006; Butler 2005).

Therefore, the process of politicising of identity as a subjectivity by the OST theory is not inherently negative, as suggested by Rossdale, as the importance of highlighting the political implications of securitization of identity in academic work should help the desecuritization process. The securitization of a subjective ''them'', in which often a single identity signifier is appointed to agents to be designated as ''not us'', needs to be discussed in its wholeness to understand its deliberate misappropriation outside of academia. Of course, a reflexive stance is necessary to understand the power dynamics behind the ability to perform a securitizing move on identity in and of itself, but denying the full capability of OST to illustrate and reveal these identity securitizing processes as political communication tools by avoiding to highlight political importance of hierarchical identity signifiers will reduce the empirical applicability of OST in real world situations. The securitization of subjectivities such as identity signifiers, in order to trigger ontological insecurity is vital to understand the political communication strategies of populist far-right movements.

1.4 OST and the Weaponization of Identity

As mentioned, concepts such as continued agency require the cognitive safety that these routines and communities provide, by which the actors involved get used to these social relationships and predictable behaviour (Mitzen 2006, 342). Applying these sociological and psychological notions to the sphere of International Relations means transcending them to other perspectives and transcending levels of actors. For instance, the 'secure bases' that need to be

created to order the security environment more cognitively approachable are translated in terms of national space or borders, such as Giddens' highlighted with the term 'locales' (Kinnvall, Manners, and Mitzen 2018, 253; Subotić 2018). The 'us' and 'them' narratives shape into for example national identities, particularly in times of crises (Anderson 1991; Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998). However, these subjectivities are transcended upon its population, connecting individuals into communities. These emotional connections can be used as mobilizing force. As Laing argued, hidden emotions and subjectivities become more defined and thrive during moments of perceived insecurity, since one tries to ground themselves in familiar narratives of 'threat' and 'secure' (Brewer 1999). This disjunctive between institutional and societal 'routines' and specific 'critical situations' justify the need for exceptional politics in times of crisis concerning national security, as highlighted in the securitization theory (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998). Inter- and intrastate conflicts have often relied on these notions of the politics of fear and anxiety governed by a strong sense of existential insecurity (Kinnvall and Mitzen 2018, 827). Framing certain conflicts as existential to one's physical or psychological state, does not only justify the means, but also continues the cycle of ontological insecurity. Consequently, an actor using the emotional and subjective connections between individuals could create a phantom 'us' and 'them' dichotomy. This cognitive framework is established in order for the agent/community to *receive* and *accept* the simplified reasons causing an ontologically insecure environment one perceives oneself to be in, and to legitimize the consequent securitization process of the populist securitizing actor (Wojczewski 2020). These narrative actions can thus be weaponized for political gain, according to Kinnvall and Mitzen:

> Consolidation and cementing images of the self and other are often fostered by the demonization of the other, which inhibits recognition of ones' own role in conflict as well as a potential role as victimizer. This has frequently involved perceived threats

> to particular communities' way of life and to state sovereignty, creating strong beliefs that the group, nation, religion, or state faces threats not only to its physical but also to its cultural survival (2018, 282)

What can be understood from Kinnvall and Mitzen's argument, is that ambivalence of ontological (in)security allows for parallel narratives of liberation as well as for oppression of a community, that is the process of framing what constitutes as a threat versus what actions will liberate the community from these threats. This is translated in Mitzen's understanding of the importance of routines and narratives in understanding an actor's (ir-)rational behaviour; in order to achieve a state of 'certainty of identity' actors will either return to the routine, or break it altogether by stepping away from the routine (Mitzen 2006, 363). Breaking the routine inherently causes ontological insecurity, since it would mean letting go of performing old routines and cemented identity signifiers, its success of dealing with the ontologically insecure state dependent on the level of reflexivity. Returning to the routine would mean solidifying the already existing identity signifiers subjectively constituting the dichotomic labels of juxtaposing *liberating* versus *threat* to the established community, all to reduce anxiety. Again, this could mean returning to insecurity, since conflict sometimes is the only way ''states know who they are'' (Mitzen 2006, 361). Adding onto this argument, Chernobrov solidifies this thought by arguing that generally, actors will favour anxiety avoidance over accuracy, understanding uncertainty as self-doubt. As stated: ''Ontological security shows how one is anxious to preserve a stable identity and transform uncertainty and discontinuity into a recognized routine, even if the latter contradicts rationality or escalates the crisis'' (Chernobrov 2016, 593). Consequently, identity rhetoric set in routines is used and weaponized to further solidify these narratives in the community and create a state of perceived ontological security, i.e. certainty in conflict, despite creating a parallel physical insecurity.

1.5 Cross-Fertilization Fields of OST, Populism, and Political Communication

Bearing the aforementioned caveats of weaponization of identity politics in mind, one could see the potential empirical fruits that OST could offer to the study of political communication, populism, and identity politics, when used as a framework to study political groups basing their communication and legitimation rhetoric on identity signifiers. Research in OST has recently been tapping into this connection between identity politics and political communication, especially considering recent globally disruptive populist phenomena such as the Trump administration and Brexit.

Leading OST scholars that have worked on the nexus between OST and right-wing populism are Brent Steele, Alexandra Homolar, and Catarina Kinnvall. Tying onto her previous work on Hindu nationalism in India (Kinnvall 2004b), Kinnvall connects the rise of racism in with the creation of a subjective 'imaginary other' in Europe (Kinnvall 2017). Kinnvall argues in her most recent work how ontological insecurities and postcolonial imaginaries are appropriated in order to create a social imaginary and construct a certain 'emotional appeal' to populist rhetoric (Kinnvall 2018, 523). OST seems exceptionally suitable to explain the populist *demand* of insecure communities of peoples for simple answers in this seemingly increasingly complex world. Kinnvall argues that next to the rise of (especially far-right) populism and the threat of declining democratic standards, there are underlying tensions and emotional experiences that need to be considered, which are especially well highlighted with OST. Results of austerity politics, neo-liberal governance, and the facing of a post-colonial pasts all require a level of reflexive power on the individual as well as the state level to deal with an unforeseen future of connectivity. Playing cards that are familiar to people are embedded in socially constructed imaginaries. Narratives that are embedded in symbols, memories, myths and heritage, are consequently reproduced by giving them new political significance according to the needs and goals of the populist agenda

(Kinnvall 2018, 525). The imagined past therefore is connected to the status quo, and consequently lays a pathway for the uncertain future, creating the illusion of an eventual ontologically secure state of being an attainable goal. ‘’Nostalgia, in these accounts, becomes a means to guide future action, while constructing an illusion of ontological security in the present’’ (2018, 525). Her article primarily focuses on narratives and discourses that exploit these emotional reactions in connection to postcolonial imaginaries of the populist actors, highlighting how power works through these emotional discourses and narratives.

Brent Steele and Alexandra Homolar, in their following article, cement the empirical suitability of using OST to analyse the rise of (far-right) populism in the EU by reiterating the similar three key elements of populist rhetoric and OST: routines and anxiety, narratives and memory, and crisis and insecurity (B. J. Steele and Homolar 2019). Homolar, in an article written together with Ronny Scholtz, specifically analyses how so-called ‘Trump-Speak’ triggered cognitive biases by using rhetoric that would play into already existing grievances with the American public during Trump’s election campaign, creating a sense of ‘loss of ontological security’ (Homolar and Scholz 2019). This empirical case study connects the aforementioned work of Kinnvall and Steele, arguing that populists exploit certain critical situations (i.e. economic struggles) in order to create imaginary anxieties (i.e. a presumed threat of migration) and perform those as imminent threats (i.e. migrants stealing jobs). The fervent attacks on the supposed inability of other candidates, being part of the elite, frames Trump as the only person capable and willing to protect the populace from these causes of anxiety, highlighting the populist political actor’s hijacking of the securitization process by posing themselves as the only legitimate securitizing actor.

Hence, cross fertilization between the fields of OST, populism, and more importantly; political communication, is paramount to understand the security implications and the pure effectiveness of using crisis narratives in politics. In a sense, populist framing acts as an exhaust for

the political energy generated from anxiety, providing the agent with a sense of direction and purpose by illustrating a scapegoat and a saviour. With the groundwork of Mitzen's 2006 work describing the conceptualization of a political community's psychological and existential needs, a connection can be taken to Ernesto Laclau's definition of populism. He constructs populist political needs as incomplete 'demands' that are not being met by the elite. In Laclau's understanding, these are empty signifiers attached to an emotional connection, on which he subsequently places crisis at the root of populism (Laclau 2005). Tackling populist rhetoric is therefore to understand that populist political frames security needs as unfulfilled demands, moulding the conceived insecurity to harness political power. Therefore, tying into populist insecurity/crisis narratives in speech, Croft and Vaughan-Williams acknowledge this as 'vernacular security', taken from anthropologist Nils Bubandt: ''[..] 'security' should not be limited in use simply to an analytical category, but rather understood as socially situated, and as a discursively defined practice'' (Croft and Vaughan-Williams 2017, 22; Bubandt 2005).

Thus, for the study of populist propagandic narratives and the effects of the spread of that rhetoric, the field of political communication can give great insights because it grants the theoretical underpinnings of the triangulation of populist political actors and their agenda, their audience, and their communication tools. Taking a security issue as an entry point, Jelena Subotić's constructivist perspective of Holocaust remembrance in post-communist Europe is a primary example of empirical evidence highlighting the link between targeted metaphysical narrative weaponization and its powerful physical security consequences. The removal of specific anti-fascist narratives and memories from Holocaust remembrance allows for a ''[..] revival and ideological normalisation of contemporary fascist ideological movements'' (Subotić 2018, 296). Also argued by Kinnvall: ''Here, we can see how recent contexts of sociocultural tensions, such as those produced through the economic and so-called migration crisis in

Europe and accelerated by the ubiquity of mass media and the Internet, have created opportunities for authoritarian and populist leaders to efficiently spread their emotional messages'' (Kinnvall 2018, 536).

Again, these contemporary security issues tie into the aforementioned OST conceptual ideas of trust systems and communities that are perceived as failing to provide security or fill the demands of the community, thereby granting populist rhetoric and identity scapegoating a dangerous combination for weaponization of crisis narratives. Hence, what could be argued that in this nexus between populism, identity politics, and propaganda (understood as the ultimate form of *strategically* channelling persuasive power through political communication) is that the entry point of research needs to take the creation of populist actors' crisis narratives as a security issue in and of itself. In this sense, populism is a particular political communicative style of securitization of the 'people' as referent object (Wojczewski 2020, 6), on which Right-Wing capture identity as threatened vertically by the elite, as well as horizontally by the scapegoat through the failings of the corrupt elite.

In order to understand how populist propaganda operates, important arguments can be taken from extremist propaganda expert Haroro Ingram's article about propaganda during crisis times: ''The intentional and strategic use of visuals (e.g. gestures, pictures, or written word) or aural (e.g. spoken words) communication to influence the opinions and behaviour of a target audience in an effort to achieve politico-military ends during times of conflict'' (Ingram 2016, 6). He further connects the importance of political communication to violent extremists in his 2017 Paris talk where he argued that the strategic logic of violent extremist propaganda is creating 'in-group and out-group' identities, similar to OST's conceptual understanding of the strategic inevitability of dichotomy creation from the perspective of security: ''[..] its audiences to engage in identity-choice decision making, i.e. choices made in accordance with one's identity'' (Ingram 2017, 5). Adding onto this

argument, Ingram recently published an article linking the aforementioned strategies of violent extremist propaganda to influence activities of state's and non-states alike, stepping out of the confines of solely linking propaganda to violent extremists (Ingram 2020). However, when crisis narratives are created (i.e. outside wartimes, in times of relative peace), what does that mean for the strategic definition of propaganda, since this move creates a crisis circle based on vernacular security/self-fulfilling prophecy? This vicious circle is best described in Ruth Wodak's analysis of Right-Wing Populist rhetoric:

> We are therefore confronted by a contingency of factors that serve to facilitate dichotomist perspectives, create scapegoats and play into the hands of Right-Wing populist parties: traditional and new threat scenarios, real and exaggerated crises as well as related horror and moral narratives, real and exaggerated security issues, media reporting that reproduces fear scenarios, and political parties which instrumentalize all these factors to legitimize exclusionary policies (Wodak 2015, 6)

Therefore, the gap in the research on the aforementioned nexus of political populist communication and the Ontological Security Theory is what this thesis aims to fill. Regarding research on populism, OST could provide a theoretical framework to analyse the term 'crisis' analytically, a problem which has divided Populism Studies in two sides, tying either a minimalist or maximalist approach to populism necessitating crisis (Moffitt 2015). Hence, in order to analyse if OST could fill this theoretical vacuum, a security issue will be taken as entry point for study, a similar approach to Subotiç's methodology. This will revolve around analysing the apparent weaponization of ontological insecurities based on identity rhetoric in political communication propaganda spread by Right-Wing populist actors, which subsequently creates and perpetuates crisis narratives.

2. Political Communication and Perceiving Crisis

2.1 Introduction

‘’Who control and have access to media have access to and potential control of public opinion’’ (Manzaria and Bruck 2013). Dubbed ‘the Dune Affect’, the theory asserts the importance of political actors and their relation to tools of political communication. The slow but sure democratization of communication tools and dimensions of political communication thus has a consequent effect on political agenda setting since the introduction of the newspaper. From this perspective, this chapter will focus on these developments, highlighted through the ‘political communication cycle’. By comparing these changes in the political communication technologies and the use of crisis narratives in political agenda setting by various populist groups, this chapter introduces a framework of analysis for political communication strategies. The cycle of increased securitization is analysed by taking apart the components of strategic Right-Wing populist communication: its fear-inducing content based on OST, and its creation of political a specific purpose being fixed in populist narratives by framing themselves as the only solution, and the technological tools used.

In order to construct this framework, the first paragraph will set out Epstein’s Political Communication Cycle, highlighting spaces in this cycle which are especially prone to populist communication strategies. Following, the second paragraph will focus on how political outsiders (whether political actors, social movements, or parties) benefit from technological innovations more than the ruling elite and are thus more inclined to use political communication tactics deviating from the usual. Lastly, a more in-depth analysis of populism as strategic communication in combination with the ontological security framework, cementing the analytical framework used in the case studies of Chapter 3 and 4.

2.2 The Political Communication Cycle

Political communication refers to ‘’[..] the communication strategies, activities, and tools employed by various political actors and organizations’’(Epstein 2018, 6). Political goals have to be discerned and spread to a certain audience by institutions, tools, and people. Whilst the target audience and the tools to spread these messages have changed, the political communication goals have stayed remarkably stable over time; that is the dissemination of information, generating support and maintaining that audience, influencing the public agenda, gathering resources, and most importantly: mobilizing political action (Epstein 2018, 7). In order to understand the various social, political, and technological forces pushing and pulling at this trajectory of political communication strategies, Ben Epstein’s social constructivist framework of the Political Communication Cycle (hereinafter referred to as PCC) offers important perspectives. The PCC framework appoints agency to the political agent as well as the audience with regards to accepting and using new technologies for political communication. Technological innovation and new ICTs do not drive social and political change on their own. Such a process, known as Technological Determinism, is widely criticized for ignoring the agency of the actors and the socio-political setting resulting in instigating a so-called Political Communication Revolution (hereinafter referred to as PCR) where a ‘’lasting and fundamental change in political communication activities that alters the relationship between the sources and audiences of political messages and, in turn, the relationship between political elites and the public’’ (Epstein 2018, 10). One could compare the PCC framework to the constructivist base of the Copenhagen Securitization Theory, referring to the conscious accepting of the speech act of the securitizing actor for the securitization process to be successful. Similar to the Securitization speech act, there is a need for the audience to accept the new technology as a legitimate and sustainable source of political communication. Political actors have a powerful agency to choose their Information Communication Technologies (hereinafter referred to as

ICTs) they deem most effective to reach their political goals. So how and when do political actors choose to innovate the existing Political Communication Order (hereinafter referred to as PCO), instead of using traditional communication tools? In order to answer that question, the PCC highlights three phases in the process of the creation of a new PCO.

2.2.1 Phase I of the PCC: The Technological Imperative

As mentioned, the new invention must fit in the social, political, but also commercial patterns in order to be accepted by the political actor as well as the intended audience. New ICTs only become political viable if political actors make the active choice to adopt this new technological tool and use them in new and innovative ways compared to traditional ICTs. Important to note is that some ICTs have innovated communication in a broad sense, such as the telephone, but were not suitable for political communication, i.e. had no *political viability*, and as such were not chosen by political actors to start nor triggered a PCR. Therefore, there is a two-phased process predating a PCR: a technological stage, followed by a behavioural stage. This social-behavioural stage does not only include the actions performed by the political actors. The target audience is also an active part of the decision-making process. In order for a ICT to become politically viable, a few processes have to happen to the ICT compared to traditional ones: fast diffusion into society, inexpensive to use, convenient to access, and the technology needs to be easily used to reach broad audiences (Epstein 2018, 50). These social developments all influence each other symbiotically, in order to reach a certain 'critical mass' of people that have adopted the ICT that it becomes a viable tool for political actors to use. However, one should also consider the technological developments (hardware/software components, innovations) that have come beforehand in order to create amalgamation of social, political, and technological factors that make the technology successful; i.e. an ICT cluster. The longer this ICT cluster of various technologies has existed, the lower the barrier of use

of the newly introduced ICT will be. This can be due to decreased costs of components or the perceived complexity by audience is reduced. All of these factors play roles in the processes of an ICT becoming *politically* viable. ‘’Evaluating the political viability of ICT’s past and present can help clarify the important distinction between a socially successful communication medium and a politically powerful one’’ (Epstein 2018, 68).

2.2.2 Phase II of the PCC: Political Choice

The second phase of the PCC regards the political choice of a new and innovative ICT being adopted in the communication strategy of the political actor. Again, this shows that the goal of political communication has not changed, rather that the strategies and tools have changed dramatically. Some political actors are more likely to adopt ICTs earlier into their communication strategies than others. This will depend on the actor’s resources and political risk. At play here is the innovators’ dilemma: political actors and organizations with greater financial and technological resources are more likely to innovate earlier than those with fewer of the resources. However, an apparent paradox is revealed; since the bigger ones’ political role in society, the bigger the political risk becomes. Therefore leaving financially and technologically strapped outsiders to more likely adopt and innovate earlier than political actors currently in power (Epstein 2018, 75). Political actors in position of power might have more resources, however they are more likely to continue using the communication technologies and strategies that got them into those positions of power, i.e. more reliant on the traditional media culture of that period. Outsiders do not face the amount of political risk that cemented powers have and are more eager to use those innovations that could possibly disrupt the dominant powers and challenge the existing PCO, possibly triggering a PCR. If successful, this new strategy leaves the dominant powers scrambling to ‘jump on the bandwagon’, albeit having lost the inertial power that the early adopters have profited off. When the new ICT is deemed to be successful, and the political risk of using the new

technology has decreased, more political actors will adopt the ICT into their own communication strategies.

Thus, political challengers also benefit more from innovative of resources in general; that is technology, money, or certain political/personality styles that are not considered to be part of the standard plethora of political behaviour. Borrowing from the PCC theory, political style and charisma therefore also acts as a political resource that fits into a certain PCO, leaving populist actors to theoretically have an advantage by their stylistic form of political communication (Moffitt 2016) (see Figure 1). Where in the radio PCO orating skills were a political asset, now the ability to be a savvy social media user has great political benefits. The style of digital campaigning and communicating one's goals and ideals becomes more important. For instance, Trump has used both positive and negative news coverage as campaign asset, to the point that he has had an estimated 113.2 billion worth of political coverage for free from traditional and non-traditional media (Epstein 2018, 113). Instead of focusing on trying to raise funds from core bases (a traditional main focus of political actors seeking office), his campaign strategy focused more on spreading his fear-based rhetoric as wide as possible. This development highlights the importance of (especially) social media visibility, which one can also gather from his focus on giving events,

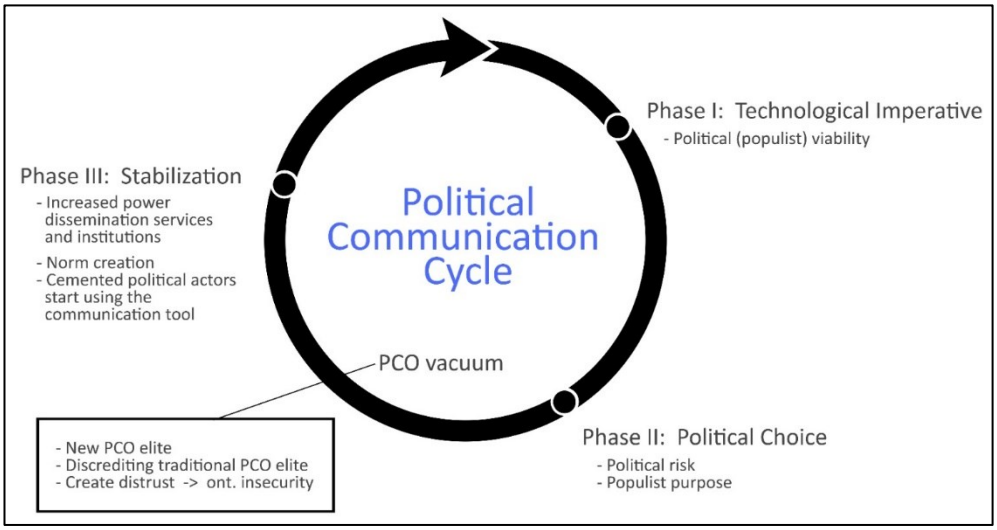

Figure 1. Political Communication Cycle with Populist Political Communication Vulnerabilities

rallies, and TV coverage. Readily accessible clickbait coverage spreading from his widely circulated tweets and public appearances spreading uncertainty and fear through these new technologies was a political asset, not a liability. In a sense, it was exactly his affinity with TV as a celebrity that gave him the tools to appeal to so many people.

2.2.3 Phase III of the PCC: Stabilization

The third phase in the PCC involves the following stabilization period, namely the PCR evolving into the new stable PCO. In this period, the once considered innovative ICT has penetrated in society in such a way that it has been normalized as a political communication technology. Because of this development, the building of norms, institutions, and regulations fixates the newly established status quo, cementing the new PCO into place of the PCO (Epstein 2018, 159). One should note that this does not suggest that the new ICT has lost any political or communicative power, yet they are now normalized and considered ‘mundane’ tools. Furthermore, since the media landscape is an inherently hybrid system of different technologies shaping political communication (Chadwick 2013), more traditional ICTs are not necessarily replaced by these new technologies as they might simply offer a different political communication experience. For instance, newspapers are still a very traditional source of political news. So, whilst those cemented information hegemons are also making use of new Social Media platforms, newspapers and Television remain an integral part of the media environment. There are various ways in which normative change can be observed with regards to the acceptance of ICTs: a widespread imitation of the political communication innovation, successfully achieve long-standing political communication goals (i.e. more efficient and effective), and the standardization of these once innovative activities. One of the key characteristics of a stable Political Communication Order is information

dissemination bodies creating norms and values regarding the use of the new ICT.

2.3 The Four Political Communication Orders (PCOs)

Throughout the course of modern history, society has broadly experienced four Political Communication Cycles, all with different target audiences and ICTs. Every new PCO has political leaders, movements, and organizations taking advantage of the medium, with certain ICTs characterizing the political media environment of that period (radio, tv, internet, social media). In order to understand the connection between emerging technologies and their influence on political actor's effective political communication strategy, the four PCCs will be discussed with case studies of political outsiders' use of the technology to trigger ontological insecurities to highlight the nexus between the technology, social environments of that time, and the political actor's style of communication. Social movements active in the accompanying PCO are illustrative to highlight how political outsiders use innovative political communicative strategies with populist roots, to express their grievances. As has been argued; the goal of political communication has not really changed dramatically over time, however the tools and styles have been subjected to significant changes accordingly.

2.3.1 The Elite and Mass PCO

The first political communication order has been named 'the Elite PCO', typified as the pre-radio era of political communication. The Elite PCO is characterized by localized order of information sharing, with most of the political communication being conducted at face-to-face level. Political communication that was not being done face-to-face, was exclusively done through print, with newspapers taking the biggest role as communication technology. Taking the Dune Affect Theory, this PCOs technology and communication source were primarily owned by a small elite existing of political and business insiders, organizations, and a small group of editors controlling the flow of information targeted towards ''an economically and politically elite audience'' (Epstein 2018,

11). Therefore, the information shared was highly selective and framed specifically for this elite voter base, since those people were the ones shaping the political domain. For instance, in the USA during this PCO, newspapers were used as propaganda tools against British influence over the colonies by stoking anti-British aggression throughout the revolutionary era (Epstein 2018, 31).

The PCO that followed is dubbed ‘Mass’ PCO, which was partly caused by declining cost of printing and distribution due to technological advances in printing, declining of costs of paper, and governmental changes in the structuring of postal systems. What should be noted that this development occurred parallel to socio-political developments such as increasing literacy rates of the general population and expanding suffrage rights, thereby increasing the demand for more political information and a growing target audience of framed political messages since the voter base has grown. Technological innovations assist this broadened audience to fit the socio-political environment. With the decrease of costs of printing and distribution, a wide range of new newspapers were created. Therefore, the difference with Elite PCO is that these new sources of political communication and the changed audience made it more attractive to political actors and the publishers to use the political communication medium for a new purpose; namely as a mass political medium. Political viability is shaped by these advancements, caused by the change in technological and socio-political environments. The active choice of the political agents and the political communication distributers to play into this new development is eventually what causes the new PCR to happen. Therefore, this new PCO catalysed the need for experts in public relations: [..] the full scale effort to control what facts reached the journalists, and in turn the public, began’’ (Berkman and Kitch 1986, 25), resulting in the eventual stabilization of the Mass PCO with the creation of appropriate dissemination institutions handling this new ICTs information steam, and norms and values regarding the use of this new tool. Populist political outsiders benefitted from the printing

boom. Notoriously, the Klux Klan benefitted from these new inventions by creating various printing and radio stations on their own to spread propaganda, an angle that will be further excavated in Chapter 3.

2.3.2 Broadcast PCO: The Civil Rights Movement

The third PCO was caused by the introduction of the radio, subsequently dubbed the Broadcast PCO. During WWI, radio technology skyrocketed due to the War Effort, making the technology cheaper and available to more households than ever before after the War ended. Due to the nature of communication of the radio, this PCO was typified with more personal and interactive information sharing styles between the political elite and the population. For instance, when president Coolidge made the first ever use of radio as a means of political communication to address the public, people were truly experiencing their presidents' words ''[..] not as embalmed text, but as living things while he was in the very act of speaking them'' (Epstein 2018, 39–40). The spoken word as means of communication untangled themselves from physical boundaries and could be propagated into every space with a radio. The second layer of disseminators, editors and journalists that were first filter in the newspaper communication line, increased the need for professionals on media expertise and image-based politics since there was no human barrier or filter between the elite's intended political message and the audience. With this newly established intimate relationship the political elite could have with its audience, television consequently added sight as a new dimension, necessitating professionals knowledgeable on visual aspects such as presenting and body language. However, it should be noted that some political communication tools penetrate certain communities different than others. The relationship between the political actor, the ICT, and the audience is therefore pertinent to its success. The broadcast media PCO solidified the power of the political communication layer between the elite and the population. By relying on their public importance and being cemented as one of the pillars of democracy, this development opened up more space and freedom for checks and balances. The

communication tools became more democratized, both stepping away from the ‘one-way-street’ characteristic of the Elite PCO, and the broader reach and penetration of narratives into society compared to the mass PCO with the introduction of radio and tv.

During this time, social movements were also benefitting from these innovative technologies exponentially democratizing political communication. Social movements are considered to be grassroots in nature, and are conducted by political outsiders who don’t have access to political decision makers or much influence on political discourse (Epstein 2018, 118). The most important goals of political communication by social movements hence are: attracting new recruits, sustain morale and commitment of current supporters, generate media coverage, mobilize support of ‘bystander publics’, constrain the social control of its opponents, and shape public policy and state action (McAdam 1982). Hence, social movements are inherently inclined to rely on populist rhetoric, highlighting the connection between the societal repression of agency and the elite that does not provide help. Populism therefore centres around communication (de Vreese et al. 2018, 425–26), and specifically the *use* of communication. ‘’Movement activists share a sense of grievance and believe their common ills are caused by systematic inequalities or injustices’’ (Epstein 2018, 118). Especially concerning minority rights, people were able to spread their message to a wider audience than ever before. With the introduction of television news and broadcast, these movements could propagate their experience strengthened by triggering visuals. What pictures and sound could not describe, video could. Here framing was used to achieve both positive and negative news coverage, to ‘’[..] capture the attention of the media and overcome political asymmetries’’ (Wasow 2020, 1). Media outlets created by the activists themselves dwindled in number as their readership and messages were amplified, and modified, by the mainstream radio, newspapers, and television. ‘’Movement organizations require resources, though these resources are rarely

defined, and emotion and frustration are not enough to create a movement on their own'' (Jenkins 1983). This form of free news coverage therefore sidestepped the elitist hurdles of both the Mass and Elite PCO's, where now social movements could funnel, express, and show their story to a mass audience without subscription barriers. Minority political communication strategies are purposefully framed to appeal favourably towards a majority-oriented press (Stephan and Chenoweth 2008). These developments also show the intersection between the media power balance, audience reach, and political viability of new technologies. Such intersections necessitate a catalyst of societal, political, and technological developments for political energy to be transformed into a disruptive power challenging the status quo.

When taking the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s as an example, nonviolent civil disobedience being met with extreme violence from the state police, the mainstream media issues frames favourably towards the activists. Wasow coins the term 'agenda seeding', which ''[..] recognizes elite dominance of political communication but focuses on the ability of activists to overcome asymmetries through tactics like disruption that appeal to news organizations and shape whether and how media cover their concerns'' (Wasow 2020, 4). With the introduction of lightweight cameras and Television starting to be a living room staple, the visuals of peaceful protesters being violently repressed were met with great distain from the elite and the mass public, subsequently favouring the minority-initiated agenda (Wasow 2020, 1). The creation of innovative political communication tactics by social movements did achieve major political goals such as the Civil Rights Movement's end in 1968 with the passing of several major policy reforms. Thus, the manipulation of major newspapers and broadcast coverage through the creation of media events and framing of issues was an essential tool for activists in historical social movements. Outsiders are more likely to innovate, however without some substantial influence over political communication sources on a

society-wide scale, it makes it almost impossible to achieve political victories on their own.

2.3.3 The Information PCO: Black Lives Matter Movement

The most recent PCR triggered the Information PCO, which started in the mid-90s. This PCO characterizes itself with an ever-increasing number of communicative tools to express one's ideas, thoughts, and opinions. With the introduction of the Internet in the mid-90s, the general population was given the power to attract and retain an audience regardless of any previous constraints such as physical location, subscriptions, or a high barrier of technological resources. Declining prices for technological tools and free platforms (such as YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook) have significantly lowered the barriers to achieve one's communicative goal without as much resources as previous PCOs required. This new infrastructure, combined with increasing levels of households owning a computer, and eventually mobile phones with internet connectivity led to an exponential increase of private use of the internet. This development caused political actors to experiment with this new communication tool. Creating websites and publishing online became a communication tool to display and propagate ones' ideas, increase political action, and attract resources such as funding. Whilst still a rather 'one way street' of communication, relatively similar compared to previous PCOs where one has the political elite and the dissemination and distribution layer providing selected information, this changed when more and more new uses of the internet were added, especially with introduction of Social Media. ''This new PCO offers more interactive, flexible, and multidimensional tools than any other prior order and has redefined the boundaries of political communication for actors at all levels of the American political landscape over the past twenty-five years'' (Epstein 2018, 12). The contemporary Information PCO is still in the midst of the stabilization period, with norms and institutions being created to manage its use. As the standardization of mobile broadband increases, it will continue to cause the further decentralization of communicative

power. Hence, the barrier of influencing public opinion is lowered. As demonstrated by the Dune Affect Theory; a power which was once limited to those with access to the tools and resources necessary for producing and spreading political communication goals is now being democratized.

To take a current example of social movements using the new ICTs brought by this information PCO, the Black Lives Matter Movement of May 2020 uses the same minority initiated agenda-setting communicative strategies as has been described with the Civil Rights Movement. Again, to use Wasow's model of 'agenda seeding,' activists use their phones to share events of police brutality immediately online, garnering widespread support and news coverage. Using hashtags such as #BlackLivesMatter and #BlackOutTuesday people can easily find information, funding, protesting tips, and tactics often shared and picked up from other protests such as the Hong Kong protests (Groundwater 2020). Most strikingly, in 2014 deliberate parallels between Hong Kong Protests and the Ferguson Protests could be seen when both movements used similar protest tactics using umbrellas as shields, 'Hands-Up gestures' signifying innocence and non-violence, and 'I can't breathe' slogan illustrating US' police violence or Chinese state repression respectively (Mina 2019, 2–3). Spurring global political action from the connectivity provided by digital platforms in these numbers would have been almost unthinkable in the previous PCOs. With the enormous amount of visual evidence of police brutality against protesters, it is no surprise that the videos have spread all over the world and led to worldwide movements of digitally communicated solidarity. However, this assumption should be relativized by the difference in PCO's and today's communicative reach by comparing social movements over time, such as Black Lives Matter, Civil Rights Movements, Anti-Vietnam Protest, Women's March, since all of these movements have gathered global attention and action. One should again note that the political communication goal has not changed,

however the mode of production and penetration into societies globally has increased significantly, making it easier to share sentiments.

2.4 Far-Right Populist Communicative Strategies and OST in a Stabilizing PCO

The status quo of the Information PCO shows that there are still a lot of norms and organizational structures that need to be developed to act as this dissemination layer, in order for the Information PCO to fully stabilize. This development lays a heavy burden on the dissemination layer of political communication: journalists and other print and broadcast media. ‘’The media plays a central role in informing the public about what happens in the world, particularly in those area in which audiences do not possess direct knowledge or experience’’ (Happer and Philo 2013, 321). A psychological and cognitive state which Far-Right Populist communicative strategies can exploit. The recent rise of populist and far-right political beliefs has therefore found itself a fruitful base in the new information PCO. Right-Wing populist actors have also exploited certain characteristics of the Information PCO, just like the aforementioned social movements. One should note that these populist Right-Wing tactics are not necessarily characterizing the Information PCO only, as will be highlighted in the next chapter’s case study of the Second KKK. However, the strategic communication tactics have increased in spread and penetration into society in the new information PCO due to new technological developments and decrease of informational barriers.

Three main developments characterising the start of the Information PCO will be discussed that are at the nexus of the tension between technological development and political communication. First, analysed through the PCC framework, one can gather that because of the democratization of the Dune Affect is that a new ‘(online) elite’ that has emerged. An effect due to the declining barriers of engagement in political communication and the policy mercy of Tech conglomerates. As an inevitable symptom of the still stabilizing PCO, these platforms do not (yet) have oversight structures and scrutinizing dissemination

institutions like TV, Radio, and Newspapers eventually had to oblige to. Secondly, as a political populist strategy, they often actively undermine the OST trust systems of the democratic system, such as governmental actors, but also traditional media dissemination organizations such as news channels or newspapers. This populist strategy opens up space for alternative sources of news, where conspiracy theories and fake news just perpetuates the circle of uncertainty and anxiety. Thirdly, the perspective that OST offers is that the use of fear-tactics spread by online political communication sources abuse these psychological states by triggering ontological insecurity, legitimizing the securitization of the perceived threat often personified in the 'out-group'. Specifically, the continuation and the artificial enlargement of the uncertainty and anxiety is part of their political strategy.

2.4.1 New (Online) PCO Elite

As described by the Dune Affect and the various PCOs as highlighted in the previous paragraphs, the flow of information from elite to public is strained and filtered. The number of experts and individuals, both public and private, concerning themselves with fields such as Public Relations and lobbying show the importance of containing and mediating the information flow. The Information PCO has just exponentially increased the demand for this expertise; more information equals more need for control. Three facets characterising the developmental stage of the Information PCO's elite will be discussed: the rise of technology conglomerates, merging of political communication and media consumerism, and the rise of a new online influencer elite.

First, companies like Facebook, Apple, and Google have grown increasingly powerful in terms of their dominance over the information we see. Additionally, the public is moving more toward a mobile, app-mediated information flow, which means that the choices these content producers and vessels of political communication play an increasingly important framing role. With their increasing power, technology firms are an important part of the PCO, something that political actors do not

ignore. This relationship between Tech companies and the political elite is self-serving to say the least:

> We find that technology firms are motivated to work in the political space for marketing, advertising revenue, and relationship-building in the service of lobbying efforts. To facilitate this, these firms have developed organizational structures and staffing patterns that accord with the partisan nature of American politics. Furthermore, Facebook, Twitter, and Google go beyond promoting their services and facilitating digital advertising buys, actively shaping campaign communication through their close collaboration with political staffers (Kreiss and Mcgregor 2018, 155).

With these companies acting as distribution channels for news as well as consultants, the Tech firms' incentives regarding dealing with politics is flawed and biased to begin with. This development does a disservice to the traditional media's goal of informing the public about political behaviour to ensure a smooth democratic voting process.

Secondly, there is an increasing level of infusion of political communication and media consumerism, where commercial algorithms distribute political news according to preference and political targeting. By both providing a platform to display political news as well as the technological infrastructure necessary for its use, these sources of information subsequently meld public utility and private power together. ''If the news industry (or possibly even the Trump campaign) offers any foreshadowing, we might be on the precipice of something akin to click-bait campaign ads, where the technological ability and incentive to monetize engagement by both firms and campaigns leads to increasingly sensationalized and targeted political communication'' (Kreiss and Mcgregor 2018, 173). Scandals such as Cambridge Analytica illustrate the political consequences of these developments. This nexus of being serving both a public democratic service as well as capitalist interests seems to be inherently paradoxical. Filter bubbles,

echo-chambers, and datamining are developments that stem from the concept of tailoring a certain online experience to each user. When this process includes political news, social media information or apps specifically made for mobile phones will give an increasingly filtered political world. Furthermore, where traditional media dissemination organizations used to logistically be dependent on the distribution of newspapers, now they have to use the vessels of PC of tech companies. ‘’These digital intermediaries can change their platforms on a whim to suit their own interests, forcing news media organizations to adapt to what can amount to a radically changed distribution environment. This fundamental dependence on digital intermediaries for distribution is an important source of the power of these technology firms to create structures of communication’’ (Kreiss and Mcgregor 2018, 158). The current PCO does not yet have fully cemented information dissemination structures and accompanying norms and value systems that contain these new sources of political information and illustrates that this PCO is still in the process of stabilizing.

Thirdly, as mobile broadband becomes more standard, it will continue to decentralize power and offer new ways to share ideas, organize, and reach people, thus lowering the barrier to influence that was once limited to those in the Elite political spheres of those with access to the sources of broadcast and print production. Whether it is individuals creating online Men’s Rights forums, Alex Jones’ online presence spreading fake news, YouTube Channels highlighting Queer representation in the media, Greta Thunberg starting a worldwide School Strike asking for political action against climate change, or the online #MeToo movement leading to an offline global march. Evident of these formative societal reactions is that they are no longer tied to a network of people tied to a specific place, but that they are bounded by interests, an effect outlined by the theory of networked individualism (Rainie and Wellman 2012). It is exactly what is done with these online spaces and niches that decides its effect on society. One cannot deny the effect that the new Information PCO has had in the power of these

individuals or organizations, and if they would have had the same political power if they had not had the tools this PCO offers.

2.4.2 Active Discrediting of (Democratic) Trust Systems: Attacking Traditional Political Communication Hegemons

The disseminative 'control' layer of traditional journalism has lost relative power- being tied to the ICTs of the broadcast PCO-, people are now able to have a platform to securitize issues themselves. This does not mean that traditional media sources decide what people should think, however they have tremendous agenda shaping power. People find themselves living in a rapidly moving and increasingly complex world. Proper analysation and dissemination of information provided is key to present people with shortcuts, classifications, and succinct explanations for the status quo. People do not have the time, energy, nor the capacity to be able to process the enormous amount of information produced and presented information that media nowadays offers (Cialdini 2001). Hence there is a heavy reliance on people, organizations, and institutions doing the dissemination for us, relying on stereotyping, rules of thumb, and classifications based on certain features. According to these classifications, which will therefore depend on the dissemination institution people are provided with a set of key notions to which they can respond to events when these features are triggered (Manzaria and Bruck 2013; Cialdini 2001, 6). Granted, the dissemination organization's practices of reinforcement of societal myths and prevailing stereotypes are heavily dependent its level of embedment in culture.

Thus, downplaying or purposefully discrediting the importance of media organizations inherently causes uncertainty since such systems are sources of trust. The narratives circulating in extreme Right-Wing spheres framing newspapers and 'mainstream media' as corrupt and discrediting their legitimacy provides a window of political opportunity. By delegitimizing the cemented ICTs integral to former PCOs (newspapers, radio, and TV), and providing new alternative sources of media consumption that support their political agenda. Through this

strategy, democratic trust systems and relations between media organization and political institutions, cemented through the stabilization of previous PCOs, are actively undermined by populist rhetoric. Taking the Dune Affect's power to the furthest extent; they have created a space of uncertainty wide enough to take charge of news and shaping public opinion. To reiterate the OST's take on loss of trust systems in one's routine; the generated anxiety causes people to seek more information, both qualitatively as well as quantitatively, to subdue the negative emotional state tied to the anxiety felt (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008). When consequently faced with fake information, it is far more likely for people to accept that information, even though it might come from an unusual source. The need for easy explanations to subdue uncertainty might be greater than confronting the legitimacy of the source of anxiety. Again, this is a strategic psychological space that has opened up which could be hijacked and continually perpetuated by populist fear-rhetoric.

2.5 The Perpetuum Mobile of Populist Fear Rhetoric

But what exactly explains why populist fear rhetoric is such a popular theme in extremist political actor's repertoire, and why do people accept these new forms of political communication being more overtly based on mythmaking and distrust? Insights into this political communication strategy are provided by various research efforts in psychology, which suggests that ''[..] fear cues in political messages decrease people's reliance on partisan habits and increase people's openness to new information'' (Scheller 2019, 586). This is expressed in the *bounded confidence model,* highlighting that when fear rhetoric as a strategy are being used in political communication, people's 'confidence bounds' widen and they become more inclined to consider politically distant opinions to their own (Hegselmann and Krause 2002). The model suggests that extremist parties appealing to fear as a tactic could thus lead to increased support. However, this is a politically risky choice. As the PCC model highlights, established parties will not rely on these tactics unless they see clear political gains to be taken, often

demonstrated by the innovators of political outsiders. Smaller parties are thus more inclined to use these tactics since there is less political risk attached for them. This symbiotic relationship between the political establishment and outsiders could be attributed to political product comparison, where extremist parties situate themselves completely differently compared to 'the corrupt elite' whilst proudly propagating this as their asset (Kitschelt and McGann 1997). It is therefore not the content of the message they are spreading, but the fact that they are not the established elite, highlighting the populist rhetoric. ''[..] the party should aim at splitting the in-between-group away from the rest of the population's influence. This requires taking a position that is clearly distinct from other groups, or alternatively: to move very close to the moderate cluster so that they easily become influenced by the party themselves. Never should a party carry out either of those strategies half-heartedly, as this is more likely to lead to core voters being led away from the party without gaining influence over any other groups'' (Scheller 2019, 601). Basing themselves on this created divide between 'us' and 'them', using fear rhetoric is a powerful tool to attract undecided, centrist, and fringe voters, building on the illusion that they are the only politically right choice with this populist divide and conquer strategy.

With regards to the use of fear as a political strategy, as explained by the Gidden's approach to Ontological Security, anxiety and fear are a powerful emotionally-inducing response especially when it is based on a supposed existential threat to ones' identity, where the divide and conquer strategy transcends the populist 'elite' level to the societal level to create scapegoats, and consequently another 'us' and 'them' dichotomy. Where populism lays the groundwork for uncertainty and distrust in traditional pillars of democracy, fear rhetoric is the catalyst for securitization; a gateway for populist political actors. Developments such as the rising spread of conspiracy theories play into this trend where fear can cause people to be more open to new information. ''These findings trace back to anxiety's evolutionary purpose of

detecting one's environment, breaking the individual out of her routine behaviour, and inducing an immediate focus of all cognitive resources on the imminent threat'' (Scheller 2019, 588; Marcus 2000, 28, 53). The environment detected by an individual is being 'derealized' through information such as conspiracy theories and myth building, of which consequently populist messages are constructed to form a 'saviour' personified (whether a party, organization, or individual), carefully constructing an image that does not belong in the 'normal' routine/political positions.

Once this routine is broken, the process of securitization of the built myth accelerates and legitimates the abnormal political decisions and behaviour of the party/person/organization. Eventually, this could lead to a shift in the Overton Window, meaning that these behaviours and decisions are slowly being normalized, maybe even used by cemented political actors (Amis 2018). Thus, especially political agents such as centrist parties, have a duty to distance themselves from extreme rhetoric. According to the Bounded Confidence Model: ''While many centrist parties have tried to clearly distance themselves from more extremist parties, it seems that at least to some extent, they should aim at reducing ideological distances instead. One might regard this as ideological weakness, yet according to the model's logic, this may constitute a strategic move that builds bridges for otherwise undecided middle-ground voters'' (Scheller 2019, 603). Rejecting the use of similar rhetoric and discourse political communication strategies as spread by Right-Wing populist actors combined with reiterating the ideological similarities of party/organizational standpoints might pull undecided voters away from extremist alternatives, thereby forcing extreme political agents in either isolation or moderation.

3. The Spike of Right-Wing Populism in 1920s US: The Second KKK

3.1 Introduction

So, how are these aforementioned communication tactics revolving around fear-rhetoric and populist narratives used to garner political support? The aforementioned political tactics are not limited to the Information PCO, since political actors, especially outsiders, have tried to political communication tools to maximize their influence. When a PCO is in the midst of stabilization, the proper dissemination institutions and proper norms missing in order to control the use of the new ICTs. Thus, in order to prove the historical empirical applicability of the proposed research framework of the PCC, OST, and populism, this chapter will analyse how the Second KKK appropriated newly introduced ICTs in the Mass PCO to spread their propaganda. With the KKK being considered one of the biggest social movements of American history (Selepak and Sutherland 2012, 80), the second KKK wave was unprecedented in its sheer propagandic power and volume. Having experienced several waves, they have always responded to the current socio-political affairs of the time. Presenting themselves as a social movement thereby captures the importance of analysing the KKK as a case study in light of answering the posed research question, since their propaganda and political rhetoric revolved around the creation of a perceived threat to their identity as a non-institutionalized movement. Tying their identity to nationalist and patriotic rhetoric, they cemented and legitimated their experience as the universal American experience. Exactly because the KKK felt like their needs were not represented and protected by the perceived elite, they reacted to the socio-political environment with propaganda based on populist fear-rhetoric, instigating and triggering people to join and protect their perceived identity signifiers. Analysing the rhetoric spread by the KKK during the 20s through OST can therefore grant perspective into the effectiveness of the political communication strategies adopted during that period.

Acknowledged is that there is an overlap between populist communication strategies and fear rhetoric, since they legitimize and strengthen each other, but they will be analysed separately to highlight the different functions they fulfil in the propagandic tactics. A two-pronged political communication strategy is noticeable. First, anxiety is created and sustained through content based on identity and fear-rhetoric. Set in both physical and metaphysical signifiers based on routines, memories, and narratives. By securitizing itself into an existential threat to the set identity and tied routines, this development increases need for quick action, a gateway to populism. The second layer regards populist rhetoric creating a political purpose, where the political actor uses anti-establishment narratives and discrediting of traditional PCO to, portraying themselves as the only legitimate political actor. This development is met with other tactics undermining pillars of democracy: fake news, alternative sources, spread of conspiracy theories; all under the guise for the protection of this myth of 'us'.

This chapter will start with the description of the historical background of the rise of the Second Klan, to understand the societal context and motive by which the 'social movement' reacted to. Following this empirical illustration, an analysis of strategic political communication through the lens of OST will be given, to highlight first layer of the propagandic tactics: the core characteristic of the propagandic content based on the identarian dichotomy creation. Thirdly, the second layer of populist communicative tactics will be highlighted to illustrate how this rhetoric shaped a political purpose for people, by undermining the democratic pillars such as press and the ruling elite, i.e. reactionary populism. Lastly, a more general application of these core themes will be given, to illustrate how the tactics and discourse of the KKK in the 1920s did not operate in a vacuum.

3.2 Context and Motive: Historical Background of the Rise of the Second Klan

Against the backdrop of the end of the First World War, a lot changed in America that disrupted the 'normal' order of assumptions that

millions of small holding white men had constructed their reality on. These changes ran perpendicular to their identity (i.e. white middle-class men); with Black Americans fighting for their rights in nationwide race riots, working class Americans walking off to go on strikes, and with women winning their long-fought battle for the right to vote (MacLean 1994, 23). Finally, next to identity signifiers of white middle-class men being challenged, big global governance changes were made by the creation of the League of Nations, fostering more feelings of being unsupported by the democratic institutions. Or as argued by Maclean: ‘’[..] the levers of power moved farther from the hands of non-elite white men than ever before’’ (1994, 23). An observing middle-class white man therefore perceived the nightmare of the founding fathers come true: economic inequality increasing with a corrupt elite accruing power from above, with the populace being filled the ‘others’ fighting for more. All the while ‘normal American’ voices are being stifled in the chaos, which decreased the confidence of white Americans in the government as security provider (1994, 47). The inherent entitlement to self-fulfilment and self-sovereignty as described in the Declaration of Independence’s self-evident Truths: ‘’[..] that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness’’ (Jefferson 1776), was seemed as to be not as guaranteed anymore. With relative individual sovereign power relations shifting to other demographics (i.e. women and Black people), and corporate power shifting from regional/national settings to global and international levels, maintaining authority over the constructed future path set out is being threatened by both people from higher up and lower on the social class ladder. The societal unrest among African Americans from the beginning of the 20th century onwards was a tipping point, with African Americans fighting en masse against their white assailants. Underscoring the already existing paranoia of a ‘Black rebellion’, the newly formed FBI had already performed investigations into gun ownership of Black Americans, feeding the panic of white supremacists even more (MacLean 1994, 29). With regards to

traditional gender structures, women being admitted to universities and divorces spiking in the 1920s, destabilized the hierarchies that white men have derived their own security from for years. The insubordination towards the ‘old masters’ created the grounds of a new social order, but were perceived as undercutting discipline, creating chaos, and most important: the evisceration of predictability.

3.3 OST Content: Identarian Dichotomic Political Communication of the KKK

Based on these aforementioned societal shifts, populist and identity-based rhetoric found itself being applied to a fruitful base. By projecting all (or most) undesirable attributes as stigma properties onto the excluded outsider, the established group can create an image of relative sovereignty and simulate possessing a fuller, superior humanity (Zarakol 2011, 71). As described by the Ontological Security Theory, this dichotomy can create a level of certainty and hence a perceived agency over the unpredictable future, whilst also strengthening in-group identity and legitimacy by creating a scapegoat; a dangerous outsider. Anxiety is therefore regarded as sense of uncertainty and unease over something that cannot be identified, which impacts the way one navigates the world (B. J. Steele and Homolar 2019, 215). Therefore, one seeks for a physical relief in routines, and mnemonic/psychological relief in constructed narratives and memories, where one can establish a reassuring and manageable pattern in the otherwise chaotic world.

3.3.1 Roles and Routines

Certain characteristics that were adopted and/or tried to maintain during this period in order to retain a certain sense of the chaos were traditionalist and conservative roles and performances. An explanation can be given that the ‘’[..] radical doubt and reflexivity central to modernity (that is the changing American social landscape) can result in ‘the looming threat of personal meaninglessness’’’ (Giddens 1991, 201), which results in a in ‘’[..] a resurgence in the appeal of religion and tradition – those systems of meaning precisely challenged by

modernity – as a means of reclaiming a sense of purpose'' (Browning and Joenniemi 2017, 44; Giddens 1991, 201–8). Routines that are recovered or maintained are subjective 'traditionalist' in nature (from the white, middleclass, man's perspective), whether its gender, religion, race, politics, or economics. These routines are therefore translated into the naturalization and performance of social hierarchies and their roles since this provides a feeling of social stability. In other words, hierarchies based on subjective social identifiers are naturalized, thereby creating space for the legitimation of a securitization process on these identity signifiers. With regards to the statist hierarchical boundaries, gender and race are social demographics that are easily visualized and imagined, by which changes in those demographics can visually be seen as anxiety creating force.

Thus, in order to fully understand the physical portrayal and routinized behaviour, and the fetishization of adhering to traditional hierarchies in the KKK, one needs to analyse the KKK with a gendered lens, since the statist boundaries set up are heavily gendered. ''Klansmen could not discuss issues of race, class, or state power apart from their understanding of manhood, womanhood, and sexual decorum. This fusion of private and public imparted to Klan prejudices much of their peculiar force'' (MacLean 1994, xii). The Klan saw itself as a social movement, not extremist, convinced that they were representing the views of the 'true Americans' (Protestant, white, nuclear families) and to be defending those generalized structures from outside threats. The KKK framed themselves as propagators for gender equality, but only in the existing hierarchies proposed by the traditional nuclear family. In other words, men and women were equally considered a rightful KKK member, if still adhering to the KKK doctrine of having different roles and responsibilities attached to each gender, 'equal but different'. By framing themselves that way, their political agenda can be seen as 'socially moral', and in clear defence of their own values. Anything outside those routinized structures enables anxiety to quickly form ground whenever one encounters a situation which challenges these boundaries. A level of control over ones live is considered to be only

achievable when taking these dichotomies and social structures as biologically programmed and ‘natural’.

In order to create a stable hierarchy, boundaries and routines become more rigid and fixed (Mitzen 2006). So as the anxiety against social change grew, the rigidity of the boundaries grew as well. This rigidity in hierarchies was strengthened with an appeal and affinity to masculine militaristic hierarchies, combining the crisis narratives with routines based on internal hierarchies and obedience.

> Enthralled with martial rank, prestige, and custom, militarists exalt "caste and cult, authority and belief. [..] The principal exponents of modern militarism have not been military men, but civilians disenchanted with the banalities of bourgeois politics and the quest for material gain, yet also inimical to liberalism, labour, and the Left. For inspiration, they have looked to the ceremony, discipline, and mystical nationalism of militarism, through which they expressed their desires for a society organized along corresponding lines (MacLean 1994, 21).

It can be argued that the rigidity and familiarity of military regimes might conceive a feeling of a stable societal structure, with militarism being associated with protection, one that they perceived the ruling elite did not offer against their anxieties. An example which these hierarchies and routines transcended to the KKK members visually presenting themselves to the public in elaborate ceremonies in which they wore their masks and white uniforms, to create a certain homogenous ‘army’ of anonymised warriors protecting the ‘true American morals’. Even more telling, in order to be admitted to the KKK, one is first considered ‘an alien’, who had to be sanitized through a routine of ceremonies to become a naturalized member (MacLean 1994, chap. 21). These martial hierarchies led to a large numbers of Law Enforcement personnel and military members joining the Klan. Focus on rigidly categorizing people is not limited to outsider and insider. Outsiders are being painted with the same brush, conceived as ‘just being inherently

bad and alien'; other categories do not matter. The categorization inside the group is more extensive, where age, gender, ethnicity etc. determines what 'functions' and roles one has in the Klan. These physical roles and visual metaphors for the in- and out groups and the internal hierarchies created added to the dichotomic thinking are at the core of the identity-security nexus, as: ''[..] these bonds also steeled them for battle against "alien forces"'' (Maclean 1994, 22).

3.3.2 Memories and Imaginary Narratives

If one imagines hierarchies and roles as a drawing's outlines, narratives and memories are used to the colour in between those lines. Narratives shape a stable self-perception, due to the discord between us and them. According to OST, this self-perception is projected through time and space, particularly through the securitization of memories ''as a means of making certain historical remembrances secure by delegitimizing or outright criminalizing others'' (Mälksoo 2015, 221). Used as a means to alleviate anxiety; memory, combined with narratives, constructs a form of psychological routine in which comforting past experiences are projected as a comfort for the present and as a ''[..] basis or script for what should be done by the agent or group in the near future'' (B. J. Steele and Homolar 2019, 216). That is, give a clear destiny to fill in the future, making tradition a timeless directional compass. The physicality of hierarchies and roles can be transferred from the present to the now, however the future has to be filled in with mythmaking, and the concept of destiny creates a more urgent need to respect the imagined tradition. Tradition then becomes almost supra-human, starting to exist in the realm of the metaphysical. This results in that neither destiny (tradition in the future) nor tradition itself (which is set in a conceived fictious past) can be challenged with evidence. This is where anxiety tends towards mysticism and conspiracy theories and creates believes of mistruth. As argued:

> And yet, when anxiety re-surfaces, individuals react through both a refastening and rigidifying of their routines and also a

> general resistance to not only experts but expertise itself. Ignorance becomes a coping mechanism, creating an opening for populist rhetoric that portrays the rejection of facts and knowledge as the assertion of autonomy against elites while simultaneously collapsing the distinction between experts and laypeople (B. J. Steele and Homolar 2019, 215).

As a result, memory and imagined narratives are used to further demark the perceived difference of the in and out groups and legitimizes this process through ideas of ‘destiny’ and ‘moral code’ of security. Memory and narratives are therefore psychological tools of mythmaking in order to ‘fill in the gaps’ that the physical world of roles of hierarchy and the performance of tradition leave.

The appeal to the form of politics used by the KKK was deeply rooted within American society and culture: in the legions of middle-class white men who felt trapped between capital and labour and in the political culture they inherited from their forefathers. Fearful for the future, Klan leaders drew from narratives already existing in American politics to fashion an ideology that would enable them to hold on to their basic values, make sense of rapidly changing social relations, and fend off challenges to their power status (MacLean 1994, xiii–xiv). Therefore, they retreated back to classical American values, and not contradicting it, but modifying and extending the subconscious notions already set in American life. Hence: ‘’Ontological security does not presuppose a threat to identity but underlines an ongoing concern with its stability’’ (Browning and Joenniemi 2017, 38; Rumelili 2015). Therefore, securitization of hierarchies and social structures becomes a tool of creating ontological security for a certain political agenda. From a discourse perspective, Ruth Wodak coins the term ‘mythopoesis’, the creation of a fictive myth, which can be used in the process of ‘othering’ (Wodak 2015, 7). Gender and race were used as appropriate categories to organize a proper hierarchy to structure society by, based on imaginaries of masculinity and white supremacy. As Maclean argues:

> Through its construction of ties based on images of masculinity and craftsmanship, the mixed class, all-male American fraternal order worked to deny the significance of class difference and t offer gender and race as appropriate categories for the organization of collective identity. Class is therefore not seen as the structure dividing people, but the imagined ‘’natural’’ lines of race, sex, and age are chosen to explain ‘what had gone wrong in the world’ (MacLean 1994, 74).

Since the routinal hierarchy envisioned by the KKK to be the perfect societal formula revolved around the fictious memory of a white, protestant, patriotic, nuclear family, the rhetoric that was adopted by the KKK was used to boost that image.

Where the in-group, the supposed ‘us’, forms itself over its perceived homogeneity, out-groups are portrayed as multiple ‘thems’ unified over its ‘otherness from us’ (Wodak 2018). For instance, the imaginary narratives that shaped the perception of the alien/out-group, other religions, such as Catholics, Jews, Greek and Russian orthodox people, are never able to be patriotic Americans because they owed loyalty to other (foreign) powers (pope/ bankers/communism). Using broad strokes of generalisation, immigrants were included in the perceived plot as being sent by the pope with instructions, live incognito until ‘signal’ was given by pope. A focus on the purity/unclean dichotomy is also widely used. People who are regarded as ‘unclean’ are more easily perceived the out-group, threatening, less trustworthy, and could carry diseases or problems that would impact the security of the ‘pure and clean’ group. Important to note is that this is an intentionally framed perception, which is consequently applied to a demographic. This rhetoric was not restricted to literal bodily hygiene, but also applied to ethnicities and other religions to further solidify the dichotomy of a ‘pure’ us and an ‘unclean’ them that the ingroup needs to be protected from. For instance, Jews were considered bodily unclean, and being considered an ethnicity, impurity was embedded in them and therefore Jewish people would never be able to integrate in

the US. This narrative strategy takes a simple, universal physical routine that can be recognized by anyone (bathing), applies an antonymic narrative to an outgroup (‘unclean Jewish people’), and consequently use it as an argument in favour of their political agenda (they inherently will never be able to integrate). Such rhetoric based on ‘cleanliness’ can also be found in propagated ideas of ‘cleaning up towns’, signifying an effort to push out immigrants. Revisiting the concept of ‘control’, everything that threatened the stability of the imposed social hierarchy deemed appropriate and natural by the KKK, was inevitably used as propagandic fuel. One can see the double standard of militaristic hierarchies in the distain that KKK members felt towards Black Civil War veterans: ‘’Even more fearsome to racist whites than the NAACP were black veterans of the Great War. The mere vision of an African- American man in a uniform, a symbol commanding respect, could arouse white fire-eaters to violence’’ (MacLean 1994, 28).

In complete opposition to this rhetoric, the in-group was constructed around serving the role of protection against ‘the dirty and untrustworthy aliens’. One of the most important ideas revolves around arguing for based on notions of ‘’purity’’ and the protecting of white, protestant women’s chastity. These narratives were already circulating in the First Ku Klux Klan, where ‘womanhood’ was used to symbolize Southern helplessness after the loss of the Civil War. ‘’The Klan proclaimed itself as the protector of white women living alone on isolated postbellum plantations and analogized the threatened rape of Southern white women to the devastation of the South in the Civil War’’ (Blee 1987, 78). White womanhood quickly became, not only a justification for the need for exceptional political measures, but also to pre-empt Black men’s freedom. A commentator, sympathizing with the Klan, noted: ‘’The negro [after the civil war] considered freedom synonymous with equality, and his greatest ambition was to marry a white wife’’ (Blee 1987, 78; Rose 1914, 17). The mnemonic connection between feelings of helplessness, loss, and shame after the civil war is

therefore projected on the increasing freedom and equality of Black men. Consequently, white protestant women and black men were used to personify the ontological dichotomy, with Black men becoming the ultimate recognizable villain to the stable social hierarchy envision by the KKK. Used as justify their actions, the KKK argued that they are a social movement protecting the American public and nation since it was "destined" to be a white Protestant nation, and that God had created the Klan in order to stop Catholic, Jewish, and Black conspiracies to seize power. Thus, KKK members experienced anxiety on diversity, arguing that it would make the country inherently unstable, and could not imagine an orderly nation state where groups might have identities beyond the hegemonic, patriotic identity (Gordon 2019).

3.4 Populist Purpose: Crisis and Insecurity as a Gateway to Populism

Thus, this loss of control facilitates the effectiveness of propagandic populistic messages. By hijacking logical debate in order to provide simple answers to one's problems, subsequently presenting themselves as the saviours creates a form of 'populist purpose'. Identities are consequently being strengthened through the creation of an enemy and social cohesiveness is shaped on collective fear. Critical situations therefore both enable, create, and are sustained by the populist political narratives. The performance of crisis is an *internal feature* of populism as a political style, using the ontological insecurity of crisis times to create social cohesion through bonding over fear (Moffitt 2016, chap. 5,7; B. J. Steele and Homolar 2019, 216). Again, when routines are rigid, it could create a general resistance to experts and expertise, as ignorance becomes a coping mechanism (B. J. Steele and Homolar 2019, 215). This vulnerable psychological state creates an entrance for populist rhetoric, deepening the divide between the perceived 'corrupt elite' and the people. Again, while some degree of ontological insecurity is inescapable because disjunctions foster anxiety and the loss of confidence in the possibility of biographical continuity of the Self (B. J. Steele 2007, 48), such critical situations

have proven to be a key part of ontological security storytelling and populist mythmaking.

The tactics used by the second KKK were very effective in using fear as strategy, with Linda Gordon arguing that the KKK was the first self-proclaimed ‘social movement’ to hire a professional PR firm, exemplifying the importance of strategic use of media and political communication (Gordon 2019). Again, the KKK’s propagandic strengths were based on aforementioned inherent dichotomic dualities: secrecy/non-secrecy, private life/public life, strategic use of own media sources and outside media sources, and creating mistrust in the perceived established order through fake news stories. Paired with rhetorical spins such as ‘calculated ambivalence’ (Wodak 2015), various discursive strategies are upheld to both appeal to moderate and extreme supporters. Mostly, propagandic recruiting tactics revolved around spreading anxiety creating propaganda on their own media platforms, purposefully triggering sensationalist media coverage through traditional newspapers, whilst also connecting public and private spheres by using clubs and churches to build up a network.

The reactionary populism strategy combines a vertical anti-elitism with a more horizontal form of scapegoating, in a sense that the vertical level is seen as people either higher or lower on the social ladder, whilst horizontally a particular peoples are scapegoated as physical personifications of the threat and failure of the elite. As a reaction to an ontological crisis, vilifying the ‘people above’ as well as the ‘threats from below’. For example, the aforementioned myth-building tactic of personifying Southern ‘innocence’ and need for protection in white protestant women by the (literal) white knights, and embodying the threat to that social structure in free Black men, is exactly at the apex of the myth-building tactics. A prime example of these tactics being engrained in new ICTs, Birth of a Nation was such a successful propagandic tool for the KKK that it caused a substantial spike in membership after its release in 1915. The movie frames how the KKK perceived violence as necessary, and how the elite was not doing

anything and was in the need of ‘white vigilantes’ to save the white protestant women. Populist rhetoric in combination with the dichotomic fear creation led to a framing of a necessary political purpose in the wake of crisis, one which will not be brought by the status quo of power balance. An excerpt from an essay published by the Imperial Wizard, the leader of the Ku Klux Klan, in the New York magazine ‘The Forum’ in 1925:

> Finally, we believe that all foreigners were admitted with the idea, and on the basis of at least an implied understanding, that they would become a part of us, adopt our ideas and ideals, and help in fulfilling our destiny along those lines, but never that they should be permitted to force us to change into anything else. This is the basic idea of the Klan. There is, perhaps, much to be said for the liberal idea of making America a mongrel nation, but that involves the two points which, as I have pointed out, the Klan will not debate. We hold firmly that America belongs to Americans, and should be kept American. . . . The whole purpose of the Klan is to bring this belief to fulfillment. We make many mistakes, but we are doing this one thing, and no one else is even trying to do it. Within a few years the America of our fathers will either be saved or lost, and unless some other way is found, all who wish to see it saved must work with us (Evans 1925).

Again, framed is that the ‘demands’ of the KKK are not met by the ruling elite, and since the securitization of the outsider threat has catalysed the need for exceptional measures, the ruling elite is failing the ‘normal American People’, and ‘nobody is trying to do anything except for us’. This is what Maclean calls ‘reactionary populism’; a combination of both anti-elitism and the subordination of a sub-group of people. Purposing political energy towards subordinating a scapegoat and propagating themselves as the only right choice as saviour is the core of the propagandic tactic of the KKK. This meant that people did not completely had to agree with everything the KKK stood for, it was

because they were the only option next to continuing the status quo of anxiety, offering ointment for a self-inflicted wound, a ‘protest against the status quo’.

3.5 Tools: Making Use of the Stabilizing Mass PCO

So how did the KKK use the stabilizing Mass PCO’s strengths and weaknesses? As described in the previous Chapter, populist communicative strategies use two tactics regarding the stabilizing PCO: firstly, make use of the changing elite structure of the PCO and the changing locales of political communication, and secondly to subsequently discredit the established hegemonic political communication channels. This paragraph will focus on how the KKK used the stabilizing PCOs weaknesses in their populist Right-Wing propaganda.

3.5.1 Change in PCO Elite

The Klan was aware of the change in media hegemons, taking advantage of two new developments in the Mass PCO: change in newspapers styles, and lowering barrier of creating own content.
To start, the Klan was profiting off a change in newspaper style that occurred in the 20s:

> There had been a tremendous move towards tabloid and ballyhoo journalism. And, effectively, the coverage of the Klan fit perfectly into that trend. It made for striking images on the front pages of papers. It drew lots of eyeballs. And the Klan was entirely aware of this. They were very careful to stage-manage events so as to draw maximum attention, and they made a concerted effort to invite journalists but then took care not to let journalists get too close – so as to “protect the secrets” ostensibly, to protect the mythos. But this is all a tactic of theirs – they need the press attention, but have to maintain their mystique (Beckett and Brenneman 2018).

Again, the Klan benefitted from the intrigue caused by a combination of secrecy and a lack of secrecy with ‘free advertisement’ from

newspapers documenting their behaviour, and luring people in the movement triggering curiosity by having their own secret rituals and meetings only visible for the privileged insider. The masked parades also worked as a calculated tactic to inspire curiosity for outsiders. The Klan knew that certain kinds of events and the proper framing of those instances are going to draw a lot of press attention. As highlighted in the previous chapter, this is a tactic that social movements are keen on using. This is why you see continually escalating media sensationalist events, i.e. the fiery crosses in front of houses became bigger. There is a sense of showmanship in these events, where both positive as well as negative coverage by local and national papers led to more membership in the KKK. However, while local papers boosted these, most maintained a continued silence regarding the Klan's behaviour. There were not a lot of media sources that gave outright support, but neither were there sources that outright condemned, investigate, or expose their activities. Some notable exceptions were local papers such as the Columbus Enquirer-Sun and the Macon Telegraph. However these instances were exceptions to the rule, since ‘’[..] no Georgia newspapers condemned the Klan until the second half of the decade, when its power had begun to wane’’ (MacLean 1994, 19). Some newspapers did do exposés, such as the New York World, but saw Klan membership spike in New York due to the new coverage (Beckett and Brenneman 2018).

Next to profiting off a change in elite with regards to the established printing elite, they started creating their own sources and content. The KKK’s own propagandic power is exemplified by the numbers: they published 150 newspapers and owned 2 radio stations (at a time where radio was a fairly new technology). On these news stations, fake news was propagated to spread a general discord and anxiety towards institutions to its following.

3.5.2 Active Discrediting of (Democratic) Trust Systems: Attacking Traditional Political Communication Hegemons

Mostly, propagandic recruiting tactics revolved around spreading

anxiety creating propaganda on their own media platforms, purposefully triggering sensationalist media coverage through traditional newspapers, whilst also connecting public and private spheres by using clubs and churches to build up a network. In a sense, these spaces function as new trust systems of political communication to fill up the vacuum left by traditional hegemons and tailor to the demand for political answers. The physical places, social clubs, and gatherings where the KKK fixed their attention to were mostly focused on churches and children's clubs since they are familiar places, providing feelings ontological security by confirming one's identity of Protestantism and familial values. Taking Giddens' term locales, these spaces of trust were spaces weaponized to trigger ontological insecurities. Ministers in protestant churches were used to spread the word of evangelical Protestantism and the dangers regarding 'others', and since attending lectures was considered a common pastime during the 1920s, these minsters were capable of reaching a lot of people. Many clergymen cooperated with the Klan; of the thirty-nine national lecturers working for the Klan at one point, two-thirds are thought to be Protestant ministers (MacLean 1994, 8). Recruited from the mainstream, many of the KKK members were protestant, white, middle-class men. With the ministers taking the role of securitizing actors, they are instrumentalized in order to create a footing of fear into communities, especially since ministers held prestigious positions in communities and were generally well trusted. Both personifying various sources of trust systems, i.e. religion and community values, the ministers were particularly powerful securitizing agents. Just as the Klan recruited men from the mainstream, so it boosted members' morale with the kinds of family and community activities that clubs and churches also sponsored. Although excluded from the Klan itself, Klansmen's wives and sons could join parallel orders: the Women of the Ku Klux Klan, created in 1923, and the Junior Klan, created in 1924 (MacLean 1994, 10). This intermingling of public and private life was an especially important tool, in a sense that one's whole life started to be associated with KKK ideologies. What was also noticeable, is that the

KKK held a lot of public gatherings, marches, and rallies to further solidify this public-private connection (Blee 1991). All of these activities ‘’[..] helped forge a solidarity movement that would be activated into militant action against the Klan’s declared enemies’’ (McVeigh 1999, 1467). The Klan showed itself in a more ‘sanitized’ way in public, whilst the secret demagogue-inspiring private life was mythicized and protected from scrutiny. These developments show the nexus between selected locales and the effectiveness of certain political communication styles, in order to maximize its effects.

As discussed in the previous paragraph on anxieties, Steele and Homolar argued that one is more predisposed to resisting expertise when routines are rigid. Fake news and the spread of conspiracy theories were a staple in the dichotomy creation of the KKK. Lies such as the police force being ninety percent Catholic were used to increase mistrust, and the perceived need to take matters of security in their own hands. Again, the movie ‘Birth of a Nation’ was one of the most important pieces of propaganda that the Klan used. A very emotionally powerful film in a time where most people were not familiar with movies, so it was a thrill to see for people.

> Nothing in the early years helped more to make that promise come to life than D. W. Griffith's film extravaganza, Birth of a Nation, released in the same year as the second Klan's creation. In this racist epic of the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the restoration of white rule, Griffith harnessed all the emotive power of modern film-making technique to convince viewers that black men were beasts and white vigilantes were the saviours of American civilization (MacLean 1994, 12).

The clear cut identarian narratives and visuals are powerful in describing the construction of hierarchies, roles, and mnemonic narratives that constitute the KKK’s propaganda. These new propagandic forms infiltrated people’s lives in different ways, and combined with the emergence of various newspapers and radio

channels from the KKK, they could spread disinformation more easily, whilst discrediting traditional PCO elites for not portraying the truth properly.

3.6 Spread of OST Propaganda: Perpetuum Mobile of Right-Wing Populist Rhetoric

This rhetoric did not exist in a vacuum. The ideas of the KKK led to various security consequences on national and global level, even now. Anti-immigration violence was not exceptional. Next to the ever-famous cross burnings in Black people's gardens, anti-immigration rhetoric seeped through the everyday lives. For instance, economic anxiety was expressed through the hatred towards foreign owned 'chain stores', arguing that ''[..] department stores, all of which are principally owned by Jews or foreigners were pushing out American businesses'' (MacLean 1994, 78). Even the Imperial Wizard, the leader of the KKK, argued that if those businesses are left to thrive and the trend continues, soon immigrants from southern and eastern Europe would ''crowd out native-born whites out of the business class'' (MacLean 1994, 79). Consequently, boycotts and vandalism to those businesses owned by Christians, Jews, or Black or Brown people were common. Also, empirical evidence has been found connecting Klan activism and an increased homicide rate, since community cohesion is disrupted from the movement's activism (McVeigh and Cunningham 2012, 844).

Next to creating fertile ground for hate crimes, the Ku Klux Klan changed political debate. Not only by threatening political adversaries and supporting political candidates that aligned with their views, but they also caused the Overton window to shift. This means that certain opinions that used to be considered extreme, now are mainstreamed. For instance, regarding political correctness on campuses in the mid-1920s: ''Prudential Committee members insisted, calling upon university rules for support, "that there be no political criticism at the University of our government." (MacLean 1994, 16). The result was that not a lot of faculty members dared to speak out against the Klan. These decisions subdued critical oppositional voices, and led to a staggering

one-third of the freshmen defending propositions such as that the KKK was acting in the United States' best interest (MacLean 1994, 16). By framing themselves as a social movement protecting national values, their points are considered social issues, consequently portraying the white, protestant, lifestyle as being threatened because of rising equality as a legitimate social issue. Even after its decline in the late 20s after various scandals in leadership and declining social importance, the ideas that represent the KKK and their framing tactics have stayed potent symbols in far-right circles. The KKK's later leader, David Duke, has profited off these mainstreaming efforts of stigma transformation by promoting white supremacist and racist messages as 'new civil rights movements' and white supremacists as 'victims of discrimination' (Selepak and Sutherland 2012, 76; Berbrier 1999). As argued by Agamben's notion of camps: ''The camp is the space that opens up when the state of exception starts to become the rule'' (Agamben 2000, 39). Once certain rhetoric becomes normalized, it is hard to deconstruct is legitimacy and ties to reality. Analysing the framing tactics, use of myth building, and communication strategies can provide a framework for understanding current populist far-right rhetoric, whether done by self-appointed social movements or political parties.

4. OST and Technology in the new PCC: The Rise of Forum for Democracy

4.1 Introduction

Eventually social movements can develop into political parties. The KKK did not converge into a party structure and continued to 'merely' support political actors that aligned with their ideological agenda and Klansmen that ran for office. The strategies outlined in Chapter 3 by the KKK are not exclusive to Right-Wing extremist movements. Using a similar fear-laden political communication strategy catalysing social movement or political action, populist parties can quickly raise momentum. In the Netherlands, with its multi-party consensus democratic system, small populist parties enjoy greater opportunities to win representative seats and use parliamentary power (Louwerse and Otjes 2019, 479). Using the same framework by which the KKK was analysed in chapter 3, this chapter will focus on how social mobilization movements and their particular political communication style can evolve into populist political parties, with their reach and political power significantly expanded by new technologies. This is to highlight the dangers of using these tactics in the mainstream political sphere. The case study will focus on the relatively quick rise of the populist Right-Wing 'Forum for Democracy' (FvD) party in the Netherlands. In this context, this chapter will highlight political communication strategies based on the spread of discourse and propagandic tactics as analysed through OST, and not on particular ideological relatedness. By this succinct case study, the proposed framework is tested, to illustrate that the goal and tools of populist political communication has not changed, however the mode of production, penetration into society, and the fervent use of catalysing narratives have periodically created these spaces in PCOs where anxiety can be triggered for political gain. The analysis will be done by discourse text analysis of the inauguration speech of Thierry Baudet, Forum for Democracy's political leader, when FvD became the biggest provincially represented party in the Netherlands in the 2019 provincial elections, analysing the party's

positions as portrayed on their site, and looking at their most-used media sources. This way, the content, purpose, and tools of Forum for Democracy's political communication strategy will be laid bare, insofar they are guilty of using populist fear-rhetoric as a political strategy and are able to thrive simply because of this new Information PCO. Lastly, derived from the aforementioned analysis of cases of populist securitization of Right-Wing ideological hierarchies, a model will be proposed to illustrate the specific securitization move that takes a social-political security issue out of its regular political context, repurposing the societal issue for political propaganda.

4.2 Context and Motive: Historical review

Seemingly out of nowhere, the Dutch populist Right-Wing party Forum for Democracy (FvD) gathered the biggest membership number in the Netherlands in just three years after its introduction in the Dutch House of Representatives. FvD's rhetoric is based on a mix between libertarian values, xenophobia, and populist anti-elitism directed at the Dutch governmental parties, the European Union, and influence of international organizations. Having started out as a think tank in 2015, FvD was catalysed into the attention of the general public, by voicing concern regarding the state of democracy in the Netherlands after the government did not adhere to the results of the non-binding referendum on the Dutch-Ukrainian EU Association Agreement by vetoing the treaty (Otjes 2020). They based their rhetoric on highlighting the connection between a seemingly disfunctioning democratic state and the elite 'cartel of parties'. As stated by Epstein: ''movement activists share a sense of grievance and believe their common ills are caused by systematic inequalities or injustices'' (Epstein 2018, 118). Seizing this political opportunity, the main leader Thierry Baudet created the thinktank Forum for Democracy, which in two years would turn into the party as it exists today, unifying politically dissatisfied people from all across the political spectrum. Most of his new voters came from Prime Minister Mark Rutte's Centre-Right Liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) and Geert Wilder's Far-Right Party of Freedom

(PVV). In the same timeframe, the Dutch Socialist Party (SP) and the Christian Democrats (CDA) both suffered great membership losses of around 10 percent (Kok 2020). This shows the important role that middle-class centrist voter's trust has in the political landscape, since most people voted for FvD because they had lost trust in the centrist and centre-right parties, thereby specifically casting a ''vote against the cabinet'', seemingly a necessary signal (ANP 2019).

4.3 OST Content: Dichotomy Creation

Based on the rhetoric spread in the inauguration speech of Baudet and the political standpoints set out on FvD's site, dichotomy creation based on traditional hierarchies and memories are pertinent its political communication strategy.

4.3.1 Roles and Routines

Starting with hierarchies and roles, FvD argues that the Netherlands and the 'West' suffers from 'oikophobia', that is a fear of oneself. In Baudet's inauguration speech he argued that: ''[..] It is pure oikophobia, pure self-hatred. It's a guilt complex, that apparently needs a way out'' (Baudet 2019). With regards to hierarchies, a clear distinction is made regarding 'the civilized Boreal world'- the West as typified by Baudet, compared to 'the others who are critical of our civilization'. He calls this group of Boreal countries 'civilization family', which are forced to endure criticisms and attacks from outside. Conservative, white, and masculine notions of a glorious historical colonial past are unfairly criticized and are masochistic in its acceptance of these criticisms. This inside-outside group creation is both nativist as well as global. With clear ties to other European populist groups such as the Italian Five Star Movement, a paradoxical situation where one both rejects as well as embraces globalization. As argued by Pollard, taking Fascist Movements as example: ''[..] encouraged by the ease of air travel and Internet communication, groups of British skinheads in particular have joined with their European counterparts at gatherings and, above all, at Blood & Honour concerts, to forge a new kind of European fascist identity'' (Feldman and Pollard 2016, 30). The dichotomy of anti-elitist

narratives towards the EU and the ruling elites of the various countries, versus the inherent embracing of globalized forms of communication and technologies to communicate with likeminded Right-Wing populist actors shows the universality of anxiety and how this energy is channelled through the fearmongering xenophobic rhetoric. As argued by Kinnvall, there seems to be a universal connection between nativism, masculinity, and populist anxiety when looking at the male-heavy electorate of Right-Wing populist parties:

> ‘’This populist narrative seems to resonate with a large number of people in European political space who experience the disruptive effects of economic, cultural, and political change, but the emotions displayed—insecurity, anxiety, and fear—are also intimately connected to particular masculine attachments to emotional narratives of love for the nation and lost masculinity and it is no coincidence that populist narratives are particularly (although not exclusively) appealing to a male electorate. Being male and white thus appear to correspond with cross-national findings of those who are most likely to buy into a discursive narrative of insecurity and risk—at least if we look at the European support base of far right parties both in terms of electoral preferences’’ (Kinnvall 2018, 535).

Thus, hierarchical notions of institutionalized Right-Wing populist parties, unlike the KKK for example, focus less on inter-group traditional identarian hierarchies, and focus more on dichotomy creation of populist anti-elitism. According to the principles of political communication this is only logical, since institutionalized populist parties have the goal of disbanding the corrupt elite and create a new ‘democratic system’. To compare, the goal of social movements is to illuminate grievances shared by a particular group highlighting the institutionalized failures, with a focus on policy reform showing trust in the democratic system. Therefore, with Right-Wing Populist Parties, the inherent masculinities and roles are less overt and project themselves more in an orientalist sense where the masculine nation state is being

threatened by an incoming flux of the ‘Orient’, and feminine/weak ruling elite is not doing anything about it, whether is nationalist politics or European ‘anti-democratic’ policies.

4.3.2 Memories and Imaginary Narratives

With regards to narratives and memories to support these dichotomic hierarchies, a heavy reliance on historical adoration and war-like rhetoric increases ingroup sentiments and the urgency of protecting these envisioned value systems from the ‘outside invader’. These sentiments are highlighted by phrases such as: ‘’We have been called to the front because our country needs us’’ (Baudet 2019), ‘’We are the party of rebirth, the renaissance. This is what we want to achieve. [..] we have to rekindle with our own traditions. [..] to find all the good we can find in the world and connect them with our old roots, to make our country bloom again’’ (Baudet 2019). The reiterations of a great colonial past, the distain towards modernism while also embracing its benefits, highlights the inherent juxtapositions in the political strategy of populist Right-Wing parties. It is not modernity and development in and of themselves that is at crossroads with Right-Wing populism, it is that people that do stem from the envisioned ‘old roots’ should not be able to savour its fruits. Again, one can analyse that the hierarchies and role building notions of OST are used to create in- and outgroups to highlight grievances, and distribute roles of ‘deserving’ or not, creating the outline which memories and narratives will fill in.

4.4 Populist Purpose: Crisis and Insecurity

Presenting themselves as the solution to counter the anxiety perceived, FvD refers to the ruling elite as ‘cartel of parties’ that can only be destroyed from the inside, whilst creating a new and better democratic system from the ‘ashes’. Clearly separating themselves from their Social Movement roots, in his speech Baudet argues that true change comes from breaking this cartel and building a new democracy from the ground up, ‘’[..] on this rock we are going to build our pillar. We are going to restore our democracy, and today the first great battle has been won’’ (Baudet 2019). Promoting themselves as the only solution

by discrediting on the ruling powers and the only ones not afraid to bring change. FvD frames the political system as the inherent cause of current problems and crises we experience; from immigration, the 'hopeless Euro', the worsening educative system, and the unsustainable healthcare system. Preying off these socio-political changes and shifts, FvD positions themselves as the saviour to the crisis and only legitimate political power in that they actually strive for a true democracy.

4.5 Tools: Making Use of the Stabilizing PCO

Utilizing the Information PCO's vacuums created by the stabilization, FvD exploits communication strategies fitting into the PCC framework as proposed in this thesis, by using traditional media for sensationalist coverage and alternative channels to spread political messages. As argued, cemented political leaders and/or movements with a relatively clear organizational structure, leadership, and political agenda, are more less inclined to use new ICTs, and retain a more traditionalist approach to media. On the other side of the spectrum, ''[..] we find cases of populism that are essentially 'hybrid mobilisation movements'-cum-parties, in that they blend and blur the lines between online and offline political communication, as well the lines between party movements'-*cum*-parties'' (Chadwick 2013). Unsurprisingly, as argued by the PCC theory as well as populist political communication literature, it is at this end of typology where the innovation in terms of social media usage is taking place'' (Moffitt 2018, 42). This analysis is especially typical of FvD's political communication strategies. Since the Netherlands enjoys a rather stable and cemented traditional media ecology, the strategy primarily involves the aforementioned populist strategies of capitalizing of the change in the PCO elite, and an active discrediting of democratic trust systems such as traditional ICTs with their disseminative powers.

4.5.1 Change in PCO Elite

FvD's roots find themselves in active use of new media platforms, as they transcended from think tank/ social movement hybrid to a political

party through the establishment of a platform asking for a referendum on the Ukraine Association Agreement. Together with a satirist media platform, GeenStijl, they launched a website where people could vote to ask for a referendum. Eventually they gathered enough votes to ask the government for a nationwide referendum, in which two-thirds of the counted votes were against the Association Agreement. This new use of media platforms to fulfil a role of 'direct democracy' at the same time gives the image of closeness to the populace. Next, new media platforms are used as broadcast mediums, with Baudet giving clickbait-worthy performances with his feigned charisma and use of elitist pseudo-intellectual phrases: ''[..] the owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk. And that does not just apply to this evening, dear friends'' (Baudet 2019). Especially by leaving room for interpretation to these sorts of statements, causing a form of calculated ambivalence (Wodak 2015), traditional media sources are left scrambling for proper explanation and have difficulties disseminating the information spread. Next to paralysing the disseminative powers of the cemented media elite, FvD uses alternative media sources to spread their messages. Creating their own political communication locales, FvD's communicative output is thus primarily done with their own media channels on Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok. Parallel to these developments new online platforms rose, disturbing the Dutch media ecosystem. One example is Breitbart inspired 'Unheard Netherlands' (Ongehoord Nederland), which spouses xenophobic and racist messages under the guise of 'alternative news from people previously unheard'. Another new media platform is Jensen, a Dutch version of Infowars, spreading conspiracy theories and fear-laden rhetoric. Multiple FvD advocates have used these new media sources to broadcast their rhetoric.

4.5.2 Active Discrediting of (Democratic) Trust Systems: Attacking Traditional Political Communication Hegemons

Next to creating and using new sources of political communication that the information PCO offers, without the scrutinizing eye of the

traditional dissemination powers, discrediting the traditional democratic trust systems is an important part of the strategy. Not only traditional ICTs but also universities have to endure criticisms: ‘’[..] But just like in other countries from the Boreal world, we are being destroyed by the very people who are supposed to protect us. We are being undermined by our universities, our journalists [..] We are the carriers, the heirs of the greatest civilization that has ever existed. We carry a unique strength. And, a few decades of indoctrination of the media and universities could never undo that’’ (Baudet 2019). This perceived left indoctrination by established traditional pillars of democracy such as universities and traditional media has led to FvD’s position of a seemingly necessary step to ‘remediate’ the Dutch Public Broadcast system’. Again, as already argued by Jelena Subotić, the normalization of these forms of destabilizing rhetoric and revisionism opens up spaces for a revival or normalization of fascist thought (Subotić 2018, 296).

4.6 Perpetuum Mobile of Right-Wing Populist Propaganda: The Populist Ontological Security PCC

The influence of FvD on the Overton Window is clear. For instance, the central-right People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy, the ruling party of Prime Minister Mark Rutte, gave into rightist populist narratives when he published a letter in two major Dutch newspapers calling for more ‘decent behaviour’ of Dutch people. An excerpt:

> We feel a growing discomfort when there are people take advantage of our freedom to ‘stink up the place’, even though they came to this country precisely because of that freedom. People who do not want to adapt, denying our habits and reject our norms. Who harass gay people, catcall women in short skirts or call normal Dutch people racist. I understand that people are thinking: if you reject our country so fundamentally, I would rather see you leave. I agree with that feeling. Act normal or go away (Rutte 2017).

This shift of narrative in established political parties is especially dangerous when dealing with a fast-growing party toying with ideas such as remediating media structures, destabilizing the political status quo, and implementing a law on the 'protection of Dutch values'. Political energy catalysed by these sorts of practices should be dealt with carefully, and not used for political gain. Especially when centrist parties are the ones who have a particular responsibility of being the moderate alternative to far-right extremist parties. Actively and publicly rejecting the political communication strategies of parties such as FvD is pertinent to force anti-democratic far-right populist parties into isolation or moderation.

4.6.1 The Populist Ontological Security PCC: Ends Justify the Means

Evident of the aforementioned case studies is that there is a constant populist political communication strategy design noticeable when analysed in conjunction with the Ontological Security Theory. Therefore, the goal of political communication has not changed per se, however technologic advances have democratized political communication sources, making the mode of production, and the penetration into society more salient. Indeed, the fervent use of catalysing narratives can therefore profit off of spaces where anxiety is triggered for political gain, periodically with inflated and deflated effects due to technological changes and power vacuums in the political communication cycle. Populism can therefore be seen as politically profiting off of ontological insecurities, considering that the narratives used are inflated crisis scenarios.

4.6.2 Populist OST PCC

Political communication motives are drawn from an event causing uncertainty, whilst the communicative content is gathered from the anxiety created due to people trying to rationalize the situation. Important to note again, is that in this scenario uncertainty is an inward emotion of merely not-knowing, whilst the anxiety is this uncertainty tied to a general state of fear without ties to an external threat (Giddens

1991, 43–44). Based on this, anxiety can be appropriated in various ways by appointing a perceived external threat to this anxiety. Thus,

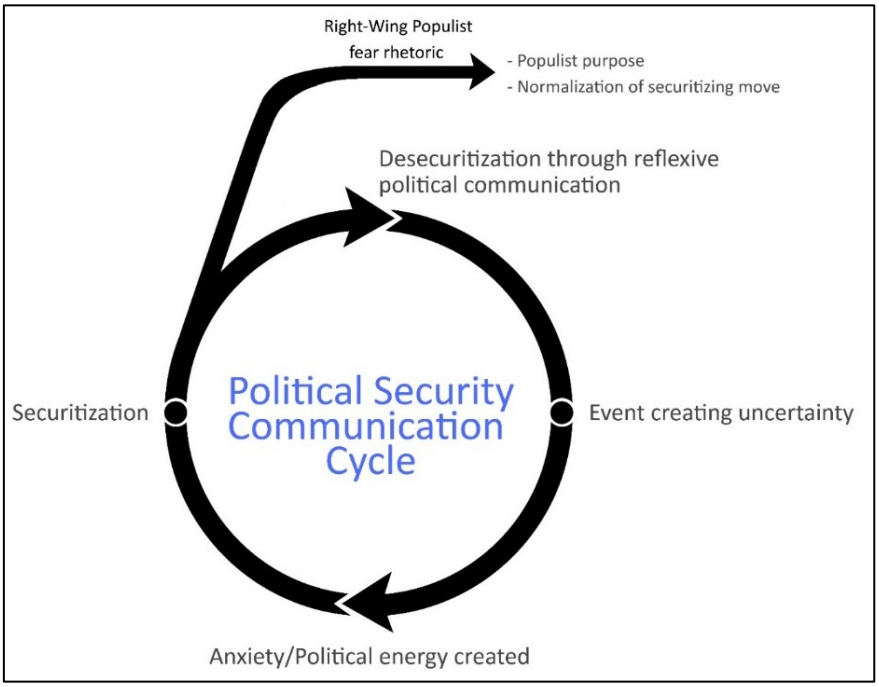

Figure 2. Political Security Communication Cycle

securitization from a political actor leads to the bifurcation, in where a political actor can either securitize the issue through reflexive political communication and action-based policies staying in the 'regular securitization sphere', or the political actor can use populist rhetoric to highlight the inability of the elite to solve the issue leaving the securitization circle (see Figure 2). This depends on how the anxiety shapes the securitization process, if it's based on a legitimate threat, or on mythopoesis (Wodak 2015, 28). OST analyses this process, by tracing back where the anxiety stems from: where does the anxiety stem from? Based on that, the OST cycle can continue the routine by using desecuritization through reflexive political communication, subsequently continuing the status quo. Though, if the political actor does not believe the elite is capable of this process, or that desecuritization could lead to crisis, they could use populist political communication strategies highlighting this discrepancy. This is characterizing of the political agenda of social movements, in which they use the political energy created by their securitization of a grievance in combination with populist messages to highlight inequality,

catalysing social change whilst using democratic channels. Populism therefore grants a channel to purpose political energy, which otherwise continues anxiety or lays dormant. However, when the securitization is based on mythopoesis, populist fear-rhetoric could securitize subjectivities such as identity, building the perceived crisis around these narratives. Therefore, populism based on mythopoesis distorts the securitization logic since the political energy created from the securitization of subjectivity will be catalysing the negative connotations towards the illegitimate perceived cause of the anxiety. In this sense, for Right-Wing populist political actor, fear rhetoric creates a horizontal (scapegoats as the causes of anxiety and the need for securitization) as well as vertical (corrupt elite refuses to protect) divide and conquer strategy. The means justify the ends, legitimizing themselves every step of the way. The danger that lies in this strategy is when eventually the ‘perceived crisis’ and the whole construction of securitization and anxiety is normalized, and turns into the first state of the OST cycle, thereby normalizing the roots of anxiety. Whilst some events may create legitimate anxiety, securitization of factors causing a framed form of uncertainty based on subjectivities such as identity are dangerous, extremely overgeneralizing, and take political energy away from getting to the root causes of uncertainty by blurring the political agenda.

5. Discussion: Desecuritization through Reflexive Political Communication

Limitations of the research as outlined in this thesis are primarily focused on are that of case study selection and scope. To evaluate the outlined methodology and adapted models for analysis assessing its applicability to more political communication strategies, more in-depth research needs to be done with different case studies than the ones analysed in this research. This thesis has aimed to propose an interdisciplinary framework of analysis, important is that what is proposed is applicable to more case studies active in current technological status quo. Adding onto this limitation of reviewed case studies, further deepening of the effects of current technological developments on political communication, such as A.I., Computational Propaganda, Botnets, the effects of echo chambers in social media etcetera, are important to take into account when studying their possible effect on the weaponization identity-driven rhetoric as *tools* and their consequent effect on democratic security.

Protecting democratic security necessitates constructing and providing a transparent and understandable flow of information based on those uncertainties is paramount to avoid the need for securitization of subjectivities. In order to achieve this, the PCC theoretical framework suggests strong dissemination powers and services in the online sphere (especially on social media platforms) have to be put into place in order to flag propaganda and call out the use of mythopoesis from political parties and other important agents of the PCO elite. Debunking the existence of a utopian morality could be a powerful asset to any political agent in this regard. Further research will be necessary to fully conceptualize proper tools to deal with the broad range of issues the Information PCO presents, and the possibility of desecuritization through reflexive political communication.

Furthermore, research surrounding the identity-security nexus can be strengthened by including literature from fields dealing with reflexivity,

trust, and security as an affective matter, i.e. Queer Theory and Feminist Security Studies. Portraying and communicating positive and real stories of diversity could help stabilize the uncertainty phase since it provides a mnemonical base to build personal reflexivity on. Understanding the identity-security nexus in forms of trust, another theoretical concept that International Relations could benefit from in the populist and political extremist realm, shows that ‘’[..] as actors learn to trust each other, this trust-learning process has a transformative effect on their definition of self-interests and identities’’ (Bilgic 2014, 36). Creating trust systems in which the securitized identity is included is pertinent for personal, community, and even state resilience against uncertainty and anxiety creation. In the wake of disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation campaigns on the national as well as international level, it is paramount to have resilient communities that can reflexively and critically engage with polarising information.

6. Conclusion

In order to answer the posed research question of how ontological insecurities based on identity rhetoric are weaponized via (new) political communication technologies by Right-Wing populist actors, this thesis has used a combination of interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks applied to various historical and contemporary cases to achieve a trans-historical understanding of the nexus between Right-Wing Populist communication tactics based on Ontological Security and the new media landscape.

First, with assistance of Epstein's Political Communication Cycle, populist political communication's relationship with perceiving and framing crisis is analysed. Arguably, vulnerable spaces in a Political Communication Cycle are detected which can be particularly prone to populist securitizing rhetoric, especially during the phases of political choice and subsequent stabilisation state. Testing these findings, the historical Civil Rights Movement operating in the Broadcast PCO is analysed along these theoretical lines, highlighting the interdependence of political viability of new ICTs and audience reach in order for innovative political communication tactics to achieve their goals. Applying the same framework to the current Information PCO, with its own set of strengths and weaknesses, the Black Lives Matter Movement proves the statement that the goal of political communication has not changed (with the mobilization of political action being considered the primary goal), however the different PCOs provide a different range of technological tools to achieve these goals with their accompanying different dimension of mediatization power and political viability. Consequently applying focal points of Right-Wing populist communicative strategies; that is anti-elitism, anti-democratic sentiments, and fervent use of identity-heavy fear rhetoric, resulting analysis has shown that the propagandic narratives exploit these strengths and weaknesses of the current PCOs' stabilization phase.

Secondly, the aforementioned analytical foci of political communication and OST are combined in the third Chapter's case study of the Second

Ku Klux Klan at the height of their propagandic power (1915-1925), in order to illustrate how Right-Wing populist political communication tactics are utilized to garner political support. As argued by Linda Gordon, people affiliating themselves with the KKK were experiencing anxiety on diversity and the increasing equality of all peoples, arguing that these processes would make the United States inherently unstable. Analysing the propaganda spread by the KKK through the lens of Ontological Security, stability and the hegemonic, patriotic identity are tied, causing any perceived threat towards that power structure to render agents ontologically insecure. Playing into the narratives, memories, and routines tied to the aforementioned hegemonic identity, the securitization move based on identity rhetoric creates anxious energy that can be given a populist 'purpose'; that is a perceived target for the emotional energy. Framing themselves in this way, populist actors strategically make use of the aforementioned strengths and weaknesses of the PCO they are operating in.
Considering the propagandic modus operandi of the KKK, the change of the Mass PCO's elite regarding lowering barriers of newspaper publishing and increased usage of radio, they heavily invested in spreading propaganda on these channels. Secondly, locales of political communication physically concentrated in spaces which were considered 'trust systems', and heavily focused on protestant ministers spreading KKK propaganda during lectures. Finally, one cannot separate the Second KKK's rise from the release of the movie Birth of A Nation in 1915, which visually demonstrates the constructed hierarchies, roles, and mnemonical narratives that constructs the KKK's propagandic nature, and how the emotive anxious energy created from these strategies can be given a populist purpose embodied in the KKK movement, leading to an exponential rise in membership.
Thirdly, testing the political communication framework combined with OST outside the historical social movement setting, the fourth Chapter also both outlines how current new communicative technologies affected these strategies as well as how institutionalized populist political actors make use of these tactics utilizing the party standpoints

of Dutch Right-Wing populist Forum for Democracy party, combined with the inauguration speech of its leader Thierry Baudet.

This shift could eventually lead to a normalization of such rhetoric. This perpetuates the grand strategy of populist Right-Wing rhetorical normalization: ends justify the means. This cycle is described in the fourth chapter, of which the Populist Security Communication Cycle is introduced, which visualizes the inertial power of populist fear rhetoric. Eventually, this initial 'abnormal' securitization move can create a new space of which a normalized state is created, legitimizing this 'new normal'. Afterwards, events creating uncertainty are politicized monolithically, all the while blurring the political agenda by focusing on identity politics and fear rhetoric for explanation. Propaganda in this sense is an artform, which consists of content, style, and subjective interpretation (Sontag 1961; Wodak 2015). To understand its stylistic means to channel emotive and anxiety guided energy to a political (populist) purpose, is to understand its roots in identity, of which any perceived threat will always 'hit close to home'. Recognising the subject-matter relation and the rhetorical game of mimicry, i.e. the ontological insecurity perceived as reflecting reality, is pertinent to capture a holistic analysis of the possible weaponization of these narratives by political actors. Especially when those are rooted in forms of identarian dehumanization: ''Dominance, even the threat of it, is a form of dehumanisation. It's the ugliest kind of power'' (Obama 2018). Reflexivity and trust in democratic functioning is fundamental to counter the inertial power of Right-Wing populist propaganda, and paramount to resist its effects in the new technological reality of the current status quo.

7. References

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