

# Cultural Backlash

Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Authoritarian Populism

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## Synopsis

Authoritarian populists have disrupted politics in many societies, as exemplified by Donald Trump in the U.S. and Brexit in the UK. Authoritarian populist parties have gained votes and seats in many countries, and entered government in states as diverse as Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, and Switzerland.

Across Europe, their average share of the vote in parliamentary elections remains limited but it has more than doubled since the 1960s and their share of seats tripled.

Even small parties can still exert tremendous ‘blackmail’ pressure on governments and change the policy agenda, as demonstrated by UKIP’s role in catalyzing Brexit.

The danger is that populism undermines public confidence in the legitimacy of liberal democracy while authoritarianism actively corrodes its principles and practices.

This book sets out a general theory explaining polarization over the cultural cleavage dividing social liberals and social conservatives in the electorates and how these values translate into support for Authoritarian-Populist parties and leaders in the U.S. and Europe.

The conclusion highlights the dangers to liberal democracy arising from these developments and what could be done to mitigate the risks.

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## Chapter 1

### Understanding populism

Populists have disrupted long established patterns of party competition in many contemporary Western societies. The most dramatic case is the election of Donald Trump to the White House. How could such a polarizing and politically-inexperienced figure win a major party's nomination – and then be elected President? Many observers find it difficult to understand his victory. He has been sharply attacked by conservatives such as George Will, establishment Republicans such as Mitt Romney, social liberals such as Elizabeth Warren, and socialists such as Bernie Sanders. He has been described by some commentators as a strongman menacing democracy, by others as a xenophobic and racist demagogue skilled at whipping up crowds, and by yet others as an opportunistic salesman lacking any core principles.<sup>1</sup> Each of these approaches contains some truth.

We view Trump as a leader who uses populist rhetoric to legitimize his style of governance, while promoting authoritarian values that threaten the institutions and norms of American democracy.

Trump is far from unique. Previous demagogues in America include Huey Long's Share the Wealth movement, Joe McCarthy's witch-hunting Communists, and George Wallace's white backlash.<sup>2</sup> Trump's angry nativist speeches, anti-establishment appeals, and racially-heated language resembles that of many other leaders whose support has been swelling across Europe. Beyond leaders, these sentiments find expression in political parties, social movements, and the tabloid press. Populism is not new; von Beyme suggests that it has experienced at least three successive waves.<sup>3</sup> Its historical roots can be traced back to the Chartists in early-Victorian Britain, Narodnik revolutionaries in late-nineteenth century Tsarist Russia, Fascist movements in the inter-war decades, Peronism in Argentina, and Poujadism in post-war France. Authoritarianism also has a long history that peaked during the era of Bolshevism and Fascism, but it has seen a resurgence since the late-twentieth century.

*What is populism?*

Populism should be understood as a style of discourse reflecting first order principles about *who* should rule, claiming that legitimate power rests with ‘the people’ not the elites. It remains silent about second order principles, concerning *what* should be done, what policies should be followed, what decisions should be made.<sup>4</sup>

Populist actors make two core claims about how societies should be governed.<sup>5</sup>

First, populism challenges the legitimate authority of the ‘establishment’. It questions the rightful location of power in any state, including the role of elected representatives in democratic regimes. Favorite targets include the mainstream media (‘fake news’), elections (‘fraudulent’), opposition politicians (‘treasonous’), political parties (‘dysfunctional’), public sector bureaucrats (‘the deep state’), judges (‘enemies of the people’), protests (‘paid rent-a-mob’), the intelligence services (‘liars and leakers’), lobbyists (‘corrupt’), intellectuals (‘arrogant liberals’), scientists (‘who needs experts?’), interest groups (‘drain the swamp’), the constitution (‘a rigged system’), and international organizations like the European Union (‘Brussels bureaucrats’) and the U.N. (‘a talking club’). In Trump’s words, “*The only antidote to decades of ruinous rule by a small handful of elites is a bold infusion of the popular will. On every major issue affecting this country, the people are right and the governing elite are wrong.*”<sup>6</sup> Donald Trump is far from alone: Marine Le Pen attacks faceless European Commissioners: “*No one knows their name or their face. And above all no one has voted for them.*”<sup>7</sup> For Brexitiers, ‘out of touch’ judges seeking to delay triggering Article 50 are vilified by the tabloids as ‘*Enemies of the People*’.<sup>8</sup> Hugo Chavez’s berated former presidents charged with embezzlement, lambasted the Caracas elite, and attacked American imperialism (‘*domination, exploitation and pillage*’).<sup>9</sup>

The claim is not just that the establishment are arrogant in their judgments, mistaken in their decisions, and blundering in their actions, but rather that they are morally wrong in their core values. Populist leaders depict themselves as peasants with pitchforks willing to disrupt mainstream politics-as-usual. ‘Deplorables’ enjoy the Punch and Judy theatre where they can cheer faux punches on holier-than-thou liberals, poke sticks at the powerful, and serve as tricoteuses de la Guillotine

watching the downfall of hoity-toity elites. This appeal resonates among critical citizens – those committed to democracy in principle but disillusioned with the performance of elected officeholders and representative institutions, including parties, elections, and parliaments.<sup>10</sup>

Secondly, populist leaders claim that the only legitimate source of political and moral authority in a democracy rests with the ‘people’. The voice of ordinary citizens (the ‘silent majority’, ‘the forgotten American’) is regarded as the only ‘genuine’ form of democratic governance even when at odds with expert judgments– including those of elected representatives and judges, scientists and scholars, journalists and commentators. The collective will of ‘the people’ (‘Most people say...’) is regarded as unified, authentic, and unquestionably morally right. In cases of conflict, for example if Westminster disagrees with the outcome of the Brexit referendum, the public’s decision is thought to take automatic precedent.

On the night of the Brexit referendum to leave the European Union, the leader of UKIP, Nigel Farage, crowed that *“This will be a victory for real people, a victory for ordinary people, a victory for decent people.”*<sup>11</sup> For the Germany protest movement Pegida, *‘We are the people’* (*“Wir sind das Volk”*).<sup>12</sup> Trump’s inaugural address proclaimed: *“We are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the American People.... The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer.”*<sup>13</sup> In the 2017 French presidential elections, the National Front candidate, Marine Le Pen, campaigned to *“...free the French people from an arrogant elite.”*<sup>14</sup> A few months after Brexit, at the 2016 Conservative party conference, Prime Minister Theresa May expressed similar views: *“Just listen to the way a lot of politicians and -commentators talk about the public. They find their patriotism distasteful, their concerns about immigration -parochial, their views about crime illiberal, their attachment to their job -security inconvenient.”*<sup>15</sup> And Norbert Hofer, presidential candidate of the Freedom Party of Austria, criticized his opponent: *“You have the haute volée [high society] behind you; I have the people with me.”* For Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, as well: *“We are the people. Who are you?”*<sup>16</sup> Those questioning the wisdom of the people, or resisting its sovereignty, even if elected representatives or eminent judges, are accused of being corrupt, self-serving, arrogant know-it-alls, *‘traitors declaring war on*

*democracy*.<sup>17</sup> There can be no turning back from the people's decision: Brexit means Brexit.

Therefore populist rhetoric seeks to corrode faith in the legitimate authority of elected representatives in liberal democracies. But the revolution finds it easier to destroy the old without rebuilding the new. The danger is that this leaves the door ajar for soft authoritarians attacking democratic norms and practices. Strongman leaders rise to power by claiming to govern on behalf of the 'real' people, sanctioned by flawed elections and enabled by partisan loyalists. The concept of 'legitimacy' can be best understood, in Seymour Martin Lipset words, as "*the capacity of a political system to engender and maintain the belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate and proper ones for the society*."<sup>18</sup> It is the vital quality which ensures that citizens comply with the decisions of their government not because of the law or threat of force but because they choose to do so voluntarily. Populist leaders knock-down safeguards on executive power by claiming that they, and they alone, reflect the authentic voice of ordinary people, and they, and they alone, have the capacity to restore collective security against threats. Leaders draw fuzzy lines between the interests of the state and their personal interests – along with that of their family and cronies. Democracy is thereby attacked, but not necessarily directly, which would raise too many red flags. No coup d'état is hatched. The military stay in the barracks. Elections are not cancelled. Opponents are not jailed. But democratic norms are gradually degraded by populists claiming to be its best friend ("Trust me").<sup>19</sup>

*What is authoritarianism?*

What is important for fully understanding this phenomenon, however, is not just the rhetorical veneer of 'people power', but also what second order principles leaders advocate -- and thus what cultural values they endorse, what programmatic policies they advocate, and what governing practices they follow. Know them by what they do -- not just by what they say. In this regard, the populist words of parties such as Jobbik in Hungary, Golden Dawn in Greece, or Poland's Law and Justice – and leaders such as Orbán, Chavez, and Trump – are the external patina disguising authoritarian cultures and practices.

In this study, authoritarianism is defined as a cluster of values prioritizing collective security for the tribe at the expense of individual autonomy. This ideology contains three core components: 1) the importance of *security* against risks of instability and disorder (foreigners stealing our jobs, immigrants attacking our women, terrorists threatening our safety), 2) the value of *conformity* to preserve conventional traditions and guard our way of life (defending ‘Us’ against threats to ‘European values’), and 3) and the need for loyal *obedience* towards strong champions who protect the group and its customs (‘I alone can fix it’, ‘Believe me’, ‘Are you on my team?’).

The politics of fear drives the search for collective security for the tribe even if this means sacrificing personal freedoms. In this regard, the ‘tribe’ refers to imaginary community demarcated by signifiers of Us versus Them – the People versus the Other. This is often broadly defined by bonds of nationality and citizenship (*‘We all share the same home, the same heart, the same destiny, and the same great American flag’*).<sup>20</sup> Or it can be demarcated more narrowly by signifiers of identity providing symbolic attachments of belonging and loyalty towards the in-group and boundaries towards out-groups, whether by race, religion, and ethnicity, location or age, party, gender, or sex, or any other form. The notion of ‘tribe’ is therefore distinct from simply joining any loose grouping or membership organization. Tribes are social divisions, often in a traditional society consisting of families or communities linked by economic, religious, or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect, typically having a recognized leader. They involve loyalty, stickiness, boundaries, and shared cultural meanings.

Authoritarian values blended with populist rhetoric can be regarded as a dangerous combination fueling a cult of fear.<sup>21</sup> Populist rhetoric directs tribal grievances ‘upwards’ towards elites, feeding mistrust of ‘corrupt’ politicians, the ‘fake’ media, and ‘out-of-touch’ mainstream parties, assaulting the truth and corroding faith in liberal democracy. Politicians won’t/can’t defend you. And authoritarians channel tribal grievances ‘outwards’ towards groups perceived as threatening the values and norms of the in-group, dividing ‘Us’ (the ‘real people’) against ‘Them’ (‘Not Us’), stoking anxiety, corroding mutual tolerance and poisoning the reservoir of social trust towards humanity. If the world is seen as full of gangs,



criminals, and fanatics, if our country is vulnerable to rogue regimes, terrorist groups, and economic rivals, if democracy is broken, then logically we need high walls – and strong leaders – to protect us and our nation.

Authoritarian leaders and their followers seek strength and security because of the triumph of fear over hope, of anxiety over confidence, of darkness over light. The theme of Trump’s inaugural address perfectly encapsulates this bleak vision: *“For too many of our citizens, a different reality exists: Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities; rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation; an education system, flush with cash, but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of knowledge; and the crime and gangs and drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential. This American carnage stops right here and stops right now.”*<sup>22</sup> This discourse strikes a discordant note because it is so much at odds with the tradition of American ‘can do’ optimism. Not “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself” (Roosevelt). Not “Ask what you can do for your country” (Kennedy). Not “Its Morning Again in America” (Reagan). Not “The Audacity of Hope” (Obama).

When Authoritarian-Populist rhetoric and values are translated into more concrete public policies and laws, the key issue concerns the need to defend ‘Us’ (‘our tribe’) through restrictions on ‘Them’ (‘the other’) -- justifying restrictions on the entry of immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and foreigners, and the use of policies designed to integrate ethnic minorities within society, such as official language requirements or bans on certain religious practices. It justifies Guantanamo Bay. This orientation underpins and vindicates the intolerance, racism, misogyny, and xenophobia characteristic of authoritarian populist parties. In Viktor Orban’s words, *“Every single migrant poses a public security and terror risk,”* while refugees bring *“gangs hunting down our women and daughters.”*<sup>23</sup> In foreign affairs, this viewpoint favors the protection of national sovereignty, secure borders, a strong military, and trade protectionism (‘America First’), rather than membership of the European Union, diplomatic alliances, human rights, international engagement, and multilateral cooperation within the United Nations. Moreover, Authoritarian-Populism favors policies where the state actively intervenes

to restrict non-traditional lifestyles, typically by limiting same sex marriage, LGBTQ rights and gender equality, access to contraception and abortion, and affirmative action or quotas – unless, in some cases, these types of liberal policies are framed as a defense of national cultures against attacks by ‘others’. Finally, in the public sphere, since liberal democracy has been delegitimized, Authoritarian-Populists favor strong governance preserving order and security against threat (“They are sending rapists’ ‘radical Islamic terrorists’), even at the expense of democratic norms protecting judicial independence, freedom of the media, human rights and civil liberties, the oversight role of representative assemblies, and standards of electoral integrity.

### **The rise of authoritarian-populism**

Subsequent chapters classify and measure political parties using systematic evidence and demonstrate that authoritarian-populism has taken root in many European countries.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the rising tide in the electorate. Across Europe, the average share of the vote won by these parties for the lower house in national parliamentary elections in Europe has more than doubled since the 1960s, from around 5.4% to 12.4% today.<sup>24</sup> During the same era, their share of seats has tripled, from 4.0% to 12.2%. These forces have advanced in some of the world’s richest and most egalitarian European societies with comprehensive welfare states and long-established democracies, such as Austria, Norway, and Denmark, as well as in countries plagued by mass unemployment, sluggish growth, and shaky finances, such as Greece and Bulgaria.<sup>25</sup> They have won government office in Eastern and Central Europe, such as in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Poland, as well as taking root in the Netherlands and Germany. They have gained in consensus democracies with proportional representation elections and federal systems (Belgium and Switzerland), and in countries with majoritarian rules (France) and presidential executives (the United States). By contrast, they are also notably absent, the dog which didn’t bark, in several other Western democracies which were some of the worst affected by the financial crisis, such as Ireland and Iceland.<sup>26</sup>

[Figure 1.1 and 1.2 about here]

In later chapters, using reasonable cut-off points, we identify over fifty European political parties which can be classified as ‘authoritarian populist’. These have gained a growing presence in parliaments in many countries and entered government coalitions in more than a dozen Western democracies, including in Austria, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, and Switzerland.<sup>27</sup> In long-established democracies, some of the most electorally-successful parties during recent decades include the Swiss People’s Party, the Norwegian Progress Party, the Freedom Party of Austria, the Danish People’s Party, the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, and the Finnish Party-True Finns. Similarly in Central and Eastern Europe, the largest Authoritarian-Populist parties include Viktor Orbán’s Fidesz in Hungary, Poland’s Law and Justice (PiS), and the Slovenian Democratic Party, the Bulgarian National Movement II, the Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary, and others.<sup>28</sup> Minor parties, capable of influencing the policy agenda even if less effective in winning seats, include the Flemish Vlaams Belang, the French National Front, Lega Nord in Italy, Greece’s Golden Dawn, Flemish Interest in Belgium, the Alternative for Germany (AfD), and the UK Independence Party, as well as many others. This also includes Australia’s One Nation party, New Zealand First, and the Canadian Reform Party (which merged with the Conservatives in 2000). At the extreme fringe, there are also several White Supremacist organizations, such as the racist British National Party in the UK, the Party of the Swedes, and the neo-Nazi German National Democratic Party.

Many world leaders have also endorsed authoritarian-populist values, to greater or lesser degree, including Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, and Prime Minister Andrej Babiš and President Milos Zeman in the Czech Republic, Viktor Mihály Orbán in Hungary, Thaksin Shinawatra in Thailand, Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela, as well as Narendra Modi in India.<sup>29</sup> And, Donald Trump in America.<sup>30</sup>

By contrast, populist parties, leaders and social movements with more liberal values are less common as a type but their support has also grown in recent years in several European states. These typically blend populist discourse railing against corruption, mainstream parties and politicians,

and capitalism combined with the endorsement of socially-liberal attitudes, left-wing economic policies, and participatory styles of engagement. This category includes Spain's Podemos party and the Indignados Movement, Greece's Syriza, the Left party in Germany, the Socialist Party in the Netherlands, and Italy's Five Star Movement. In the Americas, libertarian-populist leaders are exemplified by Bernie Sanders, as well as the Peronist tradition followed by Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in Argentina, Evo Morales in Bolivia, and Rafael Correa in Ecuador.<sup>31</sup> Arguably there are also centrist-populist leaders, such as President Emmanuel Macron in France, who campaigned as an outsider criticizing the established parties although governing more like a moderate.

Even in nations where authoritarian-populist parties hold few parliamentary seats, they can still exert 'blackmail' pressure on governments and shape the policy agenda.<sup>32</sup> In Britain, for example, the UK Independence Party won only one seat in the May 2015 general election, but its rhetoric fueled rabid anti-European and anti-immigration sentiment, pressuring the Conservatives to call the Brexit referendum, with massive consequences.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, in the September 2017 elections to the Bundestag, the nationalistic, anti-Islamic and pro-family values Alternative for Germany (AfD) won only 12.6% of the vote – but they gained 94 seats in the aftermath of the refugee crisis, entering parliament for the first time and thereby hindering Angela Merkel's negotiations to form a Grand Coalition government, leaving the government in limbo for four months.<sup>34</sup> Mainstream parties can seek to coopt minor parties in formal or informal governing alliances and they can adopt their language and policies in the attempt to steal their votes. *Populism* and *authoritarianism* remain potent forces in the contemporary world, even where authoritarian populist parties and leaders don't make substantial or sustained electoral gains.

### **What explains these developments?**

Many observers seeking to explain developments offer narratives focused on particular high-profile cases and leaders -- such as the role of Jean-Marie Le Pen in founding the French National Front (FN),<sup>35</sup> the rightwards shift and revival of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) under

Jörg Haider,<sup>36</sup> and the role of Hugo Chávez in the United Socialist Party of Venezuela.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly 2016 U.S. presidential elections can be seen to reflect a contingent series of idiosyncratic events catalyzing the unexpected rise of Donald Trump. Accounts emphasize the role of personalities and leadership styles: the dramatic appeal of Donald Trump, an out-spoken and unpredictable television celebrity, with the public rejecting both 'No drama' Obama's reserved control and cool grace and also Hillary Clinton's policy wonk professionalism.<sup>38</sup> A lot of ink has blamed James Comey's intervention controversy during the final days of the campaign and false journalistic equivalence in negative media coverage of Hillary Clinton's handling of emails and Trump scandals.<sup>39</sup> Others regard the outcome in terms of the evolution of political parties, with the Tea Party and Freedom Caucus pushing House Republicans to the right and deep partisan gridlock emerging in a broken Congress, with Trump inheriting the mantle of Sarah Palin.<sup>40</sup> The FBI has pointed to Putin's meddling through cyber-hacking, Facebook bots, and Twitter trolls.<sup>41</sup> The outcome of the 2016 election can also be attributed to a visceral white backlash against the election of Obama, the first African-American President, toughing the deep scar of race in U.S.<sup>42</sup> Economic accounts seek explanations focused on the aftereffects of globalization, as trade shocks from cheap Chinese imports shut factories and squeezed pay checks for low skilled white American workers.<sup>43</sup> Contingent events clearly do help to account for the outcome of the 2016 American presidential election -- for example, it has been estimated that a switch of just 77,744 votes would have tipped Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania into the Clinton column, making her President.<sup>44</sup> During the fall campaign, the standard political economy model, combining presidential approval with GNP growth, predicted a tight outcome where the popular vote could have flipped either way.<sup>45</sup> Given the close race, and the decisive role of the Electoral College, we should avoid mechanical over-determinism.

But accounts focused only upon Trump's rise cannot understand the deeper roots for this phenomenon within the Republican party and the American electorate. And those focused only upon America cannot explain why support for populist parties has roughly doubled across

Europe in recent decades with leaders strikingly similar to Trump rising to power in many places around the world. The phenomenon is much broader than any individual and thus requires a more general theory. Any plausible account should be consistent with what is already known from previous research about this phenomenon in the fields of public opinion, elections, political parties, and voting behavior. Claims should also ideally generate propositions testable against a wide range of cross-national and time-series empirical data. And finally, scientific theories should also be policy relevant, where possible furnishing insights into what can be done by those seeking to mitigate harm to democratic institutions. The plan for this book follows.

### Plan of the book

**Chapter 2** sets out the general theory that lies at the heart of this book. The story of the cultural backlash can be broken down logically into a series of sequential steps involving: (1) long-term social structural changes in the living conditions and security which successive generations have experienced during their formative years; (2) the way these developments led to the silent revolution in cultural values; (3) the conservative backlash and authoritarian reflex that this has now stimulated; (4) medium-term economic conditions and the rapid growth of social diversity accelerating the reaction; (5) how the backlash mobilizes voting support for Authoritarian-Populist parties and leaders; (6) how votes translate into seats (and thus government offices) through electoral systems; and finally (7) the broader consequences of this phenomenon, including for the stability of established democracies and hybrid regimes, for party competition and the issue agenda, and for the civic culture.

Building on this narrative, **Chapter 3** establishes the book's core concepts. We expand upon the argument that populism is a form of rhetoric claiming that legitimate authority flows from the vox populi ("Us"), not the establishment liberal elite ("Them"). But for many European parties, and world leaders such as Donald Trump, Hungary's Viktor Mihály Orbán, Venezuela's Nicolás Maduras, and the Philippines' Rodrigo Duterte, behind the populist façade, a darker and more disturbing set of authoritarian values can be identified.

We discuss the core components of our updated concept of authoritarianism and why we believe that drawing upon this notion, rather than conventional labels such as the ‘radical right’ or ‘right wing populists’, provides a more powerful analytical lens which accounts for both the attitudes of supporters and the policy position of political parties.

These concepts are operationalized and measured separately at both party and citizen levels in subsequent chapters. Citizens’ positions are determined using cross-national mass survey measures of Authoritarian-Libertarian, Populist-Pluralist and Left-Right attitudes and values in the electorate (in Chapter 4). Authoritarianism in the European electorate is gauged not by policy attitudes on issues such as immigration (which could provide a circular explanation of one’s vote) but by the individual’s emphasis on the values of security, conformity, and obedience, using social-psychological measures (Schwartz scales). The policy positions of 270 European political parties are measured independently by expert assessments (the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, or CHES) (in Chapter 7). The positions of both European voters and parties are measured on continuous scales ranging from the most authoritarian to the most libertarian, reflecting the fact that there are many shades of grey, not simple black-and-white categories.

## **Part II: Support for Authoritarian-Populist values**

The first stage in our backlash thesis builds upon the extensive body of research demonstrating that long-term social structural developments in post-industrial societies – growing prosperity, rising access to college education, more egalitarian gender roles, and processes of urbanization, led to the silent revolution in socially-liberal and post-materialist values, which first became evident at the societal level in the late-1960s and early-1970s. To update the trends, and see whether they are continuing, **Chapter 4** presents longitudinal evidence demonstrating the evolving trajectory of value change during recent decades-- the silent revolution shifting the balance between the rising proportion of social liberals in society and the shrinking proportion of social conservatives in Western societies. We also document the rise of ‘critical citizens’, who endorse democracy as the ideal form of government while distrusting politicians as a class.<sup>46</sup> We describe the long-term structural drivers underlying these

developments, including the role of intergenerational value change, college education, gender roles, ethnicity, and urbanization.

The evidence confirms the importance of generational birth cohorts in Europe and America for adherence to authoritarian values and socially-conservative attitudes. Authoritarian personal values may also be shaped by specific period effects (such as the events from 2008-13, the years of the financial crisis) and by life-cycle effects (as people enter middle-age and settle down with marriage and families). Overall, however, these factors are observed to play a secondary role in predicting values compared with birth cohort effects. Longitudinal survey evidence demonstrates that the publics of Western societies have generally become steadily more socially liberal on many issues -- but that, as expected, socially conservative values remain strongest among the oldest (Interwar) generation, non-college graduates, the working class, white Europeans, the more religious, men, and residents of rural communities. These groups are therefore most likely to feel that they have become estranged from the silent revolution in social and moral values, left behind by cultural changes that they deeply reject. The Interwar generation of non-college educated white men - until recently the politically and socially dominant group in Western cultures -- has passed a tipping point at which their hegemonic status, power, and privilege are fading. Their value profiler makes them potential supporters for parties promising to restore national sovereignty ('Make America Great Again'), restrict immigration and multicultural diversity ('Build a Wall'), and defend traditional religious and moral values ('We stand united behind the customs, beliefs, and traditions that define who we are as a nation and as a people. This is America's heritage: A country that never forgets that we are all, all, every one of us, made by the same God in heaven...')<sup>47</sup>

Theoretically there are several ways which groups could react to profound cultural changes in society which threaten their core values. One strategy could be self-censorship, the tendency for people to remain silent when they feel that their views are in opposition to the majority, for fear of social isolation or reprisal.<sup>48</sup> Another could be adaptation, as groups gradually come to accept profound cultural shifts which have become mainstream during their lifetimes, such as growing acceptance of women's equality in



the paid workforce and public spheres.<sup>49</sup> A third could be a retreat to social bubbles of like-minded people, the great sorting, now easier than ever in the echo chamber of social media and the partisan press, thereby avoiding potential social conflict and disagreements.<sup>50</sup> We theorize that an alternative strategy, however, is the authoritarian reflex, a defensive reaction strongest among socially conservative groups feeling threatened by rapid processes of economic, social and cultural change, rejecting unconventional social mores and moral norms, and finding reassurance in a likeminded community supporting transgressive strongman leaders willing to express politically incorrect views and defend traditional values and beliefs. The tipping point, as formerly predominant majorities become a steadily shrinking but still sizeable share of the population – and the electorate – are predicted to be important for triggering the latent authoritarian reflex. Resentment against the inflection point in the silent revolution has spawned a counter-revolutionary conservative backlash. In the long-term, the culture cleavage in the electorate is likely to fade over time, as older cohorts with less education, often living in relatively isolated White rural communities, are gradually replaced by younger cohorts and college educated professionals living and working in socially-diverse metropolis, who tend to be more open to the values of multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, and social liberalism. During the era of transition, however, heated culture wars are disrupting politics and society.

**Chapter 5** considers the role of economic conditions and material insecurity in accelerating the authoritarian reflex. Many changes are transforming the workforce and society in post-industrial economies through the globalization of economic markets, compounded by the period-effect linked with the deep financial crash and Eurozone sovereign debt crisis.<sup>51</sup> There is overwhelming evidence of powerful trends toward growing wealth inequality and declining real income for most of the population in the West, based on the rise of the knowledge economy, technological automation, and the collapse of manufacturing industry, global flows of labor, goods, capital and people (especially the inflow of migrants and refugees), the erosion of organized labor, shrinking welfare safety-nets, and neo-liberal austerity policies.<sup>52</sup>

The idea that economic conditions have deepened the cultural backlash is supported by studies of electoral geography reporting that Trump supporters were concentrated disproportionately in the Appalachian coal country, rural Mississippi, and rural counties in the Midwestern rust belt.<sup>53</sup> In the 2016 U.S. election, the Trump vote was correlated with areas dependent upon manufacturing sectors hit by the penetration of Chinese imports, particularly in Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and North Carolina.<sup>54</sup> Similarly in Brexit, support for the UK to Leave the EU was concentrated in northern England and the Midlands.<sup>55</sup> Leave votes in the Brexit referendum were concentrated in areas of low income, high unemployment and historic dependence on manufacturing industry.<sup>56</sup> In the 2<sup>nd</sup> round French presidential elections in 2017, Marine Le Pen's National Front support was strongest in low-skill areas with double digit unemployment in Northern France, as well as the traditional Mediterranean bastion, while Emmanuel Macron won by a landslide in Paris and its affluent suburbs.<sup>57</sup> And in the September 2017 Bundestag contests, Alternative for Germany attracted its highest share of the vote in former East Germany, which continues to lag behind the more developed West.<sup>58</sup> Similar findings are reported elsewhere in Western Europe.<sup>59</sup> For all these reasons we expect that economic conditions experienced in local communities and at individual levels will reinforce authoritarian and populist values.<sup>60</sup>

Building on these observations, we theorize that the authoritarian reflex arising from long-term processes of cultural change is likely to be accelerated and deepened by fears of economic insecurity, including individual experience of the loss of secure, well-paid blue-collar jobs, and the collective experience of living in declining communities of the left-behinds.<sup>61</sup> Material threats are likely to make groups more susceptible to the anti-establishment appeals of authoritarian populist actors, offering simple slogans blaming 'Them' for stripping prosperity, job opportunities, and public services from 'Us'.<sup>62</sup> This chapter establishes evidence supporting these arguments, at both the individual and community levels.

**Chapter 6** turns to the role of migration flows, the refugee crisis, and the growing ethnic diversity of Western societies as other accelerants of the authoritarian reflex.<sup>63</sup> Racial resentment in America is often thought to

be the driving force behind Trump support, with fears about immigration driving white defection from the Democratic party to the Republicans. In America, racial divisions in partisanship and voting, have been found to outweigh the impact of class, age, gender, and other demographic measures.<sup>64</sup> Similarly European studies consistently report that anti-immigrant attitudes, and the perceived cultural threat of foreigners, are strong predictors of voting support for radical right parties.<sup>65</sup> We believe that this is indeed an important *part* of the explanation for support for authoritarian populism-- but, by itself this is over-simplified, because xenophobic, racist and anti-Islamic attitudes are linked with a broader range of socially conservative values. The authoritarian reflex is not confined solely to attitudes towards race, immigration, and ethnicity, but also to the rejection of the diverse life-styles, political views and morals of 'out-groups' that are perceived as violating conventional norms and traditional customs, including feelings of homophobia, misogyny and xenophobia. Moreover, these sentiments are strongest among those groups, like homogeneous rural communities and older citizens, which feel most threatened by the spread of multicultural diversity, not among younger generations and university-educated professionals who commonly study, live and work in more socially-diverse metropolitan areas. To explore the survey evidence, we examine attitudes towards immigration across the European Union, demonstrating how these orientations are linked with the authoritarian reflex.

### **Part III: From values to votes**

Processes of cultural, economic and social change are therefore consistently associated with the endorsement of authoritarian or libertarian values. Yet comprehensive explanations for the rise of authoritarian populism involve not just 'demand-side' developments in the electorate but also the supply-side conditions under which support for these values can be translated into votes, seats -- and power. To start to examine these factors, we need to look not just at voters' values but also at the position of political parties across the ideological spectrum. **Chapter 7** uses the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) to identify the policy location of 268 political parties in 31 European countries. The classic Left-Right cleavage of party competition over the role of markets

versus states persists. But party competition in Europe and the United States is now not unidimensional but multidimensional. It continues to involve the traditional post-war Left-Right cleavage where parties compete over the role of government in the management and regulation of the economy and welfare state. This has been supplemented by the Authoritarian-Libertarian cleavage, which we demonstrate has become increasingly important since the 1980s, dividing parties over social and cultural issues like abortion, immigration, Europe, and gay rights. There is also the emerging Populist-Pluralist cleavages dividing parties over the location of legitimate authority in governance. Factor analysis confirms the multidimensional nature of contemporary party competition, as theorized. Thus authoritarian populist parties are not simply a more extreme version of the center-right, endorsing traditional ‘rightwing’ issues – they are also challenging mainstream pluralists on a separate dimension. Continuous 100-point scales are constructed that identify the location of European political parties on these three dimensions. This allows us to classify type of political parties, located at the extreme poles on the continuum, generating a systematic map comparing European party competition. We identify types of parties across both Western and Eastern Europe and use selected case studies to illustrate some of the main contrasts.

Building upon this framework, **Chapter 8** examines individual-level cross-national European Social survey data to determine the impact of generational cohorts, period, and life-cycle effects, as well as economic and demographic characteristics, and cultural values on voting for political parties across more than 30 European societies.

This raises a series of methodological challenges. In particular, voting support for minor parties that attract only a sliver of the electorate cannot be analyzed with any degree of reliability using the standard questions about party identity and voting choices contained in mass election surveys. Certain prominent Authoritarian-Populist parties, such as the National Front in France and UKIP in Britain, have been analyzed using standard election surveys in each country, but the diversity of these cases, along with their instability over time, make it difficult to test general theories about this phenomenon. Comparative research is rapidly expanding but it

faces the problem that voting choices are complex to measure consistently across countries.<sup>66</sup> Studies conventionally use a simple binary variable coded as whether respondents voted for radical right or populist parties (1) or whether they voted for any other party (0). This process can be unreliable, however, as it is heavily conditioned by the prior classification of political party families.

The research design we employ in this chapter uses continuous scales (instead of categorical variables for party choice) measuring where all European political parties and where ordinary citizens are positioned across the dimensions of Populist-Pluralism, Libertarian-Authoritarianism and Left-Right values. This allows us to test the correlations for all European parties based on positions on these indicators. For a broad comparative perspective, for the position of citizens, this chapter analyzes the pooled European Social Survey 1-7 (2002-2014) in 32 countries. It is worth emphasizing that the authoritarian scale used to identify the values of voters avoids asking directly about support for policies, such as attitudes towards immigration, as this would raise risks of endogeneity. Instead the Authoritarian-Libertarian scale is measure by the Schwartz scale of personal values. We also look at the effects of authoritarian and populism separately, since these emerged as distinct dimensions and the drivers of each may be expected to differ. The evidence confirms our thesis that authoritarian values are central to the electoral appeal of more authoritarian and more populist parties in Europe. Moreover voting support for parties with more authoritarian positions is concentrated among the older birth cohorts and less educated population, as well as among men, the more religious, and ethnic majority populations. By contrast, economic indicators such as occupational class and subjective financial insecurity, turn out to be statistically significant but relatively weak predictors of support for more authoritarian parties, with cultural values (authoritarian values, political mistrust, and left-right self-placement) explaining more. In similar models predicting voting support for more populist parties, the generational effects were reversed and both economic and cultural factors proved significant.

**Chapter 9** examines the fortunes of Authoritarian-Populist parties in Europe, understanding how the electoral system influences how their

share of votes is translated into seats. The chapter compares the results of elections for the lower house of parliament held during the post-World War II era under three main types of electoral systems -- Majoritarian/Plurality, Mixed, and Proportional Representation (PR) party list -- to assess how far the institutional rules of the game can explain the varied results of Authoritarian-Populist parties in gaining seats and ministerial office even among relatively similar societies. We examine recent elections in six selected case studies, comparing Britain and France using majoritarian/Plurality electoral systems, Germany and Hungary using mixed systems, and the Netherlands and Switzerland using PR systems.

For a more in-depth case-study, **Chapter 10** analyzes the reasons behind Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 American Presidential election. Many situation-specific factors have been advanced to explain the outcome, the proximate cause of which was the Electoral College rules (Clinton actually won almost three million more votes than Trump). Contributing factors include a Democratic campaign that failed to invest sufficient resources in the 'Blue Wall' of rust-belt states, the personal strengths and weaknesses of each candidate, the use of a personal email server by Hillary Clinton and the intervention of the FBI, the Russian hacking of the Democratic National Committee computers, Russian trolling via social media, and other situation-specific factors.<sup>67</sup> But the Trump phenomenon was not an isolated event; it was rooted in enduring changes in the Republican party and in the American electorate as well as growing party polarization, particularly ideological shifts on cultural politics and social issues that began many years earlier. The Tea Party wing of the Republican Party advocated many of the populist themes that Trump subsequently echoed, including anti-establishment and anti-government appeals, birtherism, and climate change denial.<sup>68</sup> Using the World Values Survey and the American National Election Study, the chapter documents the attitudinal and social basis of Trump and Clinton supporters, in both the primaries and general election, and long-term changes in the partisan cleavages dividing generations in the American electorate. The evidence confirms that Trump's support was concentrated among socially-conservative older white men, non-college graduates, and blue-collar workers in small-town America, especially Republicans endorsing authoritarian values. This was

the base particularly susceptible to Trump's promise to 'Make America Great Again', energized by a nostalgic vision of restoring the traditional social order and lifestyles that prevailed decades ago.

**Chapter 11** analyzes the populist revolution that shook up the foundations of UK party politics just a few months before Trump's victory- the June 2016 Brexit referendum in the UK, as well as the sudden rise and fall in the fortunes of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) in the 2015 and 2017 general elections. The Brexit outcome was also largely unexpected; the opinion polls had predicted a close result, but most commentators assumed that the 'remain' camp would eventually win.<sup>69</sup> Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron decided to hold a referendum on Britain's European Union membership both to appease Euro-skeptics within his party and to try to steal votes from UKIP.<sup>70</sup> The results of the analysis confirm the impact of the generation gap, with Millennials supporting 'Remain' – but failing to vote in strong numbers, while the Interwar generation voted for 'Leave' and were much likelier to cast ballots.<sup>71</sup> The subsequent UK general election in June 2017 saw the biggest age gap in British general elections since the early-1970s, with swings to Labour among the under-40s, and swings to the Conservatives among the over 55s.<sup>72</sup> Moreover in predicting Leave votes, Libertarian-Authoritarian values and populist attitudes were far stronger than class and experience of unemployment. The series of British contests also illustrates the vulnerability of small parties like UKIP when a mainstream party absorbs their language and signature policy issues, as Theresa May's Conservative party endorsed EU withdrawal, so that authoritarian populism enters the bloodstream of British politics but populist parties fail to win seats.

## **Part V: Conclusions**

This book's final section examines the consequences of Authoritarian-Populism and whether liberal democracies are sufficiently robust to resist its damage. This question has aroused intense concern. Debate continues about the potential impacts. To understand these issues, **Chapter 12** considers several consequences from the rise of populism, including for democratic regimes, for party competition over the policy agenda, and for the civic culture.

On the plus-side, it is claimed that populism can be a useful corrective for liberal democracy, if it encourages innovative forms of direct participation, highlights genuine public concerns neglected or quarantined by cosmopolitan liberal elites, and brings the cynical back into politics. Democracies have many flaws and reform movements can help to reduce corruption, strengthen participation, and deepen democracy. Populist parties claim to speak for forgotten segments of society and they may potentially mobilize disaffected non-voters and under-represented groups to participate, thereby expanding campaign activism and turnout.

But on the negative side, however, many sound the alarm about the potential threat that the rise of authoritarian populism poses to long-standing norms and institutions of liberal democracy, where populist discourse denigrates ‘fake’ media, dishonest politicians and corrodes respect for free speech, social tolerance, and confidence in government.<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, when the forces of Authoritarian-Populism rise to power, it is widely feared that they are likely to close borders to refugee families fleeing conflict zones, to erode alliances and multilateral cooperation among Western countries, to embolden bigots and extremist hate groups in society, to corrode social trust and ethnic tolerance, and to replace pluralistic give-and-take in politics with the divisive and polarized politics of animosity, hatred, and fear. The United States is a resilient democracy but during the first year of the Trump administration, the country has been torn apart in the bitter clash between the dystopian vision and divisive politics of the president and the forces resisting his policies on issues such as the investigation into Russian meddling in American elections, reforms to immigration policy and the fate of the Dreamers, the decimation of the Environmental Protection Agency, and culture wars over racial, religious, and sexual politics. Elsewhere weak institutions of liberal democracy have been pushed to the breaking point by populist leaders in hybrid regimes, such as in Hungary, Turkey, and Venezuela, ushering in a reversion to authoritarianism. We examine evidence of trends in democratization and selected case studies to see whether these anxieties are justified.<sup>74</sup>

In addition, this chapter also considers the ‘contagion of the right’ thesis, which holds that the advance of populist authoritarian parties has caused

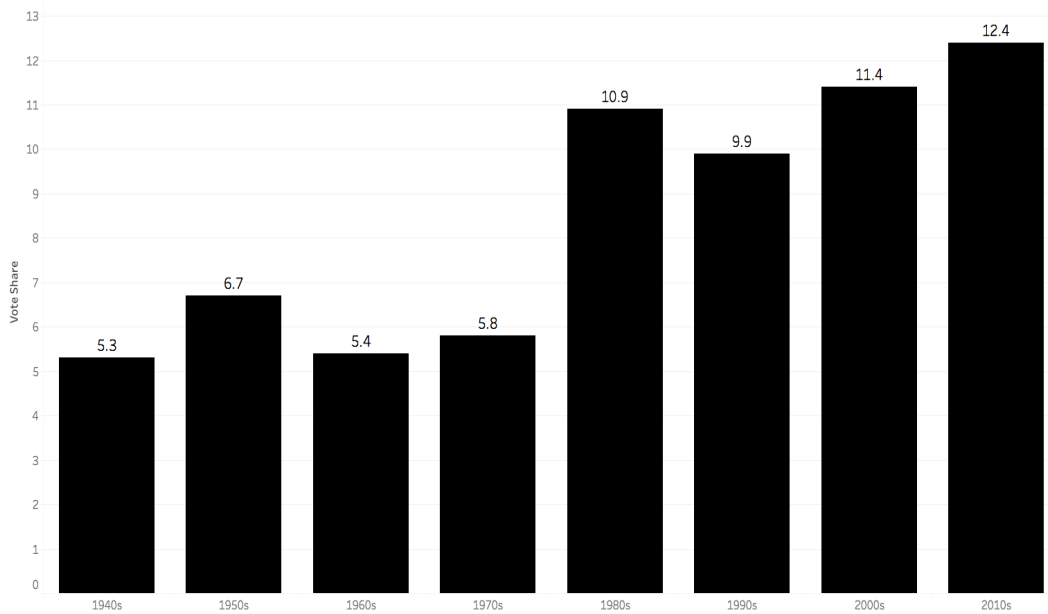


mainstream parties and governments to adopt more restrictive policies towards asylum-seekers, migrants, and political refugees, for example in Britain and the Netherlands. We conclude that the rise of Authoritarian-Populist forces is likely to have important impacts on domestic politics – heightening awareness of divisive wedge issues, polarizing party competition, and shaping how mainstream parties like the center-right respond strategically to insurgent challengers, including by adopting at least some of their policy positions. Whether this is positive or negative for the health of liberal democracy remains an open question.

Finally, we also examine debates about the impact of Authoritarian-Populism on confidence in liberal democracy. There is widespread concern that many Western democracies have experienced a long-term erosion of trust in political institutions, along with growing dissatisfaction with democratic performance. Populist support has been fermented in these juices and their rhetoric criticizing establishment institutions can also be expected to exacerbate mistrust. Yet the evidence is not clear-cut. Thus many American polls suggest that public confidence in government either remains at historic lows or else has been sinking further.<sup>75</sup> Yet recent European studies seeking to detect evidence of any legitimacy crisis present more cautious assessments.<sup>76</sup> This chapter analyzes trends in institutional confidence and support for democracy and considers the consequences for the legitimacy of liberal democracies.

The concluding **chapter 13** reviews the core argument, summarizes the main findings in the evidence, and suggests several alternative strategies which could be employed to mitigate the potential dangers which authoritarian populism poses for plural societies and liberal democracies.

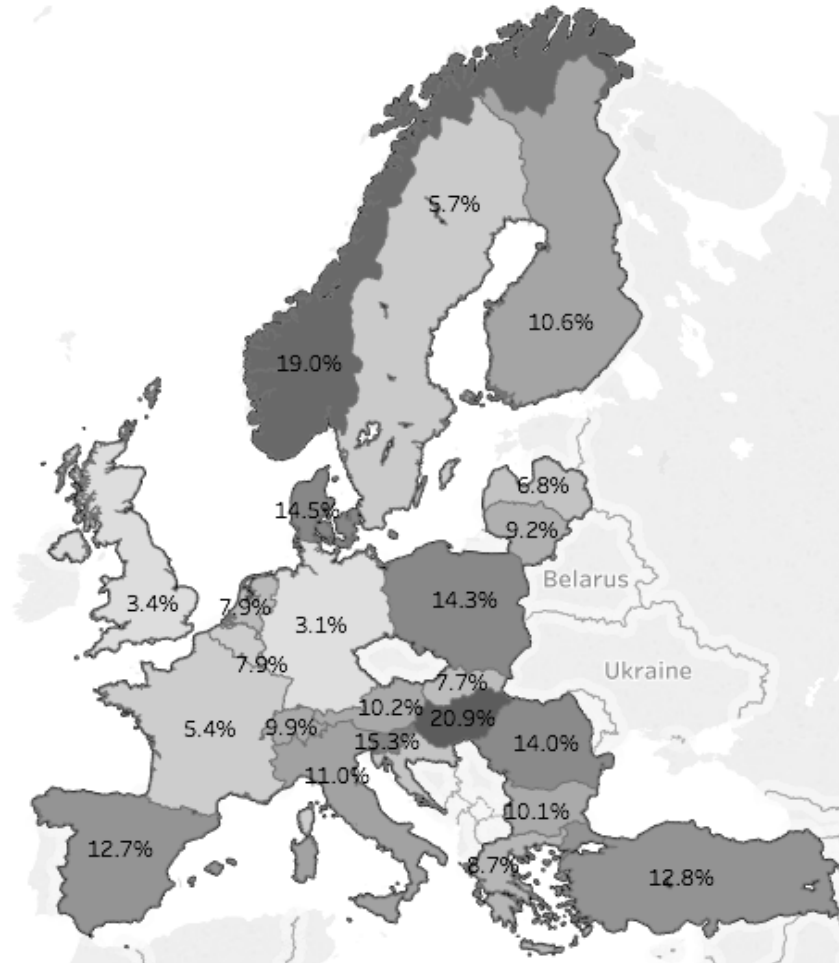
**Figure 1.1: Vote share for populist parties in Western societies, 1946-2017**



**Notes:** The mean vote share for populist parties in national elections for the lower (or single) house of parliament from 1945 to 2017 in 32 Western societies containing at least one such party. For the classification of parties, see Chapter 7.

**Sources:** Holger Döring and Philip Manow. 2016. *Parliaments and governments database* (ParlGov): <http://www.parlgov.org/>; IFES Elections Guide. <http://www.electionguide.org/>

**Figure 1.2: Vote share for Authoritarian-Populist parties in Europe, 2000-2017**



**Notes:** The mean share of the vote won by populist parties in national elections for the lower (or single) house of parliament from 1945 to 2017 in European societies containing at least one such party. For the classification of parties, see Chapter 7.

**Sources:** Holger Döring and Philip Manow. 2016. *Parliaments and governments database* (ParlGov) <http://www.parlgov.org/>; IFES Election Guide <http://www.electionguide.org/>

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<sup>1</sup> See E.J. Dionne, Norman Ornstein and Thomas Mann. 2017. *One Nation After Trump*. New York: St Martin's Press; Brian Klass. 2017. *The Despot's Apprentice: Donald Trump's Attack on Democracy*. New York: Hot Books; Michael Wolff. 2017. *Fire and Fury*. New York: Henry Hold and Co.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Kazin. 1995. *The Populist Persuasion*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons. 2010. *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort*. NY: Guilford Press.

<sup>3</sup> Klaus Von Beyme. 1985. *Political Parties in Western Democracies*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

<sup>4</sup> As discussed further in chapter 3, we reject alternative conceptualizations which suggest that populism in politics reflects: 1) a distinct set of policy preferences, specifically, shortsighted economic policies of state-controlled industrialization or protectionist policies that appeal to the poor, 2) a type of party organization with a mass base dominated by charismatic leaders, 3) a type of party defined by its social base, or 4) a 'thin ideology'. See Chapter 3 and Jan-Werner Muller. 2016. *What is Populism?* PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

<sup>5</sup> By 'actors' we refer to anyone using this rhetoric in the public sphere, whether presidents, prime ministers, politicians, political parties, journalists or media outlets, social movements, or organizations. In terms of a style of discourse, see Ernesto Laclau. 2005. *On populist reason*. London: Verso; Benjamin Moffitt. 2016. *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style and Representation*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press; Toril Aalberg, Frank Esser, Carsten Reinemann, Jesper Stromback, and Claes H. de Vreese. Eds. *Populist Political Communication in Europe*. London: Routledge; Paris Aslanidis. 2016. 'Is populism an ideology? A refutation and a new perspective.' *Political Studies* 64 (1): 88–104; Elena Block and Ralph Negrine. 2017. 'The populist communication style: Toward a critical framework.' *International Journal of Communication* 11: 178-197.

<sup>6</sup> Donald J. Trump. Quoted in *The Wall Street Journal* 14 April 2016.

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<sup>7</sup> Marine Le Pen quoted in *The Daily Express*.

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/799949/Marine-Le-Pen-Brussels-Frexit-European-Union-Emmanuel-Macron>

<sup>8</sup> After the UK High Court ruled that parliament would need to trigger Article 50, the headline in the *Daily Mail* on 2 November 2016 below images of the judges was 'Enemies of the People'.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3903436/Enemies-people-Fury-touch-judges-defied-17-4m-Brexit-voters-trigger-constitutional-crisis.html>

<sup>9</sup> Victoria L. Rodner. 2016. 'Populism in Venezuela: When discourse derails institutionalized practice.' *Society* 53 (6): 629-633

<sup>10</sup> Pippa Norris. Ed. 1999. *Critical Citizens*. New York: Oxford University Press; J. Eric Oliver and Wendy M. Rahn. 2016. 'Rise of the Trumpenvolk: Populism in the 2016 Election.' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 667 (1): 189-206..

<sup>11</sup> Nigel Farage, 24 June 2016.

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/686024/Ukip-leader-Nigel-Farage-speeches-resignation-European-Parliament-Brexit-victory>

<sup>12</sup> Pegida stands for the "Patriotische Europäer Gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes," ("Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West"), a German protest movement. See

<http://www.dw.com/en/german-issues-in-a-nutshell-pegida/a-39124630>

<sup>13</sup> Donald Trump. January 2017. *The Inaugural Address*.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/the-inaugural-address/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/04/23/le-pen-time-to-free-french-arrogant-elite.html>

<sup>15</sup> Theresa May quoted in *The Independent*.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/theresa-may-speech-tory-conference-2016-in-full-transcript-a7346171.html>

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<sup>16</sup> Christopher de Bellaigue. 2016. 'Welcome to demokrasi.'  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/30/welcome-to-demokrasi-how-erdogan-got-more-popular-than-ever>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3903436/Enemies-people-Fury-touch-judges-defied-17-4m-Brexit-voters-trigger-constitutional-crisis.html>

<sup>18</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset. 1983. *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (2nd ed.) (p. 64) London: Heinemann. The concept of legitimacy is also discussed in Stephen M. Weatherford. 1992. 'Measuring political legitimacy.' *American Political Science Review* 86:149-66; Bruce Gilley. 2006. 'The meaning and measure of state legitimacy: Results for 72 countries.' *European Journal of Political Research* 45: 499-525.

<sup>19</sup> Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. *How Democracies Die*. New York: Random House.

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<sup>21</sup> Ruth Wodak. 2015. *The Politics of Fear*. London: Sage.

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<sup>24</sup> See Figure 9.1. Calculated from Holger Döring and Philip Manow. 2016. *Parliaments and governments database* (ParlGov) 'Elections' dataset: <http://www.parlgov.org/>

<sup>25</sup> See Figure 9.2.

<sup>26</sup> Rory Costello 2017. 'The ideological space in Irish politics: comparing voters and parties.' *Irish Political Studies*, 32:3, 404-431.

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<sup>30</sup> Cas Mudde and Rovira Kaltwase. 2014. ‘Populism and Political Leadership’. In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Leadership* edited by R. A. W. Rhodes and Paul 't Hart. New York: Oxford University Press.

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