Populism and the Remaking of (Il)Liberal Democracy in Europe

Editors

Lars Rensmann, Sarah de Lange and Stefan Couperus

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Editorial

Editorial to the Issue on Populism and the Remaking of (Il)Liberal Democracy in Europe

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Abstract

Populism has become the issue of comparative political science today. The rise and continuing success of populist parties is by now evident across Europe, despite persistent cross-national variations. Populist parties' electoral success and their participation in government have raised questions about their impact: not just on established party systems, but also on the systemic core of European democracies. In theory, this impact can be both beneficial for, as well as a challenge to democracy in general, and the tenets of liberal constitutional democracy in particular. The presence of populist parties has, in several cases, increased electoral turnout and public participation, which is generally seen as a positive effect when measuring the quality of democracy. However, populist parties' rise also points to negative effects. In addition to profoundly reshaping European party systems, they advocate what the populist Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán calls "illiberal democracy". Both as an ideal and as an institutional practice when in government, the illiberal remaking of democracy implies eroding the separation of powers and subordinating constitutionally guaranteed individual civil and human rights to an alleged "general will" and a particular conception of "the people". The thematic issue explores the ideological supply, favorable conditions, political contexts and dynamics, as well as the impact of the populist surge in Europe in relation to the systemic consolidation of (il)liberal democracy on a theoretical and comparative empirical level.

Keywords

cleavages; discontent; Europe; ideology; illiberal; liberal democracy; nativism; party systems; populism; representative democracy

Issue

This editorial is part of the issue "Populism and the Remaking of (Il)Liberal Democracy in Europe", edited by Lars Rensmann (University of Groningen, The Netherlands), Sarah L. de Lange (University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands) and Stefan Couperus (University of Groningen, The Netherlands).

1. The Fourth Wave of Populism and the Rise of Populist Parties in Europe: From Pariahs to Power Brokers

Populism has arguably become *the* issue of European politics and comparative political science today. The rise, relevance, and continuing success of populist parties is by now evident in party system change across Europe, despite persistent cross-national variations. This ongoing development has been conceived as the "fourth wave" of populism (Mudde, 2013).[1] It is remarkably different, however, from the previous wave, which was characterized by the initial breakthrough of new, modernized populist parties in the mid-1980s (Abromeit, Norman, Marotta, & Chesterton, 2015; Ignazi, 2003; Mudde, 2007). Almost exclusively carried by parties from the

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[1] Von Beyme (1985) distinguishes three successive ways preceding the current wave of populist parties.

right, it affected a more limited number of European countries. These parties largely remained pariahs of European politics and their electoral and political impact remained rather limited (Mudde, 2013). Electoral successes were often followed by failures, and fluctuating parliamentary representations corresponded with a limited, mostly discursive or agenda-influencing political footprint, even if populists did take public office (mostly as junior partners) in government (Akkerman & de Lange, 2012; Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2015; Frölich-Steffen & Rensmann, 2007; Minkenberg, 2001; Rovira Kaltwasser & Taggart, 2016).

Observations that the electoral (and political) impact of populist parties has been very limited may have been valid in comparative terms until a few years ago (Mudde, 2013). They are, however, in need of re-assessment in view of the scope and force of the fourth wave of populism. After all, populist actors have improved their electoral fortunes considerably and have left their marks in party politics the world over. Indeed, they are in the process of reshaping party competition and politics in established Western liberal democracies. A steady, partly dramatic electoral rise enabled many of these parties to enter parliaments and governments, in Central Eastern Europe even as governing majorities. This includes the Hungarian *Fidesz* (governing continuously since 2010) and the Polish Law and Justice Party (*PiS*, governing with an outright majority since 2015). And in Italy there is by now a populist majority reflecting the collapse of the established post-war party system in the political earthquake of the *mani pulite* corruption scandals in 1992–1993 and subsequent political crises eroding trust in mainstream parties (Bobba & McDonnell, 2015).[2]

In 2016, populists celebrated unexpected successes in two of the oldest, most stable democracies: UKIP by winning the Brexit referendum it fought for, and, across the Atlantic, Donald Trump by winning the US presidency. Since then, the populist phenomenon has fully entered center stage of political debates and scholarly interest. Although the 2017 election cycle was overall perceived as producing mixed results—there was no populist sweep across Europe—populist parties gained votes in the Netherlands, 10.6 million voters opted for radical right-wing populist Marine Le Pen (*Front National*) in the 2nd round of the 2017 French presidential elections,[3] while in Austria the populist FPÖ re-entered government after a successful xenophobic electoral campaign. Even in Germany, a right-wing populist party—the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD)—entered parliament for the first time and immediately became the third

largest party. Moreover, the AfD and the left-wing populist *Linkspartei* together received 21.8% of the popular vote, profoundly challenging one of the hitherto most stable party systems in Europe. Moreover, transnational ideological, organizational and discursive similarities are reinforced through mutual "learning effects" in a Europeanized and globalized context (Akkerman, de Lange, & Rooduijn, 2016).[4]

2. The Populist Challenge: Liberal Constitutional Democracies and Dimensions of Populist Politics of Discontent

The populist parties' electoral success and their participation in government have raised questions about their impact. Not just with regard to established party systems, but also in relation to the systemic core of European democracies. In theory, this impact can be both beneficial for, as well as a challenge to democracy in general, and the tenets of liberal constitutional democracy in particular (e.g. Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). The presence of populist parties can increase electoral turnout, public participation, and representation under certain conditions (Huber & Ruth, 2017; Immerzeel & Pickup, 2015). However, populist parties' rise also points to potential negative effects. In addition to profoundly reshaping European party systems, they advocate what the populist Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán calls "illiberal democracy". Both as an ideal and as an institutional practice when in government, the illiberal remaking of democracy implies eroding the separation of powers and subordinating constitutionally guaranteed individual civil and human rights to an alleged "general will" and a particular conception of "the people". Recurring strategies and features of populist political mobilization appeal to these illiberal sentiments, alongside desires to break the rules of civil society and discourses of fear and crisis (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014; Rensmann, 2017a; Wodak, 2015).

The thematic issue explores the ideological supply, favorable conditions, political contexts and dynamics, as well as the impact of the populist surge in Europe in relation to the systemic consolidation of (il)liberal democracy on a theoretical and comparative empirical level. Avoiding generic claims about the "end of politics" (Mouffe, 2005) that are difficult to test, the authors engage with a dynamic, interactive understanding of populist parties' ideological changes and responses by established parties (and liberal democracy) to the populist challenge (Kriesi, 2014). Notwithstanding its con-

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[2] There is also a distinctly South European context and playing field. In Greece and Spain, where liberal democracy did not arrive until the 1970s, left-wing populist parties like *Syriza* and *Podemos* recently emerged as the most succesful populist parties, in contrast to most other European countries. In Italy, the *Movimento Cinque Stelle*, which is ideologically neither left nor right but populist, quickly became a major organization, adding to the already large spectrum of populist parties.

[3] The pro-European candidate Emmanuel Macron, to be sure, defeated her by a large margin (Rubin, 2017).

[4] Radical right populist parties have recently also reinforced their cross-national organizational and political ties in the European Parliament and beyond. The political group "Europe of Nations and Freedom" in the European Parliament, launched in 2015, prominently includes the AfD from Germany, Geert Wilders' single-member party *Partij voor de Vrijheit* (PVV) from the Netherlands, the *Front National* (FN) from France, the *Lega Nord* from Italy, the *Austrian Freedom Party* (FPÖ) from Austria, and *Vlaams Belang* (VB) from Belgium. Several of these actors also expressed support for US President Trump whose success they explicitly see as a model.

tested nature and presence as a fuzzy buzzword in political debates, "populism" has been successfully operationalized in systematic studies of contemporary actors challenging established liberal-democratic politics in Europe and beyond (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). Indeed, "populism" properly conceptualized, is especially well suited to understand key features of the most significant, electorally successful—new or transformed—movement-party types and other political actors gaining ground in European politics today. And while there is a variety of challengers liberal and representative democracy and party systems face (Pappas, 2016), the most successful and relevant are populist parties.

To facilitate the discussions between the contributions in the issue and to be able to draw conclusion on the basis of the separate studies, we present two minimal definitions. We conceive of populism as a thin-centered ideology (or discourse) "that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people" (Mudde, 2004). Because of its nature, populism can be combined with left- and right-wing, or other ideologies. In addition, we conceive of liberal democracy as consisting of two pillars: on the one hand, institutionalized forms of popular, democratic sovereignty (i.e. free and fair elections among equal members, forms of representative government, a free public sphere and media, and other democratic procedures of popular and pluralistic will-formation and inclusion), and on the other hand liberal constitutional rights and principles (i.e. individual civil, political and human rights and liberties, including freedom of expression, separation of powers, an independent judiciary; Plattner, 2010). Both constitutive pillars, the exercise of democratic public autonomy and the constitutionally guaranteed "private" autonomy of individual rights and liberties, can work as mutually reinforcing (or "co-original", in Habermas' words [1998]), but may also be in tension if output from the first pillar, which points to the particular will-formation of a particular political community, clashes with the inherently universalistic norms and undercurrents of the second (e.g. in a "tyranny of the majority", or illiberal forms of democracy, threatening the latter) (e.g. Kornhauser, 1959). However, countries regularly holding free and fair democratic elections are more likely to protect individual rights, and vice versa (Plattner, 2010).

The debate about illiberal democracy thereby points to nativist or exclusionary, particularistic critiques of liberal democracy as well as to procedural criticisms of representative democracy in the populist mobilization of discontent. It points to a socio-cultural divide identified by Bornschier (2010) affecting the character of liberal democracies and to an actual crisis of liberal democracy that is, however, simultaneously promoted, constructed and reinforced by its populist critics.

3. Populism and the Remaking of (Il)liberal Democracy in Europe: Findings

Based on cross-national studies, the thematic issue explores the relationship between populist discontent and liberal democracy (and its cultural undercurrents). Existing studies indicate that the causes of the rise of populist parties and the extent to which effects on liberal democracies materialize depend on the characteristics of the populist parties themselves (Akkerman et al., 2016) and on those of the political systems and political cultures in which these parties compete. The central question to which the different contributions of this thematic issue respond is two-fold: *What* are the political/cultural conditions or crises within liberal democracies that are favorable to the current rise of populist parties, and *how* does the emergence of populism impact on (the quality of) liberal democracy in Europe? In other words, the contributions seek to unravel through which mechanisms and under which conditions the presence of European populist parties and leaders, currently riding on a wave of electoral success, are engendered in different political, cultural, and media contexts, and have impact on various key characteristics of liberal democracies, such as levels of democratic inclusion and participation of citizens (and denizens), democratic political culture, civil, social and political civil rights, the separation of powers, an independent judiciary, and a free, diverse and pluralistic public sphere.

Theoretical reconceptualizations of conditions and dynamics, as well as comparative empirical research in this issue seek to rethink and systematize the extent to which the causes and effects of populist actors are conditional on certain factors, such as 1) the specific or shared "modernized" political ideologies of "left-wing" and "right-wing" or nativist populist parties, 2) the exclusion or inclusion of populist parties from government, 3) the type of government in which populist parties participate (i.e. type of coalition, formal or informal participation), 4) historical legacies and the degree of consolidation of (il)liberal democracy (especially taking account of differences between Western liberal democracies and post-Communist Eastern liberal democracies, where populists are on average more successful today), or 5) the contexts of political cultures and dominant social values in which populist parties operate (e.g. dynamics of social value change and backlash, dominant cultural/democratic self-understandings).

The studies show that the hitherto underexplored relationship between populism and (il)liberal democracy is more complex than initially conceived. Assessing the scope of a multi-faceted challenge, they yield mixed findings on the negative impact or threat to the future of liberal democracy and its robustness. Approaching the issue from both a comparative European perspective and a more specific regional focus, studies vary in their assessment of this relationship. While some suggest that

the transformative impact may be more limited than often claimed in recent public debates (especially on Central Eastern Europe, where populist majorities govern and recently have been reprimanded by the European Union), others argue that populism's negative impact on democratic political cultures—and the quality of democracy—in Europe is more profound and has rather been underestimated. In light of broader long-term shifts in cultural self-understandings and a traditionalist or authoritarian social value backlash against globalization, diversity, and liberal democratic principles often promoted or reinforced by populists, these studies diagnose an increased readiness to suspend or break with established norms and constitutional frameworks. This development is likely to further transform liberal democracies and consolidate populist successes.

In his article, Benjamin Moffitt (2017) questions the much-echoed equation of populism with illiberalism. Taking cue from right-wing populist parties in Northern European countries (i.e. the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway), Moffitt argues that the relationship between populist politics and liberalism is more complicated than usually assumed. Populism is not necessarily "profoundly illiberal". He makes the case for a mode of "liberal illiberalism", a selective, nationalist liberalism that is discursively employed to "put a more 'acceptable' face" on illiberal politics. In this way, Moffitt also implicitly shows that hesitance with regard to generalizations about populist politics allows for the articulation of regional variations and differences throughout Europe.

While recognizing politico-cultural specificities and significant cross-national variations, Lars Rensmann (2017b) argues that the rise of populist parties is part of a trans-national, illiberal backlash reflecting a deep cultural divide within European democracies that is increasingly reflected and mobilized in transformed political spaces. In his reconceptualization of European populist parties, he adds cultural dimensions that left- and right-wing populists share. In order to understand and assess the scope and origins of the fourth wave of populist politics in Europe, Rensmann proposes a cultural turn in the study of populism beyond conventional political science frameworks. His research takes this cultural turn into three directions, integrating insights from three currently still marginalized fields: political sociology, political psychology, and media studies. They help illuminate, it is argued, the cultural conditions from which today's populists benefit—a long lingering cultural counter-revolution, the socio-psychological dynamics of an authoritarian cultural revolt articulated by populists, and a transformed communicative environment shaped by social media.

Matthijs Rooduijn, Wouter van der Brug, Sarah de Lange, and Jante Parlevliet (2017) examine in their article whether exposure to populism makes citizens more cynical about politics. More specifically, they assess whether exposure to populist messages affect only those already favourably predisposed towards populist parties or all citizens, irrespective of their existing attitudes. On the

basis of survey experiment, in which a representative sample of Dutch citizens had to read a newspaper article containing either a populist or a non-populist message, they study the impact of populism on political cynicism. The authors find that the participants that read the populist message were more cynical afterwards than the participants that were exposed to a "neutrally formulated" message. Interestingly, they also conclude that not all citizens exposed to the populist message are equally affected. In fact, the effect of the exposure to populism is only significant for participants that support populist parties.

Robert Huber and Christian Schimpf (2017) empirically analyze differences and commonalities in the way populist parties of the left and right relate to democracy and democratic quality. They argue that populism should not be considered in isolation from its (left or right) host-ideology. Using data from 30 European countries between 1990 and 2012, Huber and Schimpf show that populist parties can exert distinct influences on minority rights depending on their left or right orientation while, however, the association between populist parties and mutual constraints is a consequence of the populist element.

Emphasizing Central Eastern European context specificity and differences within the region, Lenka Bustikova and Petra Guasti (2017) investigate the democratic backsliding, and the extent to which it is the result of rising populism, in the Visegrad countries. On the basis of a comparison of developments in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia they state that the notion of democratic backsliding, which is often used in the literature on democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, is flawed. The concept of backsliding suggests that in the Visegrad countries a clear break exists from a liberal trajectory to an illiberal one. The authors demonstrate that the countries under investigation have not gone through a linear process of democratization and consolidation in the 1990s and early 2000s, nor have they gone through a linear process of de-democratization and de-consolidation in more recent years. Instead, they observe a sequence of "episodes" delineated by elections, some of which can be characterized as "illiberal swerves". In Hungary, and to a lesser extent in Poland, the swerving has persisted over multiple elections. In these countries the "illiberal swerving" has resulted in an "illiberal turn".

In his review, which concludes this thematic issue, John Abromeit (2017) engages with five recent studies that have intervened in the empirical, conceptual and methodological debates on contemporary global populism. As each of these studies claim to make an innovative contribution to the field in their own right, Abromeit prudently assesses their merits and shortcomings. In doing so, his main criticisms revolve around constructivist approaches to populism and the use of history in some studies. Abromeit takes issue with the theoretical assumptions and (perceived) explanatory capacity underlying constructivist (e.g. discursive, performative) ap-

proaches to populism, but also hints at tendencies towards historical reductionism in some of the studies under review. Moreover, he acknowledges that the conceptual grammar of (group and social) psychology might contribute to the field, but in the same breath states that the ways in which such angles are employed offer little explanation for identification processes that are key to populist politics at large.

Be that as it may, the studies and new research all recognize that the current populist boom reflects a steady, consolidated ascendancy over a decade or more. It indicates that new and old populist actors maneuver more successfully through a changing political and (social) media landscape and actor environments, often outflanking the external supply side of established parties and appeals. This fourth wave of populism hereby benefits from what Cas Mudde (2004) once aptly called a "populist *zeitgeist*" and profoundly transformed demand side conditions in post-industrial, globalized societies: readjusted political, cultural and social value cleavages in a rapidly changing communicative social media environment as well as lingering socioeconomic and cultural crises of liberal representative democracy. It points to deep-seated discontent and a declining stability and cultural appeal of consolidated, representative liberal democracies. A crisis which populists seem to both construct and effectively exploit. While political scientists should be reluctant to make long-term predictions, the thematic issue suggests that there are few reasons that the populist phenomenon within liberal democracies is a transitory challenge likely to disappear any time soon. Rather, it is likely part of European liberal democracy's future, thereby continuing to change the political cultures and party systems that shaped Europe's post-war horizon.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Liberal Illiberalism? The Reshaping of the Contemporary Populist Radical Right in Northern Europe

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Abstract
Populism, particularly in its radical right-wing variants, is often posited as antithetical to the principles of liberalism. Yet a number of contemporary cases of populist radical right parties from Northern Europe complicate this characterisation of populism: rather than being directly opposed to liberalism, these parties selectively reconfigure traditionally liberal defences of discriminated-against groups—such as homosexuals or women—in their own image, positing these groups as part of 'the people' who must be protected, and presenting themselves as defenders of liberty, free speech and 'Enlightenment values'. This article examines this situation, and argues that that while populist radical right parties in Northern Europe may only invoke such liberal values to opportunistically attack their enemies—in many of these cases, Muslims and 'the elite' who allegedly are abetting the 'Islamisation' of Europe'—this discursive shift represents a move towards a 'liberal illiberalism'. Drawing on party manifestoes and press materials, it outlines the ways in which these actors articulate liberal illiberalism, the reasons they do so, and the ramifications of this shift.

Keywords
free speech; gender; illiberalism; liberalism; liberty; nativism; populism; populist radical right; Scandinavia; The Netherlands

Issue
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1. Introduction

It is generally accepted that populism is an illiberal phenomenon. While there is ongoing debate about populism's democratic credentials (see Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012; Panizza, 2005), most scholars would not object to characterising populism as antithetical to liberalism, whether it is right-wing, left-wing or another ideological variant of populism. Here, populism's propensity for constructing 'the people' as a homogenous group, construing 'the elite' as a singular actor, for ignoring or suppressing difference, and in the case of right-wing populists, for actively targeting minority groups, are seen as flying in the face of liberalism's commitment to pluralism, openness, and the protection of individual liberty.

However, recent high-profile cases of populist radical right (PRR) parties from Northern Europe complicate

this characterisation: rather than being *directly* opposed to liberalism, these parties reconfigure traditional liberal defences of discriminated-against groups in their own populist image, characterising groups such as homosexuals and women as part of 'the people' who require protection from 'the elite' and associated dangerous Others. They also invoke liberal defences of free speech, secularism and individual freedom, and thus 'display a more 'civic' and liberal democratic face' (Pels, 2011, p. 27) than older PRR parties. Against an elite that is allegedly in thrall to cultural relativism and political correctness, these populists present themselves as the true defenders of liberty and 'Enlightenment values'.

This article examines this situation by comparatively analysing five contemporary cases of PRR parties in Northern Europe that have often utilised liberal arguments—the Party for Freedom (PVV) and Lijst Pim

Fortuyn (LPF) in the Netherlands, the Sweden Democrats (SD) in Sweden, the Danish People's Party (DF) in Denmark and the Progress Party (FrP in Norway)—and exploring what they reveal about the complicated relationship between populism and liberalism. It argues that these cases can be viewed as examples of 'liberal illiberalism', in which illiberal attacks on particular Others associated with 'the elite'—in many of these cases, Muslims and Islamists who are allegedly bringing about the 'Islamisation' of Europe—are couched in a liberal discourse.[1] To do this, it first examines the extant literature on populism's relationship with liberalism, before turning to the question of how these parties invoke liberalism in their policy platforms and public statements. Here, it examines four themes core to the strand of 'romantic liberalism' (Gustavsson, 2015) these parties draw upon: the defence of gender and sexual minorities; individual freedom; secularism; and free speech. It finds that these parties selectively invoke liberalism, utilising it less as an ideological compass than a discourse that is easily combined with a nativist ideology and populist style. It then examines the reasons why these PRR parties utilise liberal illiberalism, as well as the repercussions of doing this for the wider political landscape. With these findings in mind, it then closes by considering whether the strict binary between liberalism and populism needs reconsidering, given their intermingling is far more complicated in practice than in theory.

It should be noted that this article is directed towards and engages primarily with the literature on populism (and PRR parties) in Western Europe. While other relevant and adjacent literatures have explored similar themes, such as the tensions and challenges inherent in combining liberal values with diverse models of citizenship—see for example the literatures on civic integration (Joppke, 2005; Joppke & Morawska, 2003), contested citizenship (Koopmans, Statham, Giugni, & Passy, 2005) or multicultural citizenship (Kymlicka, 1995)—these debates are beyond the limits of the article. PRR parties are here understood via the influential definition provided by Mudde (2007), whereby this party family combines nativism, authoritarianism and populism (although as shall be argued, the populist component of the PRR party family is less a matter of ideology than a discourse or political style).

2. Populism versus Liberalism

Before progressing, it is worth defining the key terms being utilised in this article: populism and liberalism. Both are contested concepts—some would say they go so far as to fall into the category of being *essentially* contested concepts (Abbey, 2005; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017)—but the limited focus of this article prevents us diving too deeply into these conceptual arguments. For our purposes, populism is here understood

as 'a political style that features an appeal to 'the people' versus 'the elite', 'bad manners' and the performance of crisis, breakdown or threat' (Moffitt, 2016, p. 45). This is somewhat different to Mudde's (2007) influential definition of populism as a 'thin-centered ideology', reflecting the fact that populism is difficult to conceptualize and measure as a core *ideological* feature of a party family (see Aslanidis, 2016) and the approach has been refuted by the creator of the notion of 'thin-centered ideology' (Freeden, 2017). However, my chosen definition is coherent with Mudde's definition of PRR parties, acknowledging that populist *style* is a key feature of these parties' public expressions and discourse. Liberalism, meanwhile, here is understood in its ideological sense, as opposed to historical or philosophical senses, as laid out by Freeden (2005, p. 5), in which it is seen as 'an ideology that contains seven political concepts that interact at its core: liberty, rationality, individuality, progress, sociability, the general interest, and limited and accountable power' (Freeden, 2015, p. 15). In the contemporary European context, these ideological components tend to be reconfigured along a number of different subtypes of liberalism, which Gustavsson (2015) labels as reformation liberalism, enlightenment liberalism and romantic liberalism. These subtypes follow Locke, Kant or Mill in placing diversity, autonomy and self-expression as their primary values respectively.

What happens when we draw populism and liberalism together? As noted, populism is generally seen as antithetical to liberalism in the academic literature. The vociferousness of authors who make this argument varies: on one side, we have those who see populism as not only illiberal, but also as undemocratic; on the other, we have authors who see populism as illiberal, but accept its democratic credentials. In the former camp, authors such as Müller (2014, p. 484) argue that populism 'is a profoundly illiberal and, in the end, directly undemocratic understanding of representative democracy'. In the latter camp, authors generally contend that populism is 'one form of what Fareed Zakaria has recently popularized as 'illiberal democracy'' (Mudde, 2004, p. 561). Switching the order of the syntagm, Krastev has argued that populism 'capture[s] the major political trend in our world today: the rise of democratic illiberalism' (Krastev, 2007a, p. 104), and notes that 'populism is antiliberal but it is not antidemocratic' (Krastev, 2007b, p. 60).

Perhaps the most extensive exploration of populism's relationship to liberalism comes from Pappas (2014, 2016), who uses the same language as Krastev to provide and defend a minimal definition of populism as 'democratic illiberalism', arguing that this definition is useful as it 'points directly to populism's 'negative pole', namely, political liberalism…populism, in short, may be democratic, but it is not liberal' (Pappas, 2014, p. 3). Drawing on Riker (1982) and Rawls (2005), Pappas argues that liberalism and populism differ along three key lines: liberal-

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[1] I am not the first to note this situation—others have explored this contrast, but have focused on these parties' nationalism rather than their populism (Brubaker, 2017; De Koster, Achterberg, Van der Waal, Van Bohemen, & Kemmers, 2014; Halikiopoulou, Mock, & Vasilopoulou, 2013).

ism's multiple cleavages versus populism's single cleavage between 'the people' and 'the elite'; liberalism's 'overlapping consensus' that seeks moderation versus populism's adversarial politics; and liberalism's constitutionalism versus populism's majoritarianism.[2] More so, Pappas (2016) argues that his definition of populism as 'democratic illiberalism' not only allows us to distinguish it from political liberalism, but also autarchy, or as he rewords it to explicitly demonstrate its difference from his own concept, 'nondemocratic illiberalism'. This clarification is useful as it demonstrates where those who see populism as both illiberal *and non-democratic* have gone wrong—they conflate it with autarchy.

Yet as useful as Pappas' populism/liberalism/autarchy typology is, there are cases that fall 'in between the cracks', rather than fitting neatly into one category. In this regard, empirical reality is never as clear-cut as theory, something that Pappas readily admits:

> Some cases, to be sure, will be mixed bags, and therefore their inclusion in analysis, or exclusion from it, will be assumed by how one defines 'democracy' or 'illiberalism'. Should we, for instance, classify Hungary's Jobbik as a populist (i.e., illiberal but still democratic) party, or is it to be relegated to the category of nondemocratic parties, which fall outside our research concerns? Another example: Is the strong anti-immigration discourse of the Danish Progress Party a clear enough indication of 'illiberalism' (so that we can classify this party as populist), or is it reckoned simply as a set of ultra-conservative ideas, and policy proposals, of an otherwise perfectly liberal party? (Pappas, 2016)

It is this set of 'mixed bag' cases that are of interest to this article, which concerns itself not with the former cases (where the border between democratic/nondemocratic is in question), but rather with the latter cases, in which the liberal/illiberal distinction is unclear.

There are precedents for trying to classify these 'mixed bag' cases. The terms 'centrist populism' (Učeň, 2004) and 'new/centrist populism' (Pop-Eleches, 2010) have been used to classify parties in Eastern Europe that combine populism with otherwise relatively liberal-centrist positions, while Wolkenstein (2016, pp. 14–15) has convincingly argued that the populism of the Scottish National Party should be understood as a 'liberal populism'. The same term has also been used by Fella and Ruzza (2013, p. 42) in the context of Italy: 'while the populism of the LN could be described as of radical right

or nativist in character, that of Berlusconi might be described as closer to 'liberal populism''.

3. Illiberal Liberalism in Northern Europe

Yet one cannot use the same terminology—centrist or liberal populism—to describe the Northern European PRR parties explored here—the PVV, LPF, SD, DF and FrP. These parties have been chosen as they are the most prominent cases of PRR parties in Northern Europe (Jungar & Jupskås, 2014; Mudde, 2007, 2013) and this study follows a similar regional-based approach put forward by Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2015).[3] Each of these parties combine policies that are undeniably xenophobic and putatively anti-liberal with at times classically liberal positions in other policy areas. The former policies are well-documented in the academic literature, and thus do not require a lengthy analysis here: in addition to the anti-liberal positions lay out by Pappas above, they include racism (Widfeldt, 2015), nativism (Hellström & Hervik, 2014), xenophobia (Rydgren, 2010) and authoritarianism (Jungar & Jupskås, 2014). What is of interest, however, are the latter policies, which have been less explored. The liberal themes that these parties tend to use to couch their otherwise relatively consistent illiberalism coalesce around: 1) gender and sexuality; 2) individual freedom; 3) 'Christian secularism' (Brubaker, 2017); and 4) free speech. Given that liberalism is such a broad church, these specific areas have been selected to examine as they broadly reflect the concerns of the variant of 'romantic liberalism' put forward by Gustavsson (2014, 2015)—a mode of 'hard' liberalism that sees self-expression as the primary value that justifies liberal rights rather than diversity, tolerance or autonomy—that is relatively common in the discursive and ideological platforms of many actors on the contemporary Western European (populist as well as non-populist) right. More so, these themes firmly fit into the sociocultural dimension of liberalism (rather than the socioeconomic dimension), which is focused on here due to the increasing salience of sociocultural issues for PRR parties in Western Europe (Akkerman, de Lange, & Rooduijn, 2016a). In the following section, I draw on these parties' platforms and public statements to examine each of these themes in turn. Taken together, I argue that these parties articulate a 'liberal illiberalism', whereby selective elements of liberal discourse and ideology are utilised to defend an ultimately illiberal position.

The first liberal theme invoked by Northern European PRR parties revolves around the protection of sexual mi-

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[2] In a later article, Pappas modifies liberalism's two latter features to read 'the pursuit of political moderation, and the protection of minority rights' (Pappas, 2016).

[3] There is some debate about whether the FrP is a populist radical right party: Jungar & Jupskås (2014, p. 216) argue it is 'less authoritarian and more economically right-wing' than other PRR parties, and thus 'is probably best seen as a hybrid between a PRR party and a more traditional conservative party' although Jupskås (2016, p. 169) has elsewhere referred to the party as a 'radical right-wing populist party'. Here I choose to include FrP in this article, following the example set by Rydgren (2008, p. 738), who argues that despite the party's toned-down ethno-nationalism/nativism, it operates as something of a 'functional equivalent' to PRR parties, as 'earlier research indicates that they are electorally successful for approximately the same reasons and satisfy approximately the same political demand', while other influential authors often include them in their studies of similarly-named party families or groupings (e.g. Bale, Green-Pedersen, Krouwel, Luther, & Sitter, 2010; Norris, 2005).

norities and gender equality. The former has been particularly pertinent in the Netherlands, where the LPF's leader, Pim Fortuyn, was keen to promote his social liberalness with pronouncements about his homosexuality—as he once claimed to a critic who accused him of racism: 'I have nothing against Moroccans. I've been to bed with so many of them!' (in Pels, 2003, p. 42). PVV leader Geert Wilders has also been keen to paint himself as an ally of the LGBTQ community, arguing that he is fighting for 'the freedom that gay people should have—to kiss each other, to marry, to have children—[which] is exactly what Islam is fighting against' (in Lester Feder, 2016), and speaking at the 'Wake Up' LGBT Republican National Convention event in 2016, alongside Milo Yiannopolous. The Scandinavian PRR have been less enthusiastic about LGTBQ rights: the DF are opposed to same-sex marriage; the SD does not oppose it, but also does not really support it with any vigour in its manifesto or public pronouncements; while the FrP only shifted its support behind same-sex marriage (and adoption by same-sex couples) in 2013. Nonetheless, these parties do argue against discrimination against LGBTQ people in their policy platforms, with the SD supporting legal prosecution against those who discriminate against people due to sexual orientation, and the DF explicitly targeting Islam as an enemy of the LGBTQ community, claiming that 'in recent decades, homosexuals have come under pressure from intolerant Islamic groups' and arguing that the party will 'work determinedly against oppression and discrimination against homosexuals', encouraging the police to 'take targeted action against specific groups that may exhibit despicable intolerance against homosexuals' (Dansk Folkeparti, 2009).

These parties have also positioned themselves as defenders of gender equality, although this tends to be a matter of discourse rather than policy. The Scandinavian PRR parties tend to treat gender equality as an established 'fact' in their countries, rather than a goal that still needs dedicated work to be achieved. This framing of gender equality allows these parties to appear to support gender equality and simultaneously criticise measures aimed at achieving further gender equality. In the first regard, 'conceiving equality as a matter of national pride, something already or nearly achieved, enables belittling gender discrimination and concealing power structures that cause gender inequality because they cannot possibly exist in a country that 'has gender equality'' (Ylä-Anttila & Luhtakallio, 2017, p. 44). This argument is particularly helped in the cases of the DF and FrP, where the PRR parties have been or are led by women, Pia Kjærsgaard and Siv Jensen. In the latter regard, it follows that if gender equality has 'been achieved', then any further work towards gender equality is akin to social engineering by 'the elite' or 'forcing' men and women to be the same, which is a form of discrimination in several of these parties' eyes. This manoeuvre is evident in the position of the DF, which states that it is 'committed to full and unreserved gender equality', but notes that 'equal-

ity should not be confused with positive discrimination' (Dansk Folkeparti, 2009), as well as the position of the SD, who see gender policies as highlighting difference rather than equality (Mulinari & Neergaard, 2017). This 'equality but not positive discrimination' argument works for both the more socially conservative populist right parties (SD and DF) as well as the more neoliberal populist right parties (FrP, PVV and LPF), in that the former can oppose it on grounds of 'natural' differences between the genders in line with their conservative preference for so-called 'traditional families', and the latter can present equality policies as interfering with individual and market choice.

Where these parties truly invoke a strong defence of gender equality is when it comes to the perceived sexism and misogyny of immigrants, who are seen as not sharing the liberal gender attitudes of native Northern European citizens. As Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2015, p. 29) argue, in the context of PRR parties, 'gender issues have become almost exclusively tied to the overarching issue of immigration or, better, integration'. For the Northern European PRR, this takes three tracks. The first is the need to defend the aforementioned hard-won achievement of gender equality from the threat of the influx of immigrants, whose presence will somehow dilute or threaten the liberal status quo: as Wilders puts it, the process of Islamisation in the Netherlands 'flushes decades of women emancipation through the toilet' (in Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2015, p. 29). The second is the need to protect native-born women from the misogynistic practices of immigrants: the SD, for example, released a report in 2010 entitled 'Time to Speak Out About Rape!', in which they claimed that Sweden was undergoing a 'rape wave' due to the high levels of immigrants allowed into the country, and therefore the key way to reduce sexual assault was to limit immigration (Sverigedemokraterna, 2010). The third is to ban misogynistic cultural practices from immigrant communities, thus 'freeing' immigrant women from their 'cultural prisons': here we can think of the FrP proposing a ban on the 'burkini' and the headscarf in schools on the basis that Norwegians should not 'tolerate that girls of such a young age are systematically indoctrinated to accept that women are subordinate and can be suppressed as adults' (in Akkerman & Hagelund, 2007, p. 209). In all these cases, the allegedly cultural-relativistic 'elite' are seen as abetting the destruction of gender equality in allowing increasing immigration levels from 'unliberal' cultures. As Akkerman notes, these parties ultimately have a 'Janus-faced' approach to gender issues:

> principles like gender equality and freedom of choice are emphasized in the immigration and integration domain, while almost all the parties are conservative when they address issues related to the family…[this] suggests that their commitment to liberalism is merely instrumental to an anti-Islam agenda. (Akkerman, 2015, p. 56)

In short, it seems that these parties are attempting to 'have their cake and it eat it too' when it comes to gender, with liberal notions of freedom of expression and tolerance being invoked only when convenient.

The second liberal theme utilised by the Northern European PRR revolves around individual freedom and liberty. The Dutch PRR's liberalness in this regard has been particularly pronounced, with the LPF having promoted policies such as allowing euthanasia and supporting the legalisation of drugs and prostitution, and the PVV also having 'relatively libertarian views on a number of ethical issues', including 'the right to abortion, embryo selection and euthanasia' (Vossen, 2016, p. 55).[4] Cultural attitudes towards drugs and prostitution are stricter in Scandinavia than the Netherlands, and this is reflected in the fact that the Scandinavian PRR parties tend to have a more conservative approach to these issues. Indeed, the SD and DF have adopted a hard-line stance on drug policy, whereas there has been some debate in the FrP about drug legalisation, and there is support in the party for a more medicalised approach to drug treatment rather than criminalisation (Fremskrittspartiet, 2016). The same goes for euthanasia—while the FrP is in favour of legalised euthanasia (Fremskrittspartiet, 2015a), the DF opposes it but supports more 'end of life' solutions (Dansk Folkeparti, n.d.), while the SD has tended to avoid the issue. When it comes to prostitution, the SD and DP subscribe to the 'Nordic model' of criminalising the buying of sex, rather than the selling of it by prostitutes, whereas the FrP is against the model, arguing that it has made things more dangerous for sex workers (Tjernshaugen, 2017).

The third liberal theme invoked by the Northern European PRR is secularism, which at first glance may look peculiar, particularly in the Scandinavian context given the very high percentages of national church membership. However, as Brubaker points out, this is a selective secularism:

> today, secularist rhetoric in Northern and Western Europe is directed against Muslim immigrants and their descendants, whose religiosity is seen as threatening despite the fact that Islam has little institutional power, political influence, or cultural authority in the wider society. (2017, p. 1201)

Whilst membership in the national Christian churches is seen as benign and borderline as a cultural membership rather than a strict religious affiliation (van den Breemer, Casanova, & Wyller, 2014), being a Muslim is seen as a dangerous all-encompassing identity at odds with the otherwise 'secular' society. These parties are thus advocates of what Brubaker (2016) has called 'Christian secularism', whereby Christianity—if not the church, then the broader Christian tradition—'is redefined as the matrix of liberalism, secularity, gender equality, and gay rights'. PRR parties' conjoined defence of both secularism and

'Judeo–Christian culture' in this regard allows them to specifically target Islam as their enemy. For example, the DF argues that the 'State and Church should not be separated. The Danish national church is part of Danish history and culture' (in Restrup & Bech-Jessen, 2015), and defends the 'Judeo–Christian culture [that has] managed to create the freedom and tolerance that is the foundation for democracy' against 'fundamentalist religions—especially Islam' (Dansk Folkeparti, 2009). A similar position is put forth by the SD, who claim to promote religious freedom, but defend the Swedish Church and explicitly attack Islam as 'difficult to harmoniously coexist with Swedish and Western culture' (Sverigedemokraterna, 2011, p. 27). While the FrP was very critical of the Norwegian Church in the 1970s and 1980s, it has since changed its tune to one similar to the DF and SD, arguing that 'Christian culture and ethics [are the] fundamental values of the Norwegian society' (Harry, 2014, p. 165). Although church membership is far lower in the Netherlands, the PVV nonetheless takes a similar tack, defending Judeo–Christian values against the 'totalitarianism' of Islam, which is seen not a religion but allegedly a 'totalitarian ideology'—and even Pim Fortuyn, whose sexuality would seemingly put him at odds with the conservative sexual mores of the Christian Church, defended 'Judeo–Christian humanism' against Islam (Kluveld, 2016).

The fourth liberal theme invoked by Northern European PRR parties is freedom of speech and expression. While 'the elite' and those on the left are portrayed as being in favour of political correctness and as wanting to police speech, those on the PRR portray themselves as the final defenders of free speech and artistic expression in a world gone mad. In some cases, the PRR has indeed experienced the reality of restrictions on free speech, with several of the parties having hate speech charges filed against them, but only the PVV being successfully found guilty of such charges. In 2016, Wilders was found guilty of inciting racial discrimination for calling for 'fewer Moroccans' in the Netherlands, and he portrayed this court battle as 'the trial against the freedom of speech', framing it in populist terms by stating it was 'against a politician who says what the politically correct elite does not want to hear' (Wilders, 2016). Such hate speech laws, according to Wilders, made the Netherlands 'a dictatorship', and like his forbearer, Fortuyn, he called for the laws to be abolished (van Noorloos, 2014, p. 252). The Scandinavian PRR parties have also portrayed themselves as victims of overzealous speech-policing and as defenders of free speech. The FrP claims that freedom of speech is 'amongst the most fundamental freedoms' (Fremskrittspartiet, n.d.) that human beings have, and Siv Jensen has argued that 'freedom of expression is absolute' (in Fremskrittspartiet, 2015b). The DF, meanwhile, has argued that 'freedom of expression should be as broad as possible' (in Restrup, 2015). Indeed, the path of free speech in the Netherlands is held up as a warning by some Scandinavian populists: following the

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[4] The PVV's position on drugs has oscillated between being against legalisation and avoiding the issue altogether (Vossen, 2016, p. 49).

Muhammed cartoon controversy of 2005, then-leader of the DF, Pia Kjærsgaard, brought up the murder of Theo van Gogh and the dangers faced by Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Geert Wilders as examples what happens when a country 'compromises on freedom' (Kjærsgaard, 2005). Perhaps unsurprisingly, despite their claims of being defenders of free speech, their passion for free speech depends on who is doing the speaking—Geert Wilders has repeatedly called for the Koran to be banned, while the DF recently clarified that they are 'not freedom fundamentalists' (in Ritzau, 2015) and wish to sanction the praising or condoning of terrorism.

Drawing the brief examination of these parties' ostensibly liberal sociocultural policies together, it becomes clear that their usage of liberalism is far from consistent. Rather than unequivocally defending liberal values, these parties tend to selectively pick-and-choose the most appropriate and useful parts of liberalism and refashion them for their own illiberal means. This is particularly clear when it comes to their defence of gender equality and LGBTQ rights, which only seems to serve to demonise Islam, and their defence of free speech, which is targeted towards 'the elite'. Apart from the case of the LPF (and to a lesser extent, the PVV), the lukewarm approach to individual freedoms and the convenient usage of 'Christian secularism' indicate that these parties' commitment to several core components of liberalism identified by Freeden (2015)—particularly those of liberty, rationality and progress—is weak. As such, it is worth asking where indeed they fit in the wider ideological span of liberalism—if at all. Halikiopoulou et al. (2013, p. 112) argue that these parties' liberalism is not of a Millean variety, but rather should be located within the lineage of Lockean liberalism, in that their tolerance only runs so far as to accommodate those who also tolerate others. Triadafilopoulos (2011, p. 863) goes one step further and calls their brand of liberalism 'Schmittian liberalism', in that they aim 'to clarify the core values of liberal societies and use coercive state power to protect them from illiberal and putatively dangerous groups'. Yet these actors' selective use of liberalism to serve illiberal ends should not *force us* to call them liberals—the term 'liberal illiberalism' is more useful in this regard in that *illiberalism* remains the subject of the paradoxical phrase, demonstrating that exclusion is ultimately the primary logic at play in these PRR parties' ideology and discourse (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013).

4. The Purpose and Repercussions of Liberal Illiberalism

Having examined the selective use of liberalism by Northern European PRR parties—what I have labelled here as 'liberal illiberalism'—we can now turn to the important questions of *why* they choose to articulate a version of illiberal liberalism, and the *potential repercussions* of doing so. First: why utilise liberal illiberalism? One reason is the fact that cultural, linguistic and ideolog-

ical contexts that these parties are operating within are not vacuums—the countries of Northern Europe are celebrated for their pluralism, liberal social values and progressiveness (see, for example, Ervasti, Fridberg, Hjerm, & Ringdal, 2008; Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005; Weldon, 2006), and thus it is unsurprising that these parties will pull from the resources that are familiar and available to them in this context. As Halikiopoulou et al. argue, these parties are operating within a 'civic zeitgeist' characterised by a 'current towards tolerance, diversity and rights' (2013, p. 109), and 'voters are more likely to support a radical right party if they perceive it as 'normal' or 'legitimate', which at least in part means democratic, effective and in line with baseline national values' (2013, p. 111). Even if their values are *not* particularly 'in line' with these baseline national values, it is strategically wise to at least keep up appearances and couch them in such a manner. This also ties in with PRR parties' increasing attempts to become more 'acceptable' and move closer to the mainstream: the biological racism of older iterations of such parties is no longer electorally successful nor even 'acceptable' on the fringes of mainstream party politics in Northern Europe, and as a result, these parties have also had to streamline their message, learn to sell it in a more sophisticated way, and adopt both language and positions that bring them closer to electoral success (see Akkerman, de Lange, & Rooduijn, 2016b).

A second reason for utilising liberal illiberalism is that it presents Northern European PRR parties with an allegedly 'honourable' and 'rational' way to frame their Islamophobia. As noted, the appeal to 'Enlightenment values' and the cribbing of the discourse of liberalism is far more appealing to audiences in these contexts than outright xenophobia. This shift—from an *ethnocratic nationalism* which centres on a particular ethnic group to a *civic nationalism* which centres on with those with 'shared values' (Akkerman, 2005)—has been particularly evident in the Northern European PRR's embrace of philosemitism (Brubaker, 2017, p. 1202). A sharp contrast to the antisemitism of their forbearers, these parties now see Jews as part of the 'enlightened Western' civilisation that must be defended against Islam: indeed, Wilders has gone so far as to portray Jerusalem as the 'frontier' for the West against Islam, arguing that 'if Jerusalem falls into the hands of the Muslims, Athens and Rome will be next' (2010). The argument promoted here is that 'Western culture is essentially liberal, and liberal values can only be defended against Islam by way of a cultural war. As Islam is essentially an anti-liberal religion, in this view, it should be rejected wholesale' (Akkerman, 2005, p. 348). This draws a clear line between those in favour of liberal values and those opposed to them—Muslims and 'the elite', the latter whom are not only abetting but are often seen as being in favour of the Islamisation of Europe: as Wilders argued in 2017, 'almost all politicians of the established parties are promoting Islamization' and that 'the establishment, the elite such as universities, churches, unions, the media, politi-

cians put our enforced freedoms at stake' (in PVV Fractie Noord-Brabant, 2017).

There are important repercussions for this refashioning of illiberal policies in a liberal package. One is that it contributes to the debasement and 'emptying' of liberal tropes and arguments, which in turn makes it harder for those who more clearly subscribe to liberal ideology to defend their position, as it can gradually lose its credibility. In his work on comparative uses of liberalism in Europe, Freeden (2008, p. 26) shows that 'the cachet of liberalism in its thin sense as an ideology concerning liberty has made it superficially attractive to those who free-ride on its reputation. Although a thin liberalism is still an adapted one, misappropriations go beyond that'. The issue is that this 'misappropriation' still affects the reputation and perceived 'content' of liberalism, and in doing so can make it seem 'thinner' by the day. As 'there can be substantial morphological overlap between the concepts and vocabulary of populism and liberalism' (Freeden, 2008, p. 26), PRR parties are in a particularly strong position to 'thin out' liberalism in this regard—a development that should concern those who identify as liberals.

The other related core repercussion of liberal illiberalism is the above-noted 'mainstreaming' of the PRR in Northern Europe. While this article has already noted how the PRR's selective use of liberalism has brought them closer—at least in rhetoric—to their mainstream brethren, there is a perhaps another trend at play here coming from the opposite direction: the fact that the mainstream is also looking more like the populist right. There is a reason that it has become easier for PRR parties to cherry-pick liberal discourse and policies from their mainstream competitors: because many mainstream parties themselves have reconfigured liberal values and discourse in similar ways in Western and Northern Europe (see Bale, 2003; Mudde, 2013; Muis & Immerzeel, 2017; van Spanje, 2010). To only draw on a few examples—when mainstream parties in France pass a ban on religious attire; when mandatory integration classes are introduced in a number of 'progressive' countries; when Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte tells immigrants to 'integrate or leave'; and when putative liberal and Christian democrats are happy to keep avowed advocates of illiberalism like Viktor Orbán's Fidesz in their European People's Party group in the EU Parliament—one should perhaps see PRR parties' adoption of liberalism not as an exception, but as a clear repercussion of the increasing bankruptcy of the way that many mainstream actors use liberalism themselves. Indeed, while Northern European PRR parties may articulate a liberal illiberalism, Adamson, Triadafilopoulos and Zolberg (2011) have argued that a number of 'non-populist' European governments are increasingly putting forward an 'illiberal liberalism'. While it is important to acknowledge that the order of the modifier and the subject matters greatly here—as noted earlier, liberal illiberalism indicates that illiberalism still reigns supreme in this conjunction, while illiberal liberalism indicates the opposite—the line where one crosses over into the other is becoming less and less clear.

5. Conclusion: Can Right-Wing Populism Be Liberal?

Having examined cases of PRR parties in Northern Europe that are characterised by a paradoxical liberal illiberalism, we can now return to interrogate the taken-for-granted assumption in the literature: is populism really the opposite of liberalism? The answer: perhaps in theory, but not necessarily in practice. These 'mixed bag' cases display elements of liberalism as well as illiberalism, and we cannot conveniently ignore the fact that these parties employ *some* version of liberal discourse, if not advocate liberal policies—whether this is disingenuous or not.

However, at the same time we cannot seriously call these parties 'liberal', or even 'liberal populists'. As long as their core ideology is a form of nativism or civic nationalism that seeks to *exclude* rather than *include*, then these parties' illiberalism still remains their core ideological compass. As Müller notes, in these kinds of cases, 'liberal values essentially become *nationalist* values: they serve *only* to exclude. Liberal, ostensibly universalist rhetoric serves to extract the people from the people and, de facto, create a kind of self-labelling liberal aristocracy among the people' (Müller, 2014, p. 489). While left-wing forms of populism can make a more serious case for incorporating elements of liberalism given that their conception of 'the people' tends to be inclusive rather than exclusive, the ultimate divide between 'the people' and 'the elite' must eventually come into conflict with the liberal acknowledgement of multiple cleavages in society.

There are three important lessons here for reflecting on the relationship between liberalism and populism. The first is that it is somewhat misguided to portray populism as the *direct opposite* of liberalism—populists openly borrow, ape and utilise the language if not the policies of liberalism, and it is increasingly the case that it goes the other way as well, where putative liberals do the same with populism. If they are truly 'opposites', then it would follow that this would be either impossible or extremely difficult to do, but this is obviously not the case. The related second point is that 'ideological purists' are rare and often relegated to the electoral sidelines, and as such, it is unsurprising that PRR parties are able to mix their ideology, policy positions and discourse in a way that confounds our neat theoretical categories—in this regard, some populists are more liberal than others. Third, the evidence of how these parties reconfigure, adopt and utilise seemingly paradoxical ideological and discursive positions lends credence to the position that populism is less a world-view or ideology (even a thin one, as in the work of Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017), and more a discourse (Stavrakakis, Katsambekis, Nikisianis, Kioupkiolis, & Siomos, 2017) or style (Moffitt, 2016): as Brubaker (2017, p. 1210) notes, such 'contradictions

are not surprising: bound by no stable substantive ideological or programmatic commitments, populism is distinctively and chronically eclectic, given to instrumentalizing whatever issues seem exploitable at the moment'. Today, those issues are most effectively exploited by wrapping them in a liberal package. Ultimately, Northern European PRR parties' liberalism should not be taken at face value, but rather understood as liberal illiberalism—an illiberalism that selectively utilises liberal tropes, discourse and ideology to put a more 'acceptable' face on otherwise illiberal politics.

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Conflict of Interests

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Article

The Noisy Counter-Revolution: Understanding the Cultural Conditions and Dynamics of Populist Politics in Europe in the Digital Age

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Abstract

The article argues for a cultural turn in the study of populist politics in Europe. Integrating insights from three fields—political sociology, political psychology, and media studies—a new, multi-disciplinary framework is proposed to theorize particular cultural conditions favorable to the electoral success of populist parties. Through this lens, the fourth wave of populism should be viewed as a "noisy", anti-cosmopolitan counter-revolution in defense of traditional cultural identity. Reflective of a deep-seated, value-based great divide in European democracies that largely trumps economic cleavages, populist parties first and foremost politically mobilize long lingering cultural discontent and successfully express a backlash against cultural change. While the populist counter-revolution is engendered by profoundly transformed communicative conditions in the age of social media, its emotional force can best be theorized with the political psychology of authoritarianism: as a new type of authoritarian cultural revolt.

Issue

This article is part of the issue "Populism and the Remaking of (Il)Liberal Democracy in Europe", edited by Lars Rensmann (University of Groningen, The Netherlands), Sarah L. de Lange (University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands) and Stefan Couperus (University of Groningen, The Netherlands).

1. Introduction: Reframing Populist Politics within Liberal Democracies

Populist actors have unsettled and begun reshaping European party systems and democracy. In recent election cycles, populist political parties like *Fidesz*—Hungarian Civic Alliance (since 2010) and the *PiS* (Law and Justice) in Poland consolidated or gained government positions in Eastern Europe. Following West European elections in 2017, the French *Front National*, the Dutch *Partij Voor de Vrijheit* (PVV) and the German *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD)—the latter entering parliament for the first time and immediately becoming the third largest party—are now main opposition parties, challenging mainstream competitors but also the very framework of existing constitutional liberal democracies.

In response to their electoral performances and successes, illiberal populist actors are the subject of scholarly interest that is growing on an almost exponential scale. Yet, because such efforts are often confined to examining agents, political opportunity structures, voter preferences, and party system change, even innovative research exploring causal mechanisms may miss the scope and depth of cultural undercurrents driving populist success. This article suggests that the puzzling cross-national ascendancy of populist actors should be explored in the context of profound politico-cultural transformations and conflicts within liberal democracies. Opposing established parties in both their form and content, populist actors understand themselves as movement-parties that primarily express—and often successfully appeal to—cultural discontent and identity concerns rather

than proposing specific political or economic goals. Research thus needs to respond to this self-understanding reflected in parties and their voters (Taub, 2017), and theorize the broader underlying *cultural conditions, conflicts, and dynamics* at play in populist mobilizations.

The article argues for a "cultural turn" in the study of contemporary populist politics. In so doing, it advances a novel, expanded theoretical framework. It is based on three interlinked components and claims that integrate and build upon initial findings from three disciplinary perspectives hitherto underrepresented in research on populist politics in Europe: political sociology, political psychology, and media studies. Such an expanded view points to an interrelated set of theoretical arguments on broader cultural—specifically socio-cultural, politico-psychological, and communicative—conditions and dynamics we deem crucial for explaining the current success of populist actors. The goal of this article is to bring these perspectives into substantive conversation, and to initiate a multi-disciplinary *theoretical* reframing for the study of contemporary populism that expands political science research by integrating insights from the respective fields. Such a multi-disciplinary, theory-guided perspective on populist politics in the context of politico-cultural and societal undercurrents takes inspiration from Frankfurt School critical theory, and especially their studies on authoritarianism, identity, and the communication of prejudice. Their theoretical models focus on illuminating the societal reproduction of persistent streaks of authoritarianism *within* the political cultures of political modernity which are mobilized time and again and recurringly challenge the boundaries of modern constitutional democracies (Rensmann, 2017).[1]

Substantively, this article thereby aims to conceptualize the populist phenomenon as an authoritarian-nativist *cultural counter-revolution*, as well as to theorize both transformed and persistent politico-cultural origins of the recent electoral boost of populist parties. The theoretical argument is three-fold: first, it is suggested that populists can benefit from and mobilize a no longer "silent" counter-revolution (Ignazi, 1992, 2003). The populists' appeal is primarily cultural: it thrives on a long lingering, increasingly polarized "great divide", or clash within civilizations, based on social value and cultural identity conflicts in post-industrial European societies. This divide is arguably more profound than political sociologists assume, who rightly diagnose a socio-cultural backlash (Alexander & Welzel, 2017; Inglehart & Norris, 2016).

Second, the cultural counter-revolution is theorized by employing new and classical authoritarianism theory, especially political-psychological models of authoritarian rebellion (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). The "noisy" counter-revolution is conceived as a transgressive, authoritarian revolt directed against

liberal-cosmopolitan socio-cultural transformations and culturally inclusive identities in globalized immigration societies—and against immigrants and "the elite" identified with those changes.

Third, theorizing initial findings from media studies, it is argued that the new social media culture and its dis-intermediated political communication patterns have helped erode boundaries of civil and factual discourse in political culture, propelling populist actors, their claims, and their authoritarian politics of transgression against norms of liberal democracy.

After reconceptualizing the ideological core of European populist movement-parties, each of the three proposed arguments about cultural conditions for the electoral success of populist politics is subsequently unpacked and molded into substantiated, interrelated theoretical claims. In so doing, the article points to an integrated new framework preparing a *cultural turn* in the study of populism in Europe. Rather then isolating or operationalizing specific hypotheses and testing them, initial research from three bodies of disciplinary literature is critically synthesized to advance a novel cultural perspective and lay out potential lines for future inquiry.

2. Parties and Movements: Reconceptualizing Populist Actors and their Cultural Appeal

Research has demonstrated that "populism" is well suited to understanding key features of the most significant movement-parties challenging European party systems today (Mudde, 2005, 2007; Müller, 2016; Rensmann, 2006). Yet, conceptualizations of electorally relevant European populist parties need to pay more attention to the *cultural* core of their ideological appeal: First and foremost, European populist parties—left and right—express and articulate cultural discontent and particular(istic) notions of cultural identity, a widely shared feeling of unease with globalized immigration societies and their elites, rather than specific political goals or a coherent ideology. These parties, it is argued here, ideologically point to a *cultural* counter-revolution (Ignazi, 2003) against established politics and society as much as a political one. A re-conceptualization of their ideological core should build on previous ideational definitions, but needs to further elaborate their cultural appeal, commonly categorized as authoritarian and nativist.

Following Cas Mudde (2005, 2007), populism functions as a "thin-centered ideology" that almost always appears attached to other ideological traits. Populism is marked by constructing stark group dichotomies: It considers society as separated into two antagonistic camps, "the (pure) people" versus "the (corrupt) elite", while the latter allegedly victimizes the former (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 6). Often employing a specific "image of the vox populi" as a particular, sharply demar-

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[1] The proposed new framework advancing a 'cultural turn' in populism studies also builds on my previous research into the emergence and political potential of the socio-cultural divide currently reshaping party politics in liberal democracies. Populist politics often failed only because of leadership failures and organizational factors, not because of a lack of politico-cultural potential (Rensmann, 2006, 2011, 2012).

cated, homogenous identity, populists argue that democracy should be a direct expression of a presumed "general will" (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 20). Thus populism implies a distinct ideological contrast to pluralism; and, we would add, to liberal constitutionalism with its universalistic underpinnings, focus on separation of powers, and individual civil rights.

While this ideological profile can apply to a variety of political actors, movements or parties, it is not grasped in formal conceptualizations of populism as a specific type of mobilization, leadership style, or discursive strategy (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 19). The constructed *vertical dichotomy* between "the corrupt elite" and "the pure people", which can be seen as populism's core feature, may also appear in mainstream politics. For actors and parties which can be classified as populist, this binary anti-elitism, or anti-pluralist dichotomy, is a constitutive part of their ideology. Yet the implicitly anti-universalistic, anti-pluralistic notion of "the good people" as an homogenous identity also automatically carries cultural weight that is overlooked by Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser: it presupposes the defense of cultural identity, and appeals to cultural discontent with perceived liberal rule. This includes "left" populist movement-parties like *La France Insoumise* led by former socialist Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who opposes refugees and reiterated Marine Le Pen's claim that the French nation shares no responsibility for the Vichy regime's crimes (Haaretz, 2017).[2]

Linked to this not quite as "thin" but implicitly culturally charged ideological center, most European populist parties also employ a second, *horizontal dichotomy* that is heavily culturally biased—an antagonism of "us" versus "the others", the "nation" against minorities, (im)migrants, refugees, Muslims, Jews, and "foreign powers" (Greven, 2016; Rensmann, 2006). Distinctively nativist (Mudde, 2007), they employ a specific, exclusionary conception of the people as a *culturally* or ethnically homogenous nation that is contrasted to antagonistic, demonized outgroups (Greven, 2016, p. 5). Whoever is construed as not "truly" belonging to "the people" is blamed for its problems, if not viewed as an "enemy of the people". While often migrants are targeted, those constructed as "others" can vary. All populist actors have attacked the "globalist elite" and supported some level of national economic protectionism, traditionally associated with "the left" (Kriesi, 2014; Rensmann, 2011). Our reconceptualization of populist parties takes into account that this overtly cultural, horizontal dichotomy between "the good people" and non-native outgroups representing globalization is not limited to right-wing populists. Neither are conspiratorial views of globalization as a zero-sum game favoring "the

global elite" and rendering "the people" as losers. In fact, distinctions between left and right populism based on the criterion nativism vs. cosmopolitanism are complicated and difficult to empirically substantiate, at least in the European context. Several left-wing populists in Europe, from the German *Left Party* to *La France Insoumise*, share nativist, *anti-cosmopolitan* sentiments, advocate national protectionism, and target presumably all-powerful external global forces for victimizing "the nation" (Hartleb, 2017).[3]

Further complicating traditional left/right divides, authoritarian features constitute a third ideological trait displayed among most populist actors today (Mudde, 2007). Negative political communication (Greven, 2016, p. 1) and apocalyptic crisis discourses, characteristic for populists from the *Movimento Cinque Stelle* to the AfD (Decker, 2016), are linked to calls for authoritarian solutions. Authoritarianism as an ideological feature—in contrast to political-psychological explanatory models, to which we turn later—is hereby understood as support for illiberal, top-down decision-making allowing for measures such as suspending the rule of law or constitutional rights, democratic deliberation, liberal procedural norms, and institutionalized separation of powers. The common support for authoritarianism has an affinity to the populists' anti-pluralistic, homogenized, culturally biased concept of "the people", as they claim to represent "the people themselves", understood as a symbolic, fictional body constituted "outside existing democratic procedures" (Müller, 2016, p. 27). To be sure, seeking to mobilize bottom-up "movements" and "culture" against an allegedly "broken" liberal government rather than aiming to govern lawful institutions, European populists thereby do not fashion themselves as regular electoral competitors, but as agents of "true" or "illiberal democracy" (Viktor Orbán). This may entail granting unrestricted authority to a leader articulating unfiltered sentiments of an imagined *vox populi*, by virtue of a certain culture or group membership, or the ratification of illiberal political measures by referenda that suggest direct democratic mandates (Müller, 2016, p. 29).

Integrating Mudde's ideational definition as a thin-centered ideology based on an "elite–people" dichotomy, the proposed re-conceptualization of contemporary European populist actors, parties, and movements views cultural underpinnings as crucial to understand populist ideology and appeal: *cultural bias, identity, and sentiments* are a constitutive ideological undercurrent.[4] It largely suspends left–right distinctions—despite their ongoing relevance in self-understandings of different political milieus, and notwithstanding some

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[2] The case of Mélenchon shows that both anti-immigrant rhetoric and the revisionist downplaying of a national past tainted by Nazi crimes and collaborations (in order to absolve "the people" from criminal responsibility and to advance national myth-making) are not exclusive features of the radical right.

[3] Only Greek *Syriza* and the Spanish *Podemos* decidedly support immigration, and only the latter opposes Euro-scepticism, which cuts across left–right divides (Teperoglou & Tsatsanis, 2011).

[4] Hans-Georg Betz observed an "identitarian turn" and respective programmatic convergences of populist parties in the 1990s, if programmatic contrasts among them were ever that stark as some early country-specific studies of opportunity sturctures had suggested (Betz, 2004; Bornschier, 2010b, p. 3).

policy differences.[5] Despite their cross-national distinctions, however, all "right-wing" and most "left-wing" populist actors share key common ideological denominators shaped by authoritarianism, anti-liberal, anti-pluralistic vertical *and* horizontal dichotomies, which implicitly or explicitly endorse cultural exclusivity, identity, and denigration of "others". Conceptualizing European populist parties this way, they can be understood as political articulations and mobilizations of an illiberal, culturally charged authoritarian-nativist counter-revolution against liberal democracy, inclusive cultural diversity, and cosmopolitan social value change.[6]

3. A Silent Counter-Revolution Turned Noisy: Populist Contestations of Cosmopolitan Value Change as Expressions of a Socio-Cultural Divide

To better explain the origins and appeal of this politico-cultural counter-revolution ideologically mobilized by populist parties, it should be framed in the context of a socio-cultural "great divide" restructuring political competition in European democracies. The populist resurgence, it is argued here, points to deep-seated and now salient cultural conflicts on collective identity and societal values within society that have previously been underestimated in empirical research and theoretical models.

Structural/institutional approaches examining electoral market competition and the erosion of "frozen" party systems help address improved political opportunity structures for newcomers in light of shrinking support for catch-all parties, especially on the center-left. Yet they largely fail to grasp the specific causes that benefit *populist* parties especially, as they pay too little attention to ideological content. Why don't they favor green, anti-authoritarian, or new socialist parties (Kriesi, 2014; Muis & Immerzeel, 2017)? Agency-centered *supply-side approaches*, which focus on party organization, agent strategy, and platform modernizations—or the lack thereof—are good at explaining cross-national variation and volatility (Art, 2011; Mudde, 2007; Rensmann, 2012), yet add little to explain the largely synchronous success of "fourth wave" populism (Mudde, 2013).

Demographic *demand-side explanations* face limitations because support for populist actors tends to cut across various groups, although there are some rele-

vant correlations. Male support for authoritarian populist parties is generally stronger—according to research by *Forschungsgruppe Wahlen*, the AfD received 16% of the male but only 9% of the female vote (2017 overall: 12.6%). While there is little variation between young and old voters, the AfD (and other populist parties) is doing slightly better among middle aged groups (Naumann, 2017).[7] The most reliable demographic predictor is education. Populist parties tend to do better among voters with low levels of education. A striking example is the French *Front National*, supported by up to 50% of likely voters without high school degree, in contrast to 16% with academic degree (Les Echos, 2015).

Explanations that focus on *economic factors* (relative social deprivation, unemployment, and economic crisis, etc.) largely fall short of yielding robust findings without accounting for a variety of contextual and other factors (Arzheimer, 2009). Guiso, Herrera and Morelli (2017) suggest economic security directly affects intentions to vote for populist parties, though this is mitigated by economic shocks, which tend to discourage actual voter turn-out. Koen Damhuis's study of PVV voters (2017) confirms that they include a broad spectrum of social strata. Hence, the AfD is almost equally supported by all social strata—with the exception, however, of blue-collar workers, 19% of whom voted for the populist party (compared to 12.6% overall).[8] Mirroring the results of the Frankfurt School's research on likely fascist voters in the 1920s, some (though not all) studies also show that populist support tends to be disproportionately high among small business owners and blue-collar workers, or economic "globalization losers" (Kriesi et al., 2006). Be that as it may, there are few indicators that such relative working class support is based on economic *issues*—even though neo-liberal austerity policies affect workers.

Rather, evidence from AfD voters indicates that *cultural issues*—the protection of national cultural identity, allegedly threatened by (Muslim) immigrants and the influx of refugees, opposition to "cosmopolitan" elite culture, and the rejection of progressive social value change—are salient among all AfD supporters (Taub, 2017). Only 14% of AfD voters prefer Germany to be an open-minded, cosmopolitan country, in contrast to the majority among voters of other parties (Naumann, 2017).[9] Anti-cosmopolitan, authoritarian-nativist cultural attitudes are by

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[5] While radical right and left are still relevant analytical categories, the new patterns point to constitutive similarities among populist parties, rendering these distinctions less relevant in view of ideological features, platforms, and voters. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser's distinctions between "exclusionary" versus "inclusionary" populism (2013) may be more useful, though most populist parties in Europe are not inclusionary. When analyzing particularism–universalism, nationalism–cosmopolitanism, authoritarianism–liberalism divides, most populist parties, "left" and "right", are today linked to the first side of these divisions, opposing, in the words of left-wing Brexit supporter Alan Johnson, the "Davos man" and "the globalist elite" (Johnson, 2017).

[6] Jeremy Corbyn's attempt to transform the British Labor Party, traditionally center-left, into a populist movement-party (with the support of "Momentum", a movement-organization within the party founded in 2015), is a case in point. He does not just consistently employ populist *vertical anti-elite dichotomies* ("the many" versus "the few") but also *horizontal dichotomies* (e.g. blaming the EU for British neo-liberal policy and supporting anti-immigrant policy to allegedly protect domestic wages; Chakelian, 2017). He also has a decidedly authoritarian streak, displayed in support for authoritarian regimes in Venezuela, Iran and Russia and violent groups like Hamas, Hezbollah and the IRA (Hirsh, 2017).

[7] An outlier is France: Only 20% of voters over 65, but 44% of 18 to 24-year-olds backed *Front National* leader Le Pen in the second round of the presidential election (Kentish, 2017). The data on the AfD are based on a combination of a telephone survey among 1,666 randomly selected eligible voters one week before the 2017 national parliamentary election, and of a survey of 41,334 voters on the day of the election, both conducted by *Forschungsgruppe Wahlen*. The French data are based on a survey among 2,797 eligible voters, conducted by IFOP in March 2015.

[8] On the survey data see footnote 7.

[9] See footnote 7.

far the most reliable predictors of populist voting. This is why political sociology that explores the evolution of conflicts on cultural values and identities offers the most promising direction to theorize populist success.

Four decades ago, Ronald Inglehart observed a "silent revolution" of post-material social value change as an effect of economic modernization and stability (Inglehart, 1977). Overall, cultural change has further progressed towards the increased acceptance of inclusive liberal-cosmopolitan and individual self-expression values (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005), particularly striking among younger generational cohorts in increasingly culturally diversified, post-industrial democracies (Inglehart & Norris, 2009). The social value revolution eventually resonated in platforms and policies of mainstream parties (even if to varying degrees cross-nationally), leading to a recently accelerated cultural "cosmopolitanization of European party politics" (Rensmann, 2014).

Yet this cultural change has not been uncontested. Following the initial rise of "post-material" left and green parties representing social value change, Piero Ignazi suggests a wave of radical right success in the 1980s and 1990s benefited from a "silent counter-revolution" (1992, 2003), understood as a cultural backlash against social value change and demographic shifts related to immigration. Although it often became politically manifest only in short-lived protest votes and fluctuating performances of radical right populist parties, the societal undercurrent of the cultural counter-revolution has lingered on. Rather than disappearing, it has now fully translated from silent value opposition among relevant segments of voters and non-voters into robust support of outspoken, politically and electorally relevant movement-parties.

Indeed, new research indicates that the backlash stabilized and helped polarize political conflict along an increasingly salient *great cultural divide* within European democracies: a divide between liberal-cosmopolitan and authoritarian-nativist social values, or cosmopolitanism vs. nationalism, which largely trumps socio-economic cleavages (Bornschier, 2010a; Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Kaldor, 1997; Rensmann, 2011).[10] Inglehart and Norris demonstrate that populist support is primarily driven by once culturally predominant groups' cultural backlash against progressive social value change, or the displacement of traditional cultural norms and privileges (Inglehart & Norris, 2016, p. 3). The authors use expert surveys of the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) to identify the ideological location of 268 political parties in 31 European countries and combine these data with

national-level European party competition and the European Social Survey (2002–2014) to examine the cross-national evidence at individual level for the impact of the economic insecurity and cultural values as predictors of voting for populist parties. While the economic security theory, which views changes in the workforce in post-industrial economies responsible for populist parties' rise, gets inconsistent support, they find consistent evidence for the cultural backlash theory. Rising levels of economic insecurity may have their share. Yet, populist parties' rise above all reflect "a reaction against a wide range of rapid cultural changes that seem to be eroding the basic values and customs of Western societies" (Inglehart & Norris, 2016, p. 30).

While offering an important empirical account of the cultural backlash, the authors fall short of further theorizing its causes beyond suggesting that rapid cultural change "catalyzed culture wars" (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Within the context of modernization theory, the backlash may then appear as a transitory phenomenon, a temporary "bump in the road" of socio-cultural modernization expressed by what Inglehart and Norris see to be an ethnocentric, partly aging white cultural minority—rather than conceiving the backlash in the context of reproduction of stable, resilient authoritarian legacies and cultural undercurrents within liberal democracies. A critical cultural theorizing of their empirical findings would also have to thoroughly reflect on underlying socio-economic origins facilitating wishes for cultural closure and exclusive identity—such as a structural crisis of global capitalist economic modernization that may undermine further socio-cultural modernization and democratization.[11] Finally, the authors say little about the depth of the divide fueling cultural value and identity conflicts, and authoritarian populist challenges to liberal democracy, which seems to currently have lost some of its cultural appeal.[12]

Indeed, the forceful, noisy cultural counter-revolution seems to correlate with eroding trust in democratic institutions and laws, and declining support for liberal democracy. Roberto Stefan Foa and Yascha Mounk view an increasingly large pool for authoritarian populists as a sign of "democratic deconsolidation" (Foa & Mounk, 2016).[13] They suggest, contrary to Inglehart and Norris, that such disaffection with liberal democracy (and its culture) especially affects the youngest generational cohorts. While, for instance, 55% of Dutch citizens born before WWII accredited maximum importance to living in a democracy, only one in three millennials do so (Foa & Mounk, 2016, pp. 7f.).

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[10] Simon Bornschier (2010a, p. 421) conceptualizes this new divide in terms of a salient conflict between libertarian-universalistic and traditional-communitarian values.

[11] To be sure, the authors call for additional robustness tests (Inglehart & Norris, 2016, p. 30). And they concede that the cultural backlash may also be stimulated by heightened economic insecurity evoked by globalized market capitalism and its crises. Such interactive effects possibly make distinctions between economic insecurity and cultural backlash somewhat artificial (Inglehart & Norris, 2016, p. 3).

[12] Political psychologists Sniderman and Hagendoorn argue that rigid identity politics contributed to a "cultural conflict zone" in the Netherlands. They point to actual collisions of ways of lives, norms, and values within immigrant societies (Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007).

[13] For a challenge on empirical grounds, see: Alexander & Welzel (2017); Norris (2017); Voeten (2017).

4. An Authoritarian Cultural Revolt? Explaining the Populist Counter-Revolution in Context of the Political Psychology of Authoritarianism

These empirical observations still leave much to be explained in terms of the underlying *causes* of the salient cultural divide, and the genesis of the politico-cultural backlash today. Which theoretical framework best explains the diagnosed noisy cultural counter-revolution, and the accelerated momentum of today's populist politicization of cultural identity and value change? We believe theorizing and research on the political psychology of authoritarianism, long ignored in studies on European populism, can partly help fill this theoretical and empirical void.

Matthew MacWilliams demonstrates that only one trait predicts if you are a Trump supporter. According to MacWilliams, this is not class, race, or age but authoritarianism. It is measured by responses to 4 questions pertaining to child-bearing: whether it is "more important for the voter to have a child who is respectful or independent; obedient or self-reliant; well-behaved or considerate; and well-mannered or curious" (MacWilliams, 2016). A study by political psychologist Pettigrew (2017) adds social dominance and prejudice to authoritarianism as constitutive for populist support. One initial, groundbreaking work by Hetherington and Weiler traces the recent political polarization in American politics to authoritarianism as an "attractive" explanatory framework (Hetherington & Weiler, 2009, p. 4). According to the authors, negative views on issues like immigration and the use of force reflect individual levels of authoritarianism and have gained salience through political decisions. However, while this important study contributes to a promising, theoretically grounded understanding of politico-cultural polarization paving the way for populist politics, it does not engage with populism, let alone populism in Europe. Moreover, it draws major inspiration from Adorno and the Frankfurt School (Hetherington & Weiler, 2009, pp. 33–58), yet it does not fully engage with their critical-theoretical framework explaining political-psychological dispositions and dynamics of authoritarian politics.

Turning to the Frankfurt School's older research on the political psychology of authoritarianism, the populist surge in Europe can be theorized as an *authoritarian cultural revolt*. Authoritarianism is hereby understood not just as an ideological feature of populist parties or attitude among their voters, but also as a multi-faceted political-psychological binding "glue" unleashed in political group dynamics.[14] Absorbing Frankfurt School theory, the origins and interactive dynamics at play that fuel the noisy counter-revolution point to a politically instigated collective rebellion, supported by aggregate individual attitudes and psychological dispositions, against post-industrial liberal democracy and its universalistic, inclusive, and non-authoritarian cultural underpinnings. Such revolt may benefit from economic insecurity of voters and a crisis of legitimacy of established parties and government, but cannot be reduced to either.

Adorno points to models of politically mobilized, collectively amplified psychological discontent. Adorno's theory of the "authoritarian" or "anti-democratic" *syndrome* refers to a psychological disposition linking desires for both authoritarian submission and aggression to anti-egalitarian ideologies (e.g. antisemitism, nationalism, and sexism; Adorno et al., 1950; for a thorough discussion, see Rensmann, 2017). This syndrome translates into susceptibility to fantasies of persecution and conspiracy myths personifying social problems; binary thinking attributing all personal or societal problems to alleged "enemies", in sharp contrast to narcissistic gains through collective self-aggrandizement of one's own group and "cultural identity"; and projections on perceived "others" of fantasies, anxieties, and social transgressions otherwise taboo (e.g. viewing immigrants as rapists)—all of which can be detected in current populist mobilizations and their self-reinforcing performative dynamics (Rensmann, 2017, pp. 321–357; Wodak, 2015, p. 154).

Explaining the appeal of authoritarian-nativist demagogues we find mirrored in today's populists, Adorno theorizes these dispositions in the context of a culturally wide-spread ego weakness present even in consolidated modern democratic cultures. He views it as being the product of structural insecurity, social dependence, and economic pressure experienced by many individuals in modern societies, which are shaped by abstract forms of societal domination and forceful socio-economic imperatives (Rensmann, 2017, pp. 215–230). According to Adorno, these socio-cultural conditions engender feelings of cultural alienation and reified, stereotypical perceptions of the social world manifest in the authoritarian syndrome. It implies submissiveness and aggression: longing for subordinating under a strong, idealized collective and authority figure alongside the denigration of constructed "enemies" of the (national) group, as well as the urge to break free from civil rules without breaking with the social order. According to Adorno's theory of authoritarian rebellion (Rensmann, 2017, pp. 127–132), populists may offer exactly these particular, tribalistic and aggressive forms of emotional gratification and psychological bonding that authoritarian subjects and milieus look for, rather than economic gains: Releasing verbal authoritarian aggression by lashing out against those seen as "different", "alien", "weak" or "dangerous" others (all present in the imagery portraying refugees), while

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[14] A recent exploratory study by Rooduijn (2014) on Dutch voters confirms that authoritarianism is part of the attitudinal complex of radical right populist voters, but does not employ authoritarianism as an explanatory theoretical framework.

promising to restore forceful sanctioning authority and elevate the in-group, "the good people", by bringing back past national collective glory and pride.[15]

Such critical theorizing of the populist surge as an authoritarian cultural revolt against the alleged cultural weakness of liberal democracy may help understand the admiration for Putin's autocratic leadership in Russia by both populist voters and parties like the AfD or *Front National*. It may also help explain why provocative violations of civil liberal norms, discursive boundaries, and even legal ones by populists—their willingness to break the rules and cultural taboos—do not seem to alienate but rather attract populist core voters, as a study of Trump loyalists shows (Carter & Johnston Conover, 2017). Benjamin Moffitt and Simon Tormey understand this "coarsening of political discourse" in disregard of "'appropriate' ways of acting in the political realm" as a core element of what they conceptualize as "populist political style" (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014, p. 392). Constantly challenging the public "boundaries of the speakable" (Rensmann, 2006), the dynamics of a new type of disruptive *politics of transgression* have already transformed political cultures. For instance, the Dutch populist Wilders provoked a ruling by a regional court that found him guilty of inflammatory speech against Muslims, only to enjoy media attention for blaming the legal system and lamenting infringement of free speech (Adam, 2016). In reference to chancellor Merkel, AfD politicians proclaim "We'll lock up the old bitch", expressing vulgar authoritarian punishment fantasies against a denigrated political elite and migrants.

Seen in this theoretical framework, the current immigration crisis which has coincided with populist electoral gains is less a cause for successful populist mobilization than an opportunity for politically unleashing existing authoritarian dispositions and anti-cosmopolitan cultural identity constructs among significant milieus. Since 2015, the European refugee crisis in the wake of the civil war in Syria helped further boost the authoritarian-nativist cultural backlash, and publicly transform it into a noisy political rebellion. This is especially the case in countries like Germany, where many migrants were able to find refuge (Ostrand, 2015).[16] However, European surveys that include countries hardly affected by the refugee crisis, such as Poland or the UK (Ostrand, 2015, p. 273), also show wide-spread opposition to new migration. In a recent PEW survey in 10 major European countries, 59% of respondents are concerned that the influx of refugees "will increase the threat of domestic terrorism", with majorities holding this view in 8 of 10 countries. Strikingly, only a minority thinks that "growing diversity makes the country a better place to live", including such culturally diverse countries like the Netherlands (17%), the UK (33%), and France (26%) (Poushter, 2016).

Even though mass immigration matters, problems with politico-cultural inclusion exist, and the threat from Islamist terrorism is a serious policy issue, these cross-national data indicate that underlying, authoritarian-nativist *cultural perceptions* play a major role, partly independent of actual migration numbers and the presence of (Muslim) immigrants. Following our argument, these data can serve as indicators of an affectively charged politico-cultural divide in society on issues of collective identity, diversity, and cosmopolitan social value change—by now largely overshadowing other cleavages among voters—and a consolidated, proliferating culture of authoritarian aggressions and transgressions expressed by populist actors and other counter-revolutionary groups on squares, demonstrations, and social media. Indeed, the authoritarian backlash today in defense of a particular, exclusive conception of national cultural identity is often articulated with regard to fear of an increasing influence of Muslims and Islam—and at times in apocalyptic terms. The populist wish to "restore" a pure, ethnic national identity and to "take back our country and *Volk*" (as cited in Cohen, 2017) is thereby frequently linked to calls for "de-Islamization" (Geert Wilders, as cited in Cannane, 2017)—if need be by authoritarian measures. "Globalist" Jews also often serve as imagined subversive "enemies" of cultural identity; occasionally they are construed as string-pullers behind Muslim migration—the authoritarian populist prime minister of Hungary makes this claim against the Jewish billionaire George Soros (Gorondi, 2017; see also Rensmann, 2011).[17]

5. Reconfigured Political Conflict in the Digital Age: Post-Factual Transgressions on Social Media as Cultural Facilitators of Populist Politics

The question about changing *cultural* conditions favorable for authoritarian populist mobilizations points to an-

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[15] Authoritarianism as an explanatory framework for populist success seems especially useful in view of the disproportionate success of populist parties in post-authoritarian, post-Communist contexts, like PiS in Poland, Fidesz in Hungary. In the 2017 elections the AfD became the strongest party in Saxony and generally considerably more electorally successful in former East Germany (21.5%), still shaped by authoritarian cultural legacies, than in former West Germany.

[16] In the 2017 elections, for instance, the new German populist party AfD gained massively among former non-voters across the country, and especially in authoritarian-nativist strongholds in East Germany still marred by authoritarian, anti-democratic legacies. But it also collected large shares in some West German towns locally dealing with the refugee crisis, where refugees became the no. 1 topic—such as Deggendorf in Bavaria, where 31.5% voted for the right-wing populists (Osel, 2017).

[17] It is noteworthy that there is some variation in the rhetoric mobilized by European populist parties on Islam. Some actors, like Geert Wilders, claim that they in fact *protect* European liberal values and gender equality against an illiberal Islam (Zúquete, 2008). Rogers Brubaker calls this "civilizationism" (Brubaker, 2017). Yet such seemingly pro-liberal defenses of liberal-egalitarian norms are deceptive insofar as they are regularly intermingled with ethnicized myths of cultural superiority and inferiority, and accompanied by racialized stereotypes of Muslims as essentially "culturally incompatible" with European societies—labeling Muslims collectively as dangerous extremists or as rapists. This betrays the grounding of such populist rhetoric in the authoritarian, anti-liberal and anti-cosmopolitan side of the cultural divide, rather than being an expression of a liberal-secular critique of political Islam(ism).

other interrelated field of inquiry beyond conventional frameworks for the study of party politics. Findings from political sociology on the cultural appeal of a counter-revolutionary backlash mobilized by populists should not only be linked to research on the political psychology of authoritarianism to better theorize the scope and depth of this appeal. Understanding the transformed environment engendering, reinforcing and polarizing the divide on social values and cultural identity also means paying attention to the role of social media and digital publics. It requires theoretically and empirically integrating research from media studies on changed *communicative* conditions of politics. Arguments on the relevance of social media bubbles and fake news disseminated through new digital media have gained prominence in recent debates about populism. But these arguments have yet to resonate in broader systematic research on this link. While the precise relations of populist communication and social media have hardly been researched yet, first quantitative studies of populist communication strategies show that populist parties make disproportionate use of Facebook and Twitter (Ernst, Engesser, Büchel, Blassnig, & Esser, 2017; on initial work on populism and new media see Coretti & Pica, 2015; Mazzoleni, 2008; Reinemann, Aalberg, Esser, Strömbäck, & de Vreese, 2017; Wirth et al., 2016).

Three initial insights from research on the implications of new digital media on conditions of political communication seem particularly relevant for both reframing the study of populism and theorizing the profoundly changed cultural conditions for its impact: First, dis-intermediating technologies like Facebook and Twitter increasingly replace newspapers and other media serving as intermediaries between politics and citizens. This transforms patterns of political interaction and publicity in multiple ways. Social media can have democratizing effects on public discourse because they engender immediate fact-checking by civil society actors, increasing the political accountability of those who hold public office. Social media also "have the potential to favor citizens' activism", enable regular citizens to actively participate in public debates and offer "free networked space" for and between political actors and non-actors (Ceron, 2017, pp. 179, 197f.). Yet studies have shown that social media can also, at least for ideologically and culturally predisposed groups and audiences, generate non-pluralistic arenas: self-referential and segregated publics in which particular world-views are affirmed and reinforced. Rather than facilitating rational deliberation about policies across a large public spectrum, social media can have constraining ideological effects and limit genuine debate between competing views; favorable to populist rhetoric, which is shaped by constructed group dichotomies, communication tends to be shaped by fragmentation and polarization (Ceron, 2017, p. 198). Digital media may thus add

to centrifugal tendencies of polarization in political life—and the breakdown of the public into fragmented, non-pluralistic, and biased micro-publics warped in closed world-views.[18]

Second, recent communication studies show that the rhetorics of horizontalism regarding social media platforms often hide vertical structures and inequalities. This has been demonstrated in the case of the Italian populist movement-party *Movimento Cinque Stelle* led by Beppe Grillo. While glorifying social media technology, it masks authoritarian, intransparent techniques (Coretti, 2014). Moreover, both Facebook and Google have boosted, arguably involuntarily, fake news sites in the past, including prominently *Sputnik* and *Russia Today*, which spread disinformation in the service of the authoritarian Russian government. Communications scholars have analyzed intransparencies, including algorithms subject to manipulation (Coretti & Pica, 2015, p. 316; Treré & Barassi, 2015, p. 299). There is mounting evidence that Russia, in addition to overt support for European populists, used cyberwar techniques on social media, interfering with fake news and "bots" (fake automatized accounts) on Twitter and Facebook on behalf of populist electoral campaigns in America, France, and Germany—with the presumed goal of destabilizing democracies (Röpcke, 2017; Rotella, 2017; Shane, 2017).

Third, Dahlgren (2005) observed already more than a decade ago negative effects of new digital media on civic cultural norms, alongside effects of transnational critical publicity. Recent studies validate the claim that especially social media discourses have engendered the growth of unfiltered hate speech and verbal violence, as well as post-factual claims and conspiracy myths both from below, or bottom up, and top down from sponsored (fake) news sites—often articulated anonymously and spreading instantaneously (Ceron, 2017, p. 1). Circumventing traditional media and their discursive filters, both social media and populist politics boost the politics of transgression (see Reinemann et al., 2017)—the latter often with the help of social media, as a study by Krämer (2017) on populist online practices shows. In addition to evading established media and developing a populist identity and ideology, main functions include justifying the hitherto socially illegitimate exclusion of outgroups (Krämer, 2017). Framing politics in terms of friends and enemies, they constantly challenge and have eroded the boundaries of "legitimate" or acceptable political discourse and civil norms. This includes the expansion of vulgarity, fear-mongering, authoritarian aggression and ad hominem intimidation, and formerly discredited social resentments.[19] Stylizing themselves as audacious "taboo-breakers" of an allegedly stifled public debate, populists often stage provocations to draw attention while pretending to be the "voice of the people" victimized by liberal media and "elite opin-

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[18] Catering to specialized audiences, social media and websites assess preferences and encourage citizens to narrowly filter information they receive and speak only to the like-minded (Sunstein, 2009).

[19] See for an analysis of these features within populist discourse Wodak (2015).

ion". They frequently employ social media to "break the rules", which constitutes part of their cultural attraction (Krämer, 2017; Reinemann et al., 2017).

Not surprisingly, populist actors often praise social media for empowering the voice of the "real people" and enabling them to speak "truth" directly to the people without interference—in contrast to information from the allegedly "lying" "establishment media", in part portrayed as "enemies of the people" (D. Trump).[20] Be that as it may, the destabilization of facticity through new digital media seems particularly beneficial to simplifications, falsehoods, and ideological binaries employed by populist actors. The culture of post-factual claims on proliferating fake news sites, which spread falsifications and invented facts and benefit from wide-spread lack of information literacy (Stanford History Education Group, 2016), undermines democratic political culture, which requires factual grounding.[21] It can be theorized that the ubiquitous political relativization, inversion, and destabilization of factual truth on social media also further advances the polarization of politico-cultural conflict, insofar as truth is increasingly seen as either unrecognizable or irrelevant among groups of voters as long as claims support one's ideological cause or political convictions. This process coincides with declining trust in established news sources and mainstream media over the last two decades (Swift, 2016).

How the changed media environment specifically interacts with the rise of a populist and authoritarian-nativist cultural counter-revolution needs to be further theorized and studied, both in its micro-mechanisms and broader cultural impact, i.e. to determine under what specific conditions communication dynamics in digital publics broaden the cultural opportunity structures of populist politics (Koopmans & Muis, 2009; Rensmann, 2011).

6. Conclusion: Towards a Cultural Turn in the Study of Populist Politics

The article has argued for a cultural turn in the study of populist politics in Europe. It proposed an ideological reconceptualization of populist actors, focusing on their long underestimated, yet constitutive cultural appeal and identity. Synthesizing, linking and integrating insights that originate in three adjacent fields—political sociology, political psychology, and media studies—we furthermore sought to advance a novel, multi-disciplinary perspective to theorize cultural conditions and dynamics at play in current trans-national populist successes.

The suggested theoretical framework conceives populist parties primarily as expressions and facilitators of

a long lingering, now noisy, authoritarian-nativist *cultural counter-revolution*. They thrive on and mobilize a significant cultural backlash that is directed against cultural inclusion and progressive cosmopolitan social value change—as well as "others" and elites representing such change. As we have argued based on sociological empirical indicators, this counter-revolution reflects deep-seated, increasingly salient and politicized cultural conflicts about values, identities, and loyalties in European democracies: a great divide grounded in cultural and social values that largely trumps economic cleavages. The proposed theoretical framework hereby attributes a key explanatory role to the political psychology of authoritarianism—long marginalized in studies on populism—and its cultural undercurrents within European societies. The populist surge can be theorized as an authoritarian revolt forcefully expressing cultural discontent *within and against* modern liberal democracies. New research from media studies contributes to understanding this revolt and its transgressions as engendered by profoundly transformed communicative conditions in the digital age: they help erode standards of civil and factual discourse and benefit populist mobilizations.

To be sure, research on changed cultural conditions needs to take into account political factors that have contributed to the accelerated rise of illiberal populist actors and politics, and deserve further study. The sensed crisis of democratic legitimacy, which populist actors seek to exploit, may also be linked to mainstream parties' technocratic or failed policy responses to societal challenges (Taub, 2017). These include neo-liberal welfare state regress and widening social inequalities advanced by mainstream parties over the last two decades, inadequate attempts to develop sound, humane refugee and immigration policies, and failure to provide effective responses to political Islamism and terrorism—which do constitute real threats to citizens, denizens, and immigrants seeking civil rights and freedom in cosmopolitan immigration societies. Moreover, the reconfigured politico-cultural conflicts analyzed may have been fueled by parts of a culturalist left and radical religious groups who promote anti-cosmopolitan, illiberal politics that relativize human rights in the name of cultural identity, thus displaying affinities with identity politics of authoritarian populists.

The diagnosed noisy cultural counter-revolution mobilized by populist actors and the cultural conditions that contribute to their current success also need further, multi-disciplinarily grounded theorizing, as well as the robust operationalization and testing of hypotheses on distinct culture(s) of populism in the future. We still know too little: about the scope and origins of the salient,

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[20] Within democracies, the Orwellian inversion in relation to news media is especially practiced by the authoritarian populist U.S. President Trump, who primarily communicates via Twitter. Attacking renowned news sources as "the Fake News Media" (in capital letters) he, emblematic also for European populists, suggests being victimized by news media: "Only the Fake News Media and Trump enemies want me to stop using social media (110 million people). Only way for me to get the truth out" (as cited in Jackson, 2017).

[21] Openness to processing factual information and accepting facts are arguably minimum requirements for democracy to work. Many populists and fake news sites, however, seek leveling out differences between fact, opinion, and falsehood and promote "alternative facts" (Kellyanne Conway, Counselor to the U.S. President).

emotionally charged divide on socio-cultural values and identities, the grievances and conflicting forces in play, and the role of underlying socio-economic factors—such as rising economic insecurity and inequality—potentially contributing to the longing for cultural closure and value change reversal. The same applies to the emotional gratifications of what we have theorized as an authoritarian revolt, anchored in wide-spread psychological dispositions and amplified by transgressions of politico-cultural boundaries on social media. However, we believe that a better understanding of the cultural dynamics of populism will also help to assess its potential effects on the future of democracies in Europe and beyond.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Article

Persuasive Populism? Estimating the Effect of Populist Messages on Political Cynicism

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Abstract
Many European countries have seen a growth of populism in recent years. Extant research shows that populist parties are increasingly successful, and that populist messages appear more frequently in the media. This raises the question to what extent populist messages affect public opinion. The aim of this study is to assess whether populist messages fuel political cynicism by arguing that an arrogant, selfish and complacent political elite does not listen to what ordinary people find important. Moreover, it assesses whether populist messages affect only those already favourably predisposed towards populist parties, or whether it affects citizens across the board. The results of a survey experiment, conducted in the Netherlands, suggests that individuals who are exposed to populist messages are indeed more cynical afterwards than individuals who are exposed to a very similar, but more 'neutrally formulated' message. However, the effects seem to be restricted to supporters of populist parties.

Issue
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1. Introduction

Since the 1980s, populist parties have surged in Europe. Right-wing populist parties such as the *Front National* (FN) in France and the *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (PVV) in the Netherlands, and left-wing populist parties like *Syriza* in Greece and *Podemos* in Spain, have been electorally quite successful. In a number of countries, populist parties have governed, either as part of a coalition government (e.g. Austria, Greece, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway) or by absolute majority (e.g. Hungary and Poland). Also outside of party politics, populism has become more pervasive. Rooduijn (2014), for example, has found that as a consequence of the upsurge of pop-

ulist parties, the populist message has also become increasingly widespread in the media (see also Manucci & Weber, in press; Mazzoleni, 2008). Interestingly, in media outlets populist claims are not only made by the politicians that are being interviewed or cited, but also by journalists themselves (Hameleers, 2017). As a result, some scholars have spoken about a populist 'Zeitgeist' in Europe (e.g. Mudde, 2004).

While much research exists on the causes of the pervasiveness of populism (for an overview see Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017), much less is known about the consequences thereof. Some scholars have argued that the rise of populism poses a threat to liberal democracy (e.g. Abts & Rummens, 2007; Akkerman, 2003; Kaltwasser,

2012; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012). However, to empirically substantiate this claim, more knowledge is required about the consequences of the rise of populism. More particularly, we need to understand how the upsurge in populism affects the attitudes and behaviour of citizens. Our study focuses on one particular consequence, namely whether populist messages fuel political cynicism among citizens.

On the basis of cross-sectional data, Van der Brug (2003) provides evidence for his claim that the right-wing populist *Pim Fortuyn* fuelled political discontent by his anti-elite rhetoric. In a more recent study Rooduijn, Van der Brug and De Lange (2016) show that citizens who switch their support to populist parties become more discontented with politics. While these findings strongly suggest that populist messages can fuel discontent, we cannot know whether it is indeed the populist message that leads to such discontent. It is important therefore to test this causal claim in an experimental study, which is what we do here.

Our study is not the first experiment to examine the effects of exposure to populism. Bos, Van der Brug and De Vreese (2013), for example, investigate how mainstream right and radical right-wing populist politicians are evaluated when they express messages that are populist in nature. They find that only radical right-wing populist politicians are positively evaluated when they express such messages. Moreover, the effect is restricted to citizens who are already cynical about politics. Similarly, Hameleers and Schmuck (2017) show that citizens who are exposed to messages in which blame for negative developments is attributed to either the government or immigrants become more strongly populist in their attitudes. Yet, this effect is restricted to those that find the source of the message credible. Both experiments demonstrate that citizens' attitudes are influenced by the messages to which they are exposed, but that only citizens with attitudes that are already in line with the message are susceptible to be influenced. Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior (2004) refer to this as a 'galvanizing effect'.

We are not aware of experimental studies that focus on the effects of populist messages on political cynicism. To further our understanding of populism's impact, we therefore examine the effect of exposure to populist messages on political cynicism by means of a survey experiment. In the experiment we assign participants at random to a treatment or a control group. The participants in the first group are exposed to a text that contains a populist message, whereas the participants in the second group are exposed to a text that is highly similar in substance, but does not contain any populist messages. We assess whether individuals allocated to the first group report higher levels of political cynicism than individuals assigned to the second group. Moreover, we assess to what extent the treatment effect is conditional upon their support for populist parties. We find a clear effect of populist messages, but this effect is restricted to

supporters of populist parties. They become more cynical about politicians as a result of their exposure to the populist message.

2. Populism and Political Cynicism

Many scholars define populism as a set of ideas in which the good people are pitted against the evil elite (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Canovan, 2004; Mudde, 2004; Stanley, 2008). Mudde (2004, p. 543) describes populism as 'an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people'. He argues that populism is not a full ideology, such as conservatism, liberalism or socialism, but a 'thin-centred' ideology. It does not offer an all-encompassing worldview, but contains first and foremost ideas about the organization of democratic decision-making processes. In line with, for example, Canovan (2004), Hawkins (2010), Mudde (2004), and Taggart (2000), we conceptualize populism as a set of ideas, which consists of two related elements: 1) a negative portrayal of 'elites'; and 2) a glorification of 'the people'. A message should contain both elements in relation to each other to be qualified as populist. This conceptualization is both moralistic and antagonistic. According to Müller (2016, pp. 19–20), populism is 'a particular *moralistic imagination of politics*, a way of perceiving the political world that sets a morally pure and fully unified…people against elites who are deemed corrupt or in some other way morally inferior'.

According to many scholars, an important motive for supporting populist parties is to express discontent with the established parties. Betz (1994) argues that radical right-wing populist voters, which he labels 'protest voters', cast a ballot against 'the powers that be', which are held responsible for what goes wrong in society (see also Bergh, 2004). In other words, citizens support populist parties, because they are discontented with mainstream politicians and political parties. Most studies into the relationship between discontent and support for populist parties are based on correlations in cross-sectional data (e.g. Betz, 1994; Lubbers, Gijsberts, & Scheepers, 2002; Mayer & Perrineau, 1992; Norris, 2005). The interpretation of this correlation as a causal effect has been criticized. In particular Van der Brug (2003) and Rooduijn et al. (2016) have argued that the effect also runs the other way: the populist message fuels discontent. Rooduijn et al. (2016) refer to this as the 'fuelling discontent logic'. According to this logic citizens become more discontented with the functioning of politics *as a consequence* of being exposed to the messages of populist parties. In this paper we examine whether exposure to populist messages indeed fuels discontent.

Here we will focus on one specific form of discontent: political cynicism. Various scholars have demonstrated that we should distinguish various types of political dis-

content (Dalton, 2004; Easton, 1965; Norris, 1999). Because populist messages most often focus on the antagonistic relationship between political elites and ordinary people, we assess the effects of the political message on political cynicism—a concept that taps into voters' discontent with politicians in general (see Agger, Goldstein, & Pearl, 1961). In a recent study, Pattyn, Van Hiel, Dhont and Onraet (2012) have shown that political cynicism can (and should) be distinguished from related concepts like political trust, and that it is related to voting for populist parties.

The theoretical underpinning for the proposed mechanism can be found in the literature on voting behaviour, preference formation, and media exposure. Studies of public opinion indicate that the content of a message has a direct effect on the attitudes of those who are exposed to this message. For instance, a growing body of research has addressed the direct effects of media messages on public opinion (see Brandenburg & Van Egmond, 2011). Studies have focused, for instance, on the impact of messages on voting behaviour (Druckman & Parkin, 2005), candidate preferences (Dalton, Beck, & Huckfeldt, 1998), and policy preferences (Zaller, 1992, 1996). Hence, there is ample evidence that citizens are directly influenced by the messages they are exposed to.

If this line of reasoning is extended to exposure to populism, it can be expected that if citizens are exposed to the message that political elites are failing, they might be inclined to incorporate this idea into their way of thinking about politics and become more politically discontented. This logic leads to our central expectation, which is:

H1: Exposure to populist messages leads to higher levels of political cynicism.

Our hypothesis is related to, but also distinct from, hypotheses that have been put forward in recent survey experiments. More specifically, our study differs from previous studies, such as Bos et al. (2013) and Hameleers and Schmuck (2017), in the causal relationship that is tested, as well as in the conceptualization of key terms. We will briefly outline the main differences between these studies and ours. Bos et al. (2013) investigate how mainstream right and radical right-wing populist politicians are evaluated when they express messages that are populist in nature. They find that only radical right-wing populist politicians are positively evaluated when they express such messages. Thus, Bos et al. (2013) look at how populist messages affect the evaluations of *the individual politician expressing these messages*. We, on the other hand, focus on the effect of populist messages *in general* on cynicism vis-à-vis politicians *in general*. More-

over, Bos et al. (2013) employ a different definition of populism than the one we outlined above. Hameleers and Schmuck (2017) show that citizens who support populists are affected by their exposure to messages in which either the national government or immigrants are blamed for certain problems in society. As a result of their exposure, these citizens become more populist in orientation. Hence, Hameleers and Schmuck (2017) are interested in the effect of blame attribution on populist attitudes, and populism is the dependent variable in their study. We, on the other hand, examine the effect of populist messages on attitudes of cynicism, making populism the independent variable in our study.[1] Thus, while related studies have been published, the impact of populist messages on political cynicism has not been examined yet.

Research into the effects of messages on voting behaviour and attitudes conclude that not all citizens are equally likely to be affected by their exposure. Based on consistency theories like, for instance, Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance, we argue that individuals aim for consistency among attitudes and behaviours, and therefore evaluate (or even select) new information that is in line with their existing views and thereby tend to ignore information that runs counter to their views. As a consequence, we would expect to find a 'galvanizing effect', as Sniderman et al. (2004) called it, which means that new messages affect particularly those who are already inclined to agree with the message. To their own surprise, Sniderman et al. (2004) do not find evidence for such a 'galvanizing effect'. However, this may well be due to ceiling effects: the groups that Sniderman et al. (2004) study were already so negatively predisposed to immigrants that the experimental manipulation could not exert much effect any more.

Other studies do find evidence for a 'galvanizing effect'. Bos et al. (2013) show that populist messages make citizens more likely to support populist parties. Yet, this effect is restricted to voters who are already cynical. Hameleers and Schmuck (2017) find that only those citizens who supported the source of the message to which they were exposed were more likely to blame elites and immigrants. Citizens who opposed the source became actually less instead of more anti-establishment. In our study, the galvanizing effect would suggest that citizens who are already favourable to populist actors, such as populist politicians and parties, are more likely to become more cynical than citizens who do not support such actors.[2] We therefore hypothesize that:

H2: The effects of the exposure to populist messages is stronger for citizens who support populist parties than for citizens who support non-populist parties.

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[1] Hameleers and Schmuck (2017) conceptualize populism in a way similar to ours, namely as a combination of glorification of 'normal' citizens and denunciation of the elite.

[2] Attitudes are not only affected by the messages to which individuals are exposed, but also by the *source* of those messages and by characteristics of its *recipients* (see Olson & Zanna, 1993). In this study we keep the source of the message constant. We assess, however, to what extent the effect of the populist message is different for audiences with diverging political preferences.

3. Research Design

In order to test our hypothesis that exposure to populist messages leads to more political cynicism, we conduct a survey experiment. More specifically, we use a randomized post-test design in which participants read a newspaper article created by the researchers and subsequently answer questions concerning their attitudes and behaviour. One (randomly selected) group of participants is exposed to a newspaper article, which includes populist messages. The other group of participants reads an article which is highly similar in substance, but which does not contain any populist messages. Survey experiments have two advantages over other research designs. First, we know to which messages the participants are exposed (see Tilley & Hobolt, 2011). On the other hand, when using non-experimental research designs, we can ask people which newspapers they read regularly and we can content analyse these outlets. Yet, we can never know whether respondents actually read the newspaper articles that were analysed. Secondly, because participants are randomly assigned to the experimental conditions, alternative explanations for differences between groups of participants can be ruled out. This is not possible in survey-based studies, where respondents make their own selection of outlets.

Our survey experiment is carried out in the Netherlands. The Netherlands is an appropriate case, because, in comparison with many other countries, the populist discourse is relatively common in this country—both in the political realm and in the mass media (Rooduijn, 2014). This is an important requirement, because in a country where populism is not very common in the public debate, a constructed populist article would not be very credible as a 'real life' media message. Moreover, in the Netherlands populism can be found both on the left and the right of the political spectrum (De Lange & Rooduijn, 2011), which makes it possible to examine the impact of populism *tout court*, rather than only that of radical right-wing populism.

Our stimulus is a (fictitious) newspaper article (created by the researchers) about the electoral losses of mainstream parties in the Dutch national elections of 2017. We constructed two different articles: one that contains a populist message (experimental group) and one that does not (control group).[3] The first two paragraphs of the newspaper articles are identical and concern a description of the situation. The third paragraph differs between the control and experimental groups and contains the interpretation of the results by a political an-

alyst. In the text given to the treatment group this analysis includes populist messages. These are references to 'the establishment', which has lost touch with 'the wishes of ordinary citizens'. The messages in the control group are much more neutral in tone. The exact wordings of the last paragraphs of our texts can be found in the Appendix.

Before we organized our survey experiment, we conducted a pilot study. It was distributed in the Netherlands between August 25th and August 29th, 2014 by means of social media (Facebook, E-mail and Twitter) ($N = 128$). The newspaper article in the pilot study discussed the 2014 elections to the European Parliament, but was in terms of the presented populist messages almost equal to the text presented in the Appendix. Although as a result of our method of convenience sampling the findings are not representative for the Dutch population, the treatment effect turned out to be statistically significant (at $p < .10$) and in the expected direction (results are available upon request). We therefore proceeded with our experiment.

Our survey experiment was appended to the June edition of the DNB Household Survey (DHS), conducted by CentERdata at Tilburg University. This panel includes approximately 2,000 households (from which one or more household members take part), which are representative of the Dutch population (see, e.g., Guiso, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2008; Parlevliet, 2017). The survey experiment was presented between June 5th and June 20th, 2017 to 3,035 individuals, out of which 2,381 completed the questionnaire (response rate of 78.5%).

We aimed to create two similar groups by randomly distributing the two stimuli to the respondents. As a result of this procedure, 51% of the respondents ended up in the experimental condition and 49% in the control group (see Table 1). The two groups were compared on various characteristics that may be correlated with political cynicism, such as age, education, gender, subjective class and religiosity. We do not find any statistically significant differences between the control and experimental groups on these characteristics, which indicates that the two groups are equivalent.[4]

To measure our dependent variable, political cynicism, respondents were asked to express their agreement or disagreement with eight statements: 1) politicians are honest; 2) politicians are profiteers; 3) politicians keep their promises; 4) politicians are corrupt; 5) politicians are reliable; 6) politicians are just smooth talkers; 7) politicians do not understand what is going on in society; and 8) politicians are capable of solving prob-

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[3] We decided to employ fictitious newspaper articles because this allowed us to fully control the messages participants were exposed to and thereby to guarantee the internal validity of our study. However, to enhance external validity, we based the stimuli on existing newspaper articles following the Dutch elections (see Hameleers, Bos, & De Vreese, 2017, p. 879).

[4] To assess whether the respondents were aware of the experimental manipulation, we also conducted a manipulation check by asking the respondents the following question: 'In the commentary of the political sociologist, reference is made to a cleavage between what politicians and what ordinary citizens find important'. A t-test ($t = -1.03$; $df = 2356$; $p = 0.150$) shows that the two groups differ from each other in the expected direction, but that the differences are not statistically significant (also when distinguishing populist from non-populist voters). While our treatment *did* affect our dependent variable 'political cynicism', we have no evidence that respondents were aware of the populist tone to which they were exposed. In the concluding section we elaborate on the implications.

lems in society. Respondents could answer on a 5-points scale from 'fully agree' to 'fully disagree'. We combined these items into a scale, which ranges from 1 (not at all cynical) to 5 (very cynical). The Cronbach's Alpha for this scale is 0.90, which is above the traditional cut-off point for scale reliability.

To measure whether citizens supported a populist party prior to participating in the experiment, we asked them for which party they had voted in the national elections of March 15th, 2017. In line with research on populism in the Netherlands, we subsequently coded a vote for the *Forum voor Democratie* (FvD), *Geen Peil, Partij voor de Vrijheid* (PVV), *Socialistische Partij* (SP), and *Voor Nederland* (VNL) as support for a populist party (e.g. De Lange & Rooduijn, 2011), while a vote cast for any of the other parties that participated in the elections was coded as support for a non-populist party.[5] Of the 2,381 participants who completed the survey, 2,184 participants voted in the 2017 elections. Of those voters 421 respondents supported a populist party, while 1,643 respondents supported a non-populist party.

Table 1 lists the descriptive statistics of the variables for the entire group of respondents. *Political cynicism* is our dependent index variable and ranges from 1 (not at all cynical) to 5 (very cynical). *Populist message* is a dummy variable taking the value of 1 when respondents have been 'treated' with the populist message and taking the value of 0 when respondents have received the neutral message. *Populist vote* is a dummy variable for respondents who voted, where 1 indicates they voted

for one of the populist parties mentioned above. The last four rows show the four combinations of having received the populist or the neutral message and having voted for a mainstream or a populist party. The means represent the proportion of respondents in the four groups. Since fewer respondents voted for a populist than for a mainstream party the two conditions with populist voters both contain 10% of the respondents, while the other two both contain roughly 39% and 41%.

4. Results

Our main expectation is that those who have been exposed to the text containing populist messages will be on average more cynical than those who have been exposed to the neutral text (H1). In Table 2 we assess whether the mean political cynicism scores are different for the control and experimental groups. We conduct an independent samples *t*-test for which we assume equal variances, since Levene's test indicates that the hypothesis that the variances in the two groups are equal cannot be rejected. Participants that have not been exposed to the populist messages have an average cynicism score of 3.10, whereas participants that have been exposed to the populist messages have an average score of 3.14. This leads to a mean difference score of 0.04, which is significant at $p < .10$ (one-tailed). Hence, those who have been exposed to the populist messages score, on average, higher on the scale of political cynicism than those who have not been exposed to such messages.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

	Count	mean	sd	min	max
Political cynicism	2,360	3.12	0.68	1.1	5
Populist message (1 = yes)	2,381	0.51	0.50	0	1
Populist vote (1 = yes)	2,064	0.20	0.40	0	1
Populist message + populist vote	2,064	0.10	0.30	0	1
Populist message + non-populist vote	2,064	0.41	0.49	0	1
Neutral message + populist vote	2,064	0.10	0.30	0	1
Neutral message + non-populist vote	2,064	0.39	0.49	0	1
N	2,381				

Table 2. Scores on scale of political cynicism.

	Political cynicism		
	Mean	Standard Error	N
Without populist message	3.10	0.02	1,151
With populist message	3.14	0.02	1,209
Combined	3.12	0.01	2,360
Difference	−0.04ˆ	0.03	

Note: Political cynicism is measured on a scale from 1–5, where 1 = not at all cynical, and 5 = very cynical
** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; ˆ $p < 0.10$

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[5] As an alternative operationalization, we also included the elderly party 50+ in the group of populist parties. The analyses with this alternative operationalization yield largely identical findings and do not alter our conclusions.

Our findings demonstrate an effect of the populist message on participants' level of cynicism, be it only significant at the $p < .10$ level. The difference of 0.04 on a 5-point scale is obviously small. However, it is important to keep in mind that we only manipulated the wording of two sentences in a newspaper article. It would be unrealistic therefore to expect much larger differences between the two groups and in reality citizens are much more frequently exposed to populist statements. We will discuss this further in the concluding section.

We also tested whether the supporters of populist parties were more strongly affected by their exposure to the populist message than the supporters of other parties (H2). Table 3 presents the results of a multiple regression, which demonstrates that this effect is indeed stronger for the supporters of populist parties. In fact, the effect is only present for the supporters of populist parties ($b = .181$; $p = .008$); the supporters of other parties are not significantly more likely to be cynical after being exposed to the manipulated message than when being exposed to a more 'neutral' message.

Figure 1 presents these results graphically. The solid line shows the two conditions in which respondents were exposed to a neutrally worded newspaper article, while the dotted line shows the conditions in which respondents were exposed to populist messages. It shows that the level of cynicism is already considerably higher among populist voters than among non-populist voters, also when they are exposed to a neutral message (compare the two groups on the straight line). Yet, the dotted line is steeper, and the difference between the groups

Table 3. Effects on political cynicism: Interaction between exposure and support for populist parties.

	Model 1
Populist message	.029
	(.031)
Populist vote	.601**
	(.048)
*Populist message * Populist vote*	.181**
	(.068)
Constant	2.923
	(.022)
R2	.171
N	2,057

Note: Political cynicism is measured on a scale from 1–5, where 1 = not at all cynical, and 5 = very cynical
** $p < 0.01$;* $p < 0.05$;^ $p < 0.10$

being exposed to a populist text and those being exposed to a neutral text is only significant among populist party voters (at the right hand side of the graph). Among mainstream party voters the experimental treatment did not exert a significant effect (see the left hand side of the graph. Thus, after exposure to populist messages the gap between the two groups of voters in terms of their level of cynicism is larger than prior to their exposure. This could point towards a spiral of cynicism among the supporters of populist parties.[6]
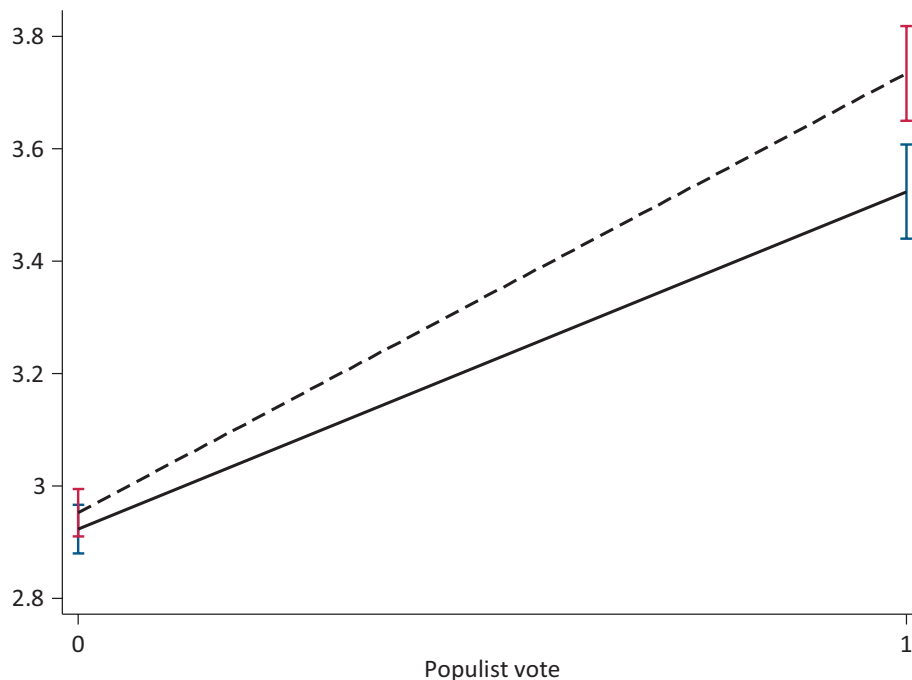
Figure 1. Predicted values of political cynicism for supporters of populist (1) and non-populist parties (0), and those who are exposed to a populist message (dotted line) and non-populist message (solid line).

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[6] We have also looked at the effects of our experimental treatment on other subgroups. First of all, we distinguished voters for the left-wing populist SP and the various right-wing populist parties. While the effect was somewhat weaker among SP voters, the effect was not significantly different from

5. Conclusion

There is a general concern that populism is not only a corrective, but also a challenge to liberal democracy (e.g. Abts & Rummens, 2007; Akkerman, 2003; Kaltwasser, 2012; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012). In this study we investigate whether the pervasiveness of populism threatens liberal democracy by affecting citizens' attitudes in a negative way. To this end we examine the 'fuelling discontent logic', which argues that exposure to populist messages fuels cynicism about politics (Rooduijn et al., 2016; Van der Brug, 2003). After all, according to populist actors—such as populist politicians, parties, and media—established politicians have no idea what ordinary people find important and only focus on their own interests. Moreover, they point towards a failure of representation and representative institutions, such as parties and parliaments.

Based on a survey experiment, in which we have randomly assigned participants to two different groups—one group in which individuals have been exposed to a text containing populist messages and another group in which individuals have been exposed to a neutral text—we conclude that exposure to populist messages indeed fuels political cynicism. Yet, the main effect is small, and marginally significant at the most, given the *p*-value of 0.091. When we distinguished respondents according to their support for parties, it becomes clear, however, that the effect takes place only among supporters of populist parties. The effect in this group is highly significant (at *p* < .01), while no effect was observed among the voters for other parties. We may thus conclude that voters for populist parties become more politically cynical when being exposed to populist messages, while other voters are not affected.

What does this mean? On the one hand, this suggests that the persuasiveness of the populist message should not be overestimated. We asked respondents to report their levels of political cynicism directly after we exposed them to a treatment. And even immediately after the treatment the effect is limited. It might therefore well be the case that the effect quickly disappears when time passes by. On the other hand, our study shows that even a small manipulation of two 'populist worded' sentences in a newspaper article *do* affect attitudes about politics. It thus seems plausible that continued exposure to populist messages brings about more cynicism.

One limitation of our study is that we focus on an effect of one small manipulation of a text. Our manipulation check suggests that the respondents did not realize that these messages are populist. This could mean that other differences between the texts presented to

the experimental and control group produced the differences in political cynicism, but given the slight manipulation and the large similarities between the two texts, we find that implausible. A more plausible reason could be that populist messages have become so pervasive that many citizens do not even notice them anymore. That such messages nonetheless exert an effect on political cynicism is therefore an important finding.

Another limitation of our study is that we look at short-term effects only (of a change in the wording of two sentences). However, in real life citizens are *continuously* exposed to many populist messages. In future studies researchers may wish to focus on long-term effects of repeated exposure to populist messages. Yet, it may not be feasible to study this in a controlled experiment. Another obvious limitation of our study is that we have assessed the effect of populist messages in only one specific country—the Netherlands. We have no theoretical reasons to expect the effects to be different in other national contexts, but whether our findings can indeed be replicated in other contexts remains to be shown empirically. Finally, respondents with anti-elite attitudes may also feel negatively disposed to academics who conduct this type of research. However, if this would have caused those who are most susceptible to the populist message to opt out of the study, our findings are likely to err on the conservative side.

Our findings contribute to the relatively young literature on the societal and political consequences of the rise of populism. These studies indicate that populism is spreading through a series of mechanisms of 'contamination'. The success of populist parties impacts on media populism, while the pervasiveness of populism in politics and media in turn affects the attitudes of specific groups of citizens. As a result of their exposure to populist messages, citizens' political cynicism becomes stronger. However, this 'spiral of discontent' is only present among those voters who were already supportive of populist parties to begin with. Because of their tendency to select and evaluate information on the basis of their already existing convictions, they become more discontented when their beliefs about the failures of politics are confirmed. Hence, we might be witnessing a vicious cycle of discontent among certain groups of citizens, which might erode their support for liberal democracy in the long run. The consequence is a further polarization of attitudes towards politicians.

A certain level of scepticism towards politicians is essential for a democracy to function well, so we do not want our conclusion to sound too 'alarmist'. As long as cynicism is directed at politicians, rather than at the democratic system as such, this is perfectly compatible

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the effect among right-wing populist party voters. We also looked at the difference between voters and non-voters. The experimental treatment had a weaker effect among the non-voters than among voters. Yet here also, the difference was not significant. In both cases we were looking at rather small subgroups of our sample. So, the failure to reject the null-hypothesis could be the result of the small *N*, which is why we do not report the results of these tests in detail. They are available upon request.

with a healthy democracy. However, there is always a risk of spill-over effects (Easton, 1965), where an erosion of specific support leads to decreases in diffuse support. This would be much more harmful to democratic support and legitimacy.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Appendix

The first two paragraphs of the text in the survey experiment concern the results of the elections to the national parliament in the Netherlands in March 2017. The third (and last) paragraph in both texts contains an analysis of a political commentator. In the first text populist messages are included in the analysis, in the second text the analysis is neutral.

Text 1 (does include populist messages)

"According to political sociologist Matthijs Rooduijn this development sends an important message. 'The gains made by parties such as UKIP and Front National clearly show that the *establishment has no idea of what the man in the street finds important. The voter has the feeling that established parties barely take into account what ordinary citizens want'. According to Rooduijn, *the establishment could win its lost seats back if it would listen better to hardworking citizens*".

Text 2 (does not include populist messages)

"According to political sociologist Matthijs Rooduijn this development sends an important message. 'The gains made by parties such as UKIP and Front National clearly show that the *message of these parties appeals to a large share of the electorate. A substantial number of voters believe that parties do not offer proper solutions to important social problems'. According to Rooduijn, *parties could win their lost seats back if they took more account the ideas of their own grassroots*".

Article

On the Distinct Effects of Left-Wing and Right-Wing Populism on Democratic Quality

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Abstract
This study examines the differences and commonalities of how populist parties of the left and right relate to democracy. The focus is narrowed to the relationship between these parties and two aspects of democratic quality, minority rights and mutual constraints. Our argument is twofold: first, we contend that populist parties can exert distinct influences on minority rights, depending on whether they are left-wing or right-wing populist parties. Second, by contrast, we propose that the association between populist parties and mutual constraints is a consequence of the populist element and thus, we expect no differences between the left-wing and right-wing parties. We test our expectations against data from 30 European countries between 1990 and 2012. Our empirical findings support the argument for the proposed differences regarding minority rights and, to a lesser extent, the proposed similarities regarding mutual constraints. Therefore we conclude that, when examining the relationship between populism and democracy, populism should not be considered in isolation from its host ideology.

Keywords
Europe; liberal democracy; minority rights; mutual constraints; political inclusion; populism

Issue
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1. Introduction

Populist actors around the world have gradually evolved into influential political forces in various countries and regions. Independent of the region, they share the ideas of anti-elitism and people centrism. On this basis, they can challenge common democratic rules, including those of liberal democracy (Plattner, 2010), according to which power must be restrained and individual rights protected. Through the populist lens, features of liberal democracy, such as systems of checks and balances, undermine the proper implementation of the general will, which they claim to be the only true representative of. Thus, their presence can have a negative impact on the quality of democracy if populist parties challenge these institutions, particularly when they are in government (Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013).

Populist parties, however, are not only characterized by their populist element but also by their host ideology (Mudde, 2004). Thus, they can take the form of right-wing populist parties (Mudde, 2007), left-wing populist parties (March, 2011), or centrist populist parties (Havlík & Stanley, 2015). In other words, populist parties differ on a wide-ranging set of issues such as the promotion of exclusive (right-wing populist parties) or inclusive (left-wing populist parties) societies (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). These differences have been shown to manifest themselves in the behavior of populist par-

ties, for instance with regards to parliamentary voting where the populist element plays little to no role (Otjes & Louwerse, 2015). Despite these well-known differences, however, there is little debate in the literature about whether the postulated relationship between populist parties and democracy is a function of their host ideology, their populist element, or both. This article seeks to fill this void, taking as its starting point the discussion between populism and liberal democracy (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012).

We adopt the proposition that the host ideology, like the populist element, is central to the actions that parties take. We argue that the role of ideology is essential to understanding why populist parties of varying host ideologies relate differently to subdimensions of liberal democracy, namely political inclusion (minority rights) and mutual constraints. Focusing on left-wing and right-wing populist parties, we anticipate the host ideology to be the deciding factor for how these parties relate to the dimension of political inclusion. In comparison to right-wing populist parties, we expect left-wing populist parties to be associated with more positive effects on minority rights. For the second dimension, mutual constraints, we expect the populist element to play the central role and in consequence, expect no differences in associations between populist parties of different host ideology.

Empirically, we test our propositions against data from 30 European countries from 1990 to 2012. This dataset, although limited to one region, allows us to test our arguments for a diverse set of populist parties. The results lend support to our argument that host ideologies matter for how certain populist parties relate to democracy and liberal democracy in particular as differences in effects of left and right-wing populists occur for minority rights. At the same time, the results do not suggest a strong association between populist parties and mutual constraints. Therefore, this study highlights the need to investigate subdimensions of (liberal) democracy (Houle & Kenny, 2016; Immerzeel & Pickup, 2015) to generate a better understanding of the complex relationship between populist parties and democracy.

2. Populism and (Liberal) Democracy

Following the ideational approach (Hawkins, 2009), populism constitutes a set of ideas. Despite varying definitions that can be subsumed under the ideational approach, most studies consider at least four attributes central to populism: people centrism, the perception of the people as a homogenous entity with a general will, anti-elitism, and the depiction of a permanent crisis (Rooduijn, 2014). Mudde (2004, p. 543; italics original) summarizes

the central attributes in his widely referenced minimal definition of populism, which we draw on in this article, calling populism a thin-centered "*ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of* volonté générale *(general will) of the people*". The view of populism as an ideological construct, however, remains at the center of many debates. Another large branch in the literature, for instance, discusses populism as a discourse (or frame) (e.g., Aslanidis, 2016, 2017; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). However, even among those that speak of populism as a discourse, some acknowledge that populists ultimately may implement their idea of politics as an expression of the general will (Müller, 2016). Furthermore, both branches in the literature share the view that populism can appear across the ideological spectrum giving populism its chameleon characteristic (Taggart, 2000). In the ideological approach, for instance, populism as a thin-ideology is said to attach itself to different host ideologies (Stanley, 2008).

Because "populism indirectly questions the procedural minimum that lies at the heart of our current definitions of democracy" (Hawkins, 2010, p. 37), scholars using different conceptualizations discuss the relationship between populism and (certain forms of) democracy. Most notably, they focus on how populism relates to democracy in general (Müller, 2016), representative democracy (Canovan, 1999), and liberal democracy (Kriesi, 2014; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012; Plattner, 2010). These studies share a focus on populism's homogenous view of society in which the common will of the people is to be articulated in an unmediated way and implemented without any restrictions (Caramani, 2017).[1] Perhaps for this reason, there has been a recent focus on populism and the quality of liberal democracy (cf. Huber & Schimpf, 2016a, 2017; Pappas, 2014, 2016). After all, the essence of liberal democracy is that power can never be absolute as it is characterized by "the intrinsic importance of transparency, civil liberty, the rule of law, horizontal accountability (effective checks on rulers), and minority rights" (Coppedge et al., 2011, p. 253).[2] Minority rights and horizontal accountability in particular are two features of liberal democracy that run counter to the populist understanding of how democracy ought to function. Populist actors depict a homogenous society (the people) and highlight the necessity for politics to follow the general will without any unnecessary restrictions, implemented by the populists themselves as the only true representatives of the people.[3] Therefore, some scholars argue that populist actors can have a negative impact on democracy, and in particular, on liberal

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[1] In contrast to extremist parties, radical populist parties are not considered anti-constitutional *per se* (Mudde, 2007; Rensmann, 2006) although they present the system they operate in as "undemocratic" (Abts & Rummens, 2007).

[2] Democratic quality in this case refers to the degree—and not the existence—of these criteria, that is, how well standards for aspects such as transparency, legality, and good governance are implemented (Beetham, 2004; Diamond & Morlino, 2005).

[3] For this reason, too, Canovan (1999) argues that populism is at odds with representative democracy in which institutions mediate any societal conflicts. Populist actors, however, consider society to be homogenous to begin with and also, may argue in favor of a more direct form of politics (but see Müller, 2016, p. 29 for a different view).

democracy (e.g. Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012; Ruth, 2017). For as long as populists are not in power, they are rarely in a position to implement their ideas. Instead, they may even have a corrective function as they highlight institutional shortcomings (e.g. Müller, 2002), mobilize otherwise unrepresented groups of voters (e.g. Hanley, 2012), and articulate issues or protest (e.g. de Lange & Akkerman, 2012).[4]

From this debate, we can derive the expectation that populist actors may have positive side effects but generally, relate negatively to (liberal) democratic quality, in particular when they are in government (Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013). Here, their presence can result in changes or even the erosion of important components such as the system of checks and balances, as can be seen in countries governed by populist parties, such as contemporary Poland (Markowski, 2016) and Hungary (Batory, 2016). However, the argument hinges on the assumption that all populist actors must share a similar understanding of a homogenous society whose general will functions as the guiding principle for political decisions and shall not be infringed by unnecessary institutional boundaries. In this scenario, *the people* constitute the sovereign. Yet Mény and Surel (2002) identify two further conceptions of *the people*, namely the people as a nation (cultural) and the people as a class (economic). Both are linked to specific forms of populism, the former to right-wing populism and the latter to left-wing populism (Kriesi, 2014, p. 362). Studies that compare these two types of populist parties find that their behavior, such as their parliamentary voting behavior (Otjes & Louwerse, 2015) for instance, differs as a consequence of the host ideology. The questions that arise then are: which of the two elements, host ideology or populism, determines the relationship between populism and liberal-democracy? And, does this relationship play out differently depending on the subdimensions of liberal democracy? In what follows, we discuss the differences between left- and right-wing populism in detail. We focus on two aspects of liberal democracy, minority rights and mutual constraints, to highlight possible commonalities and differences in the relationships between populist parties and democracy.

3. Populism Left, Right, and Center: Differences and Commonalities

Populist parties, independent of their host ideology, are united in their critique against the political establishment (Rooduijn & Akkerman, 2017). Yet, it is the host ideology that determines against whom *the people* should rally

(Katsambekis, 2017, p. 205). Left-wing populist parties define *the people* on a class basis, referring mostly to the poor. In contrast, right-wing populist parties define *the people* on a cultural, nativist base (March, 2011; Mudde, 2004). In other words, whereas left-wing populist parties frame their criticisms economically and seek to protect the proletariat from exploitation by capitalists, right-wing populist parties champion nativism (Mudde, 2007, p. 19) and seek to protect "the nation from dangerous others" (Rooduijn & Akkerman, 2017, p. 196), stressing cultural issues above the rest. Thus, left-wing populist parties differ from right-wing populist parties in that they embrace an inclusive as opposed to an exclusive view of society (Katsambekis, 2017; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013).[5] More importantly though, despite left-wing populist being inclusive on the society level, this does not necessarily imply that they are not anti-pluralistic on the political level. Essentially, the question of how democracy is organized is political and differences between left-wing and right-wing populism can be illustrated focusing on central aspects of democracy, namely political inclusion and political contestation (Dahl, 1971). While left-wing populist parties generally neither discredit minority groups nor object to granting these groups political rights, they do not accept political competition for that they, and only they, are the true representatives of *the people*. Consequently, they consider political control through effective opposition and institutional power check mechanisms as obstacles that prevent them from implementing the people's will. In this sense, left-wing populists are inclusive on the society level and the dimension of political participation. Yet, they are exclusive and essentially anti-pluralistic with regards to public contestation and the control of power (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013, p. 162). In contrast, right-wing populist parties are generally exclusive with regards to all of these aspects for that they object the extension of political participation rights to minorities in addition to claiming to be the only true representatives of what they consider to be *the people*. In short, left- and right-wing populism differ with regards to political inclusion but share similarities in their ideas of political contestation and control of power. It is for this reason that we choose two subdimensions of liberal democracy to highlight differences and commonalities between left- and right-wing populism, minority rights and mutual constraints.

3.1. Minority Rights

We define minority rights as descriptive representation of minorities in the political system, that is, the absence

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[4] This positive view, however, is not shared by all authors (e.g., Müller, 2016). After all, any new party in opposition is likely to mobilize new voters and critique established political actors, possibly increasing accountability. Thus, these byproducts can be positive but are not necessarily a function of populism (Huber & Schimpf, 2016a, p. 109).

[5] Between these two types, we can also observe a third category. Havlík and Stanley (2015) write that some populist parties are non-ideological because their positions on economy issues and the common GAL/TAN scales are too fuzzy with various mutually inconsistent policy proposals. They therefore refer to these parties as centrist populist. We take an empirical approach to this matter and add this third category when assigning parties the label of left-wing and right-wing parties in our operationalization. It allows us to avoid categorizing parties as left or right when their proposals are too incoherent. We return to this point in our research strategy section.

of systemic exclusion of groups considered minorities from exercising central power or other political rights (Merkel et al., 2016).

Here, we expect the populist element to interact with the host ideology. As written above, left-wing populist parties typically consider ethnic minorities as part of *the people* and hence, demand equal rights as part of their socially egalitarian tradition. In Europe as in Latin America, left-wing populist parties tend to be *inclusive*. In contrast, right-wing populist parties tend to be *exclusive* (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013), particularly in government where they have a lower incentive to reach out to minorities as part of a vote-maximizing campaign strategy. March (2011, p. 134), for example, shows that the left-wing Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) and the allied Respect coalition raised awareness about the Muslim population in the United Kingdom and initiated a pro-Muslim discourse. In contrast, the Slovak National Party (SNS) routinely targeted Hungarian minority parties and went as far as to propose a ban of all ethnic parties in Slovakia (Koev, 2015, p. 652).

H1. The presence of left-wing populist parties is positively associated with minority rights, whereas the presence of right-wing populist parties relates negatively to minority rights.

3.2. Mutual Constraints

Mutual constraints inhibit absolute power in a democracy by balancing the power of the executive vis-à-vis the judiciary and the legislature (Plattner, 2010).

In contrast to minority rights, where the host ideology is central, we argue that in the case of mutual constraints, the populist element determines the direction of the relationship. The strong focus of populist parties on *the people* can delegitimize the indirect aggregation of the *volonté générale* via the representative system. On the one hand, populist parties demand either stronger or more frequently employed measures of direct democracy to ease the implementation of the general will. On the other hand, if populist parties enter government, they see no need for a check on power, as they represent the peoples' will (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012). One such example is the attempt by the Polish Law and Justice Party (PiS), which assumed governmental power in 2015, to reform the Polish Supreme Court. Among the proposed changes, was the suggestion that judges would be appointed by the National Council of the Judiciary in which half the members would also be members of the parliament, effectively weakening the court's power to oversee political decisions (Walsh, 2017). And although the law was partially rejected by Poland's President Andrzej Duda at first, Poland's Premier Beata Szydło (PiS)

in reaction to the rejection said that, just like the parliament, the court should be under the control of the people (Waldoch, Krajweski, & Bartyzel, 2017).

This association does not depend upon the host ideology. Most populist parties regularly call for changes to the constitution to empower the executive. Parties on the left, such as Fico's Smer in Slovakia (Malová & Učeň, 2010), have voiced similar demands to those on the right, for example, Haider's Austrian Freedom Party (Austrian Freedom Party, 2011; Fallend, 2012) and the Czech Rally for the Republic/Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (Hanley, 2012). Each of them has demanded more power for the ruling executive to shift power away from parliaments and courts. Since the *volonté générale* is the rationale for decisions made and actions were taken by all populist parties here, we expect no differences among them regarding their influence on mutual constraints.

H2. The presence of populist parties is negatively associated with mutual constraints, regardless of the parties' host ideology.

4. Research Strategy

To test our theoretical arguments, we use a twofold strategy. First, we assess the differences between populist parties in government and opposition. Second, we distinguish between left-wing, center and right-wing populism to investigate the expected associations with minority rights and mutual constraints.

Empirically, we use a pooled cross-sectional design. Since we use the role within a political system as well as a party's host ideology, we opted for cabinets as the temporal unit of analysis. This approach allows us to determine whether a party is in government or opposition with great precision, while other approaches such as country-years are considerably more imprecise. Our data includes information from 30 European countries between 1990 and 2012.[6] This time span captures major events for European populist parties, from their establishment through their rise. We exclude cabinets with duration of fewer than six months as we assume that any measurable impact is only evident after some time.

4.1. Dependent Variable

To measure democratic quality based on our concept of liberal democracy, we draw on three different sources. We measure aggregated liberal democratic quality by using the liberal democracy score (v2x_libdem) of the Varieties of Democracy Project (Coppedge et al., 2011).[7] To capture the two subdimensions, mutual constraints, and minority rights, we rely on the Democracy Barometer. For mutual constraints, we use the aggregated di-

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[6] We chose 2012 as our cut-off point as data for most of our most dependent variables was not available beyond that year at the time of the data collection. For an overview of all countries included, see Table A1 in the Appendix A.

[7] In order to ease presentation, we multiplied the v2x_libdem by 100. This makes the results comparable to the Democracy Barometer which usually applies scales ranging from 0 to 100.

mension of horizontal checks (MC_CHECKS, Merkel et al., 2016, p. 29) which measures the balance between executive and legislative (ratio of parliamentary seats controlled by government to parliamentary seats controlled by opposition), the balance of checks between executive and legislative (ratio of control instruments of legislative over executive to control instruments of executive over legislative), and the power of judicial branch to review political decisions.[8] This measure taps into the checks-and-balances aspect. For minority rights, we use an indicator for the effective access to power for minorities (REP_DR3, Merkel et al., 2016, p. 53) that measures the descriptive representation of minorities and the extent to which they have access to central power.

4.2. Independent Variables

For testing our hypotheses, we use dummies to i) capture the presence of populist parties in opposition and government and ii) to capture either the presence of left-wing or right-wing populist parties. We further use a middle category for ambivalent cases that would not fit either of the right- or left-wing categories based on our coding procedure, which followed a three-step approach. First, we surveyed the existing secondary literature on populist parties in Europe to categorize parties in populist and non-populist parties.[9] In the next step, we determined the role of populist parties in the political system, applying the following coding scheme: populist parties in government had to hold some position in the cabinet and populist parties in opposition had to hold at least one seat in the national parliament. Thus, we excluded parties identified as populist but without a seat in parliament during the relevant cabinet from our analyses. Table A1 in Appendix A lists all parties analyzed.

Finally, to determine whether a populist party belongs to one of our three categories (left, right, center), we code populist parties in relation to their country-specific party system. The procedure is the following. First, we calculate a weighted party system's ideology mean for each cabinet. This average takes into consideration the ideological positions of all parliamentary parties in one particular country. We use the seat share of the respective parties to weight the mean. For each cabinet, we then classify populist parties as left, right, or center according to their relative distance to this weighted

mean. We code every populist party within one weighted standard deviation of this reference as centrist, while parties further to the left or right are coded respectively (also see Huber & Ruth, 2017).[10]

4.3. Control Variables

In addition to our central variables, we include a selected set of covariates that, in theory, may relate to both the presence of populist parties as well as the levels of our democratic measures. These variables are the level of democratic consolidation (time in years since democratization), cabinet duration (in years), cabinet composition (surplus governments, minimal winning coalitions, and minority governments), economic development (GDP per Capita in 1,000 US Dollar), and a dichotomous variable to distinguish between post-communist countries and other countries. A detailed rationale for the inclusion of these variables can be found in Appendix C.

4.4. Empirical Model

To control for country-specific effects, we apply a linear mixed-effects model with cabinets nested under each country (Gelman & Hill, 2007).[11] The respective countries serve as groups. This particular model also allows us to compare both intra- and cross-country variance. Given our interest in the change in democratic quality as a consequence of the presence of populist parties, modeling intra-country variance allows us to approximate this process.[12]

5. Empirical Results

In Figure 1, we plot the coefficients from the results.[13]

To start with the aggregate measure of liberal democracy (left panel in Figure 1), we observe that in Europe, there is no general association between populist parties and democracy, independent of their status (government or opposition). While we find the anticipated direction of correlation, that is negative for populists in government and positive for those actors in opposition, they are not statistically significant. However, a different picture emerges when distinguishing populist parties according to their host ideology. First, we see that right-wing populist parties are associated with lower levels of

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[8] An extension of this instrument also measures vertical checks, i.e. the degree of federalism and subnational fiscal autonomy. We did not include these in our central analyses given the focus on political contestation and power checks. However, we did include them in a robust check (see Appendix B). The substantial results are robust.

[9] We base our case selection on Mudde (2007), Arter (2010), March (2011) and Van Kessel (2015), all of whom rely to a great extent on the Mudde (2004) definition of populism we have adopted here. Following these authors, we also considered changes in a party's level of populism. For example, the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) was considered populist prior to Simitis becoming the party's leader in 1996 (March, 2011). However, thereafter it took a different course. PASOK was thus only coded as populist up until 1996.

[10] We illustrate this, using the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) in Austria. Since Haider took over the party in 1986, the FPÖ has been classified as populist (see Mudde, 2007). They held a position in government in the cabinet Schuessel I (February 4, 2000–February 28, 2003), and for this period, were coded as "populist in government". In a next step, we calculate the party systems mean for the period of the cabinet, which is 5.7 on a ten-point scale for Schuessel I. All parties within one standard deviation of the mean (2.1 [3.6 to 7.8]) are coded as central. Because the FPÖ was coded as 8.3 by ParlGov, it is coded as "right-wing populist in government" for the cabinet period of Schuessel I.

[11] A comparison between Null and Empty model (see Table A3 in Appendix A) suggests using hierarchical models.

[12] Table A2 in Appendix A shows descriptive statistics for all variables.

[13] For the full regression output in table format, see Tables B2 and B3 in Appendix B.
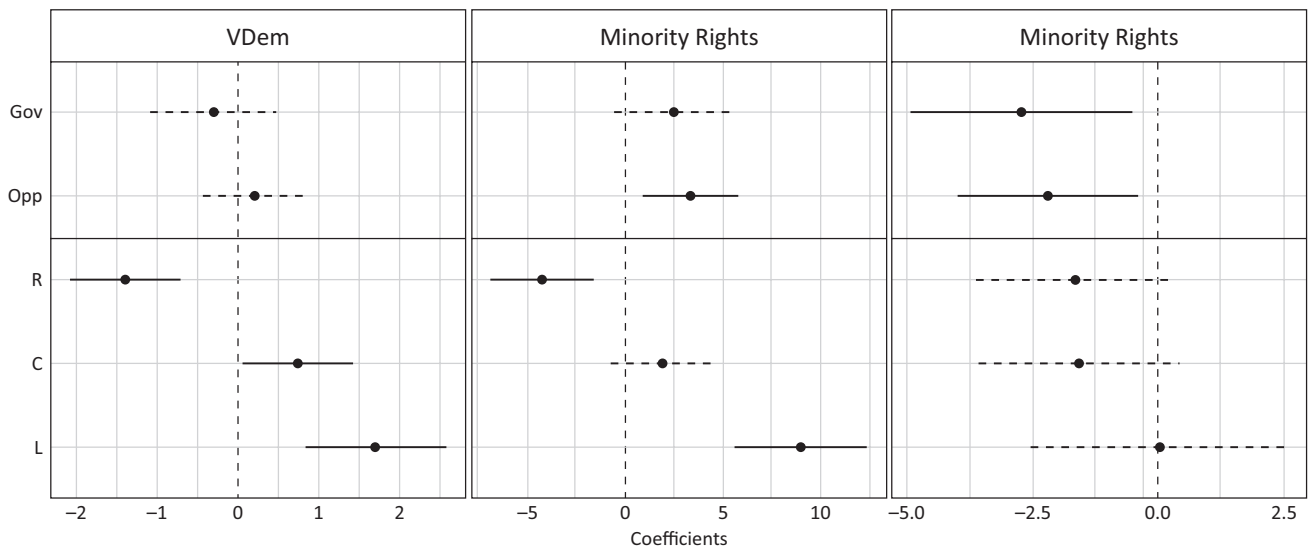
Figure 1. Effect of Populism on Liberal Democracy and two Subdimensions (Minority Rights and Mutual Constraints). Notes: Gov = Populist Party in Government (Reference: No Populist Party in Government); Opp = Populist Party in Opposition (Reference: No Populist Party in Opposition); R = Right-Wing Populist Party present (Reference: No Right-Wing Populist Party present); C = Centrist Populist Party present (Reference: No Centrist Populist Party present); L = Left-Wing Populist Party present (Reference: No Left-Wing Populist Party present); Coefficients are plotted with 90% Confidence Intervals

quality of liberal democracy. Second, both center and left-wing populist parties are associated with higher levels of quality of liberal democracy. Third, while the center and left-wing populist parties are statistically different from right-wing populist parties, there is no significant difference between those two categories. These findings provide a first idea about potential differences in the association between populist parties and liberal democracy as a consequence of varying host ideologies. For a detailed look, we now turn to the results from the two subdimensions, minority rights, and mutual constraints.

From the middle panel in Figure 1, we can first observe that populist parties in government are not associated with any particular direction regarding minority rights. In contrast, populist parties in opposition are associated with a positive development. Upon taking into consideration host ideology, however, we find that this does not apply to all populists equally. For minority rights, we expected a more negative effect of right-wing populist parties and a positive influence of left-wing populist parties, both in comparison to the absence of populist parties. The empirical results lend support to our argument. First, on average we observe a substantial positive relationship between left-wing populist parties and minority rights, whereas we find negative effects for right-wing populist parties. The presence of centrist populist parties is neither negatively nor positively correlated with minority rights.

For mutual constraints, we expected no differences between the different type of populist parties but on average, small negative associations for all of them. Figure 1 confirms these expectations. We observe no systematic effect of a populist parties' host ideology. However, populist parties in government and opposition are negatively associated with mutual constraints compared to instances where no populist parties are in government or opposition. This effect is in line with our expectation that populists undermine the separation of power.[14]

We conducted two types of robustness checks. First, we reran our analysis using a continuous variable that measures the logged seat share of populist parties instead of dummies (See Tables B9 and B10 in the Appendix).[15] Second, we used alternative model specifications (lagged dependent variable models—See Tables B5, B6 and B7 in the Appendix).[16] The most consistent finding across these additional checks is the positive association between left-wing populist parties and minority rights in comparison to right-wing populist parties, particularly in opposition.[17] Other findings, such as populist parties' relationship with mutual constraints, are less consistent as they are met with greater uncertainty in our statistical models. Overall, these findings further support our idea that substantive differences in the relationship between populist parties can arise from host ideologies.

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[14] Figure B2 in Appendix B includes all combinations of host ideology and government status, which leaves us with six dummies. Substantially, it confirms the findings of Figure 1.

[15] As a logarithm of zero ("0") is not possible, we added 1 to all values to guarantee numeric values, which are necessary to process the data.

[16] Results for these and further robustness checks can be found in Appendix B (Figures B3 and B4, Tables B5, B6, B7, B8, B9 and B10).

[17] We also ran a third analysis in which we coded parties that were not formally part of a government but supported government parties in parliamentary elections as "populist parties in government". This was the case for the Danish People's Party (2001–2011) and the Dutch Freedom Party (2010–2012). These results are also included in the Appendix B (Table B8).

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Populist parties, because of their central ideas of anti-elitism, the belief in a general will, and their people centrism, challenge some of the commonly accepted rules of democracy, especially those of liberal democracy (Plattner, 2010). However, a series of studies have identified not only negative but also positive effects of populist parties on democratic quality (Canovan, 1999; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012). Largely absent from the debate surrounding populism and its relationship to democracy, however, has been the role of host ideologies. This article sought to initiate such discussion. We proposed that the host ideology, focusing on left- and right-wing populism, has consequences for how these parties relate to the dimension of political inclusion and minority rights in particular. However, we expected the host ideology to be irrelevant for a populist parties' association with mutual constraints. The empirical findings lend support in particular to the first of our propositions. The main takeaway from our article, therefore, is that populism should not be examined in isolation from its host ideology when considering the relationship between populist actors and democracy. This finding, of course, should not diminish the role populism plays in this relationship, particularly in the wake of temporary developments in cases such as Poland and Hungary. In some cases, however, populism may matter less or even only constitute as an additional qualifier of radical right parties rather than being a steady feature (cf. Rydgren, 2017). Future studies thus could explore under which conditions ideology and populism may play a greater role for populist parties and how they relate to specific aspects of democracy, an issue in which fundamental differences in historical legacies between East- and West-Europe may well play into (Gherghina & Soare, 2013). Furthermore, right-wing populist parties have been shown to mobilize certain voter groups which have been neglected by other political parties, such as citizens who are lower educated or poor (e.g., Huber & Ruth, 2017; Rooduijn, 2017). At the same time, they may also discourage certain voters from turning out in elections (Immerzeel & Pickup, 2015). Future research, by focusing on the dimension of political participation, may therefore also explore whether left-wing populist parties exert similar effects or, whether mobilization and de-mobilization effects depend on a populist party's host ideology.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Descriptive Information

Table A1. List of populist parties in dataset.

C	Party	Populists	Host Ideology
AT	Freedom Party Austria (FPÖ)	since 1986	R
AT	Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ)	since 2005	R
BE	Flemish Block (VB)	1979–2004	R
BE	Flemish Interest (VB)	since 2004	R
BE	National Front (FNb)	1985–2012	R
BE	List Dedecker (LDD)	2007–2010	C
BG	Attack (Ataka)	since 2005	C
BG	Law, Order and Justice (PPS)	2009–2013	R
BG	National Movement Simeon the Second (NDSV)	2001–2005	C
BG	Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB)	since 2009	C (2009)
HR	Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)	since 1989	C
HR	Croatian Party of Rights (HSP)	since 1990	R
CH	Swiss Democrats (SD)	since 1961	R
CH	Freedom Party of Switzerland (FPS)	since 1984	R
CH	Swiss People's Party (SVP)	since 1971	R
CH	League of Ticinesians (LdT)	since 1991	R
CZ	Rally for the Republic-Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (SPR-RSC)	since 1989	R
CZ	Public Affairs (VV)	since 2001	C
DK	Progress Party (FPd)	since 1972	R
DK	The Danish People's Party (DFP)	since 1995	R
EE	Estonian Citizens (EK)	1992	R
EE	Estonian National Independence Party (ERSP)	1988–1995	C
EE	Estonian United People's Party (EUR)	1994–2006	L
FI	Finnish Rural Party (SMP)	1959–1995	C
FI	Finns Party (PS)	since 1995	C
FR	National Front (FN)	since 1972	R
GE	Party for Democratic Socialism (PDS)	1990–2005	L
GE	The Left / PDS	2005-2007	L
GE	The Left	since 2007	L
GR	Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK)	until 1996	C
GR	Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS)	since 2000	R
GR	Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA)	since 2004	L
GR	Independent Greeks (AE)	since 2012	R
HU	Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIEP)	since 1993	R
HU	Alliance of Young Democrats (FIDESZ)	since 2006	R (2006), C(2010)
IR	Sinn Féin (SF)	since 1970	L
IT	Lega Nord (LN)	since 1991	R (1992, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2008), C (1994, 1996)
IT	Come on Italy/ People of Freedom Party (FI-PdL)	1995–2009	C
LV	For Fatherland and Freedom (LNNK)	1993–2001	C
LI	Young Lithuania (JL)	since 1994	R
LI	Order and Justice (TT)	since 2002	C
LI	Labour Party (DP)	since 2003	C (2004), L (2008)
LU	Alternative Democratic Reform (AR|ADR)	since 2004	R
NL	Party for Freedom (PVV)	since 2006	R
NL	Socialist Party (SP)	Until 2008	L
NL	The List Pim Fortuyn (LPF)	2002–2006	R
NL	Liveable Netherlands (LN)	2002–2003	R
NO	Progress Party (FrP)	since 1973	R
PL	Law and Justice (Pis)	since 2001	C (2005, 2007), R (2011)
PL	League of Polish Families (LPR)	since 2001	R

Table A1. List of populist parties in dataset. (Cont.)

C	Party	Populists	Host Ideology
PL	Self-Defense of the Republic Poland (SRP)	since 1992	C (2001), L(2005)
RO	Greater Romania Party (PRM)	since 1991	R
RO	Romanian National Unity Party (PUNR)	1990–2006	C
RO	Party of Social Democracy in Romania (PDSR)	1993–2001	L (1992, 1996), C (2000)
RO	People's Party-Dan Diaconescu (PP-DD)	2011–2015	L
SK	Slovak National Party (SNS)	since 1989	C (1990, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010), R (1992, 1994)
SK	Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)	1998–2003	L
SK	Smer (Direction), the Third Way	1999–2005	L
SK	Smer (Direction), Social Democracy	since 2005	L (2006, 2010), C (2012)
SK	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	2002–2012	C
SK	Ordinary People and Independent Personalities Party (OLaNO)	since 2011	R
SL	Slovenian National Party (SNS)	since 1991	C
SE	New Democracy (NyD)	1991–2000	R
SE	Sweden Democrats (SD)	since 1988	R
UK	Sinn Féin (SF)	1905–today	L

Note: Sources for these parties are Mudde (2007), Arter (2010), March (2011) and Van Kessel (2015). We should note that the Progress Party (FPd) in Demark and the Swedish party New Democracy (NyD) are borderline cases for that they may fit the category of neoliberal populist parties better. This is the case, as Mudde (2007, p. 48) writes, because "their xenophobic rhetoric is primarily informed by their liberalism". We kept these parties in our analyses nonetheless as a) they still fit the category of populist parties and b) would only be relevant for the analyses of minority rights in which case our results are more conservative given the inclusion of two cases that do not share the strong focus on nativism with other cases included here.

Table A2. Descriptive statistics.

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Liberal Democracy (VDem)	255	78.56	9.83	37.32	90.36
Liberal Democracy (UDS)	265	1.34	0.45	0.10	2.25
Liberal Democracy (DB)	255	56.44	7.53	39.60	74.48
Minority Rights	270	61.94	31.00	−5.56	100.00
Mutual Constraints	269	70.00	12.73	39.72	93.99
Robustness Check: Mutual Constraints	259	46.45	9.42	28.15	75.41
Government	270	0.13	0.34	0	1
Opposition	270	0.53	0.50	0	1
Right	270	0.35	0.48	0	1
Center	270	0.24	0.43	0	1
Left	270	0.14	0.35	0	1
Right Government	270	0.05	0.22	0	1
Right Opposition	270	0.32	0.47	0	1
Center Government	270	0.08	0.27	0	1
Center Opposition	270	0.17	0.38	0	1
Left Government	270	0.02	0.15	0	1
Left Opposition	270	0.12	0.33	0	1
Democratic Consolidation	263	32.95	32.47	0	161
Cabinet Duration	270	26.79	15.23	6	61
Government Type (surplus)	270	0.22	0.41	0	1
Economic Development	270	21.49	15.95	2.48	83.41
Post-Communist Country	270	0.46	0.50	0	1

Table A3. Comparison of empty and null model using VDem.

Model	AIC	BIC	logLik	L.Ratio	p-value
Null	1891.3	1898.4	−943.6		
Empty	1362.2	1372.8	−678.1	531.1	<.0001

Appendix B. Additional Regression Figures and Tables and Robustness Checks (RBC)

The table below provides an overview of all abbreviations used for the various populist party dummies in the Appendix included in the models, their meaning (when coded as "1"), and the reference category (when coded as "0").

Table B1. Abbreviations of populist party dummies, meaning and reference categories.

Abbreviation	Meaning	Reference Group
Gov	Populist Party in Government	No Populist Party in Government
Opp	Populist Party in Opposition	No Populist Party in Opposition
R	Right-Wing Populist Party Present	No Right-Wing Populist Party Present
C	Centrist Populist Party Present	No Centrist Populist Party Present
L	Left-Wing Populist Party Present	No Left-Wing Populist Party Present
RG	Right-Wing Populist Party in Government	No Right-Wing Populist Party in Government
RO	Right-Wing Populist Party in Opposition	No Right-Wing Populist Party in Opposition
CG	Centrist Populist Party in Government	No Centrist Populist Party in Government
CO	Centrist Populist Party in Opposition	No Centrist Populist Party in Opposition
LG	Left-Wing Populist Party in Government	No Left-Wing Populist Party in Government
LO	Left-Wing Populist Party in Opposition	No Left-Wing Populist Party in Opposition
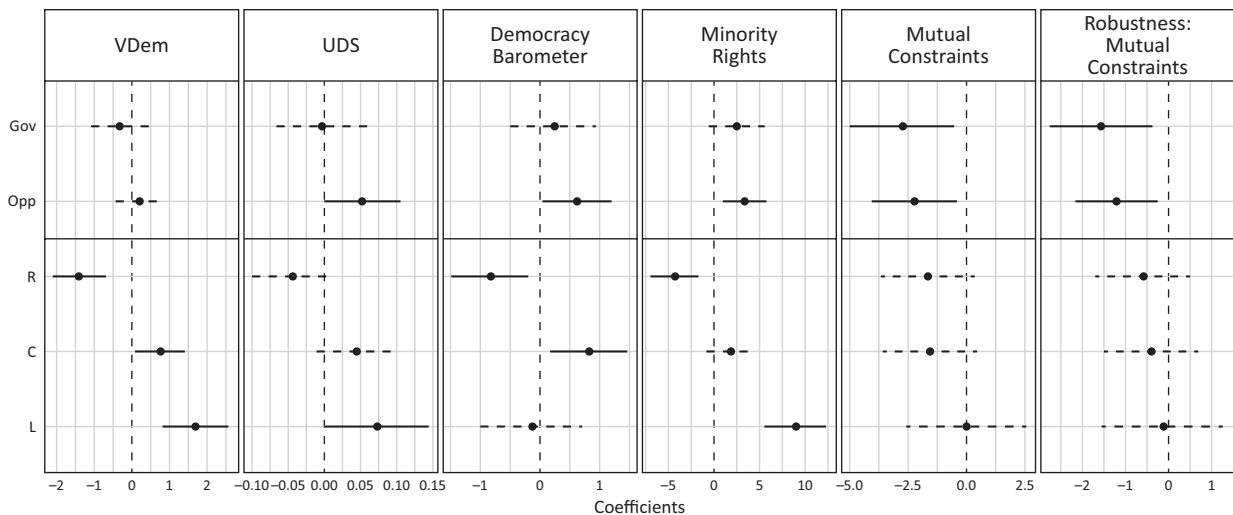
Figure B1. Effect of populism on liberal democracy subdimensions (regression results: Tables B2 and B3). Note: Figure B1 additionally includes two more measures of liberal democracy by the UDS (Pemstein, 2010) and Democracy Barometer (Merkel et al., 2016)
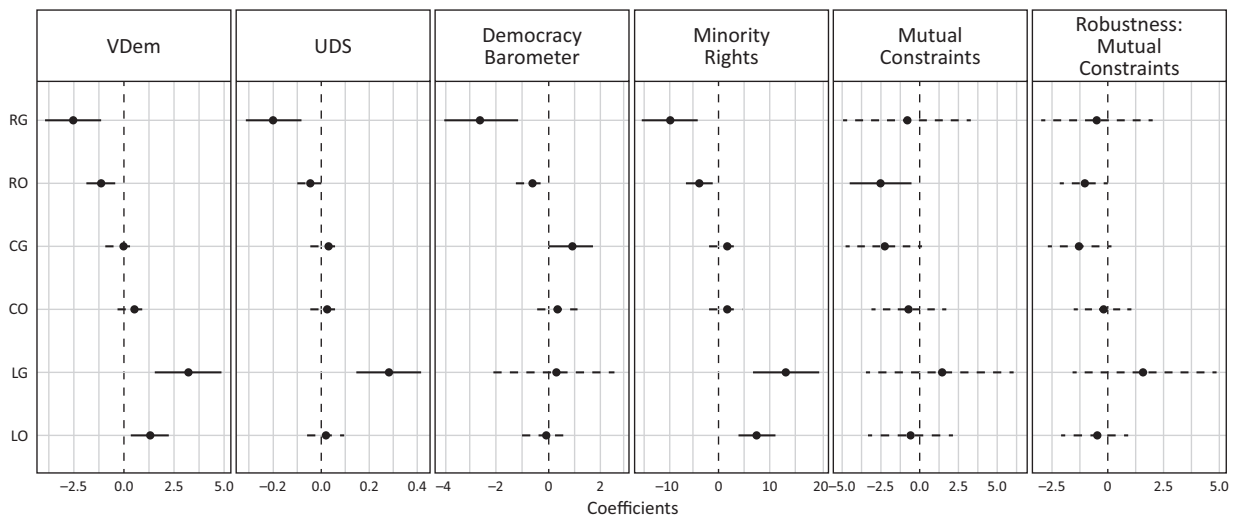
Figure B2. Effect of populism on liberal democracy subdimensions by combinations of host ideology and government status (regression results: Table B4). Note: Figure B2 disentangles combinations of both government status and host ideology.
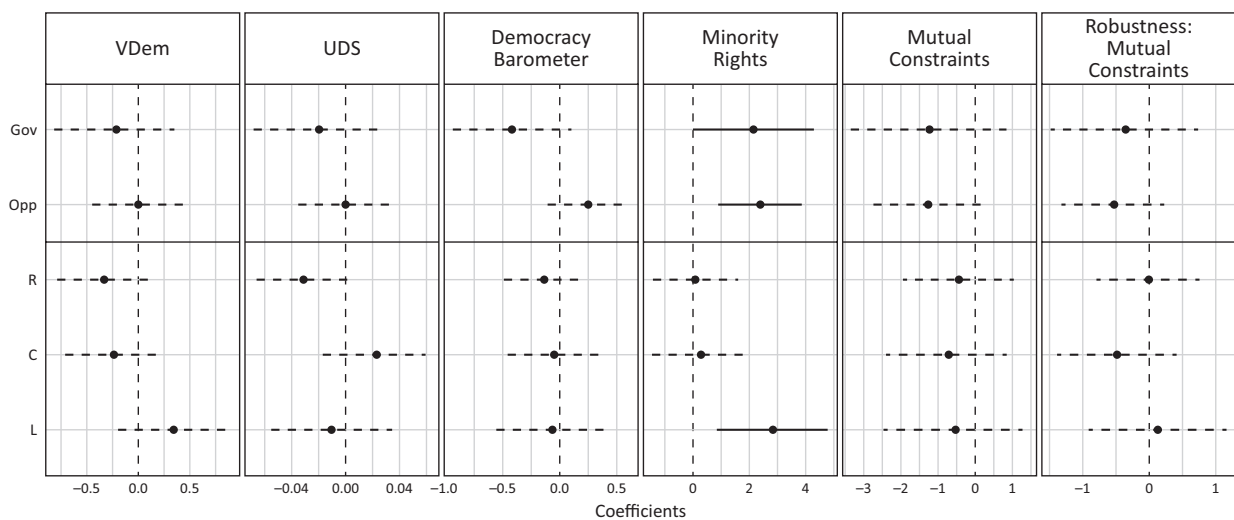
Figure B3. RBC—Effect of populism on liberal democracy subdimensions using a lagged dependent variable (regression results: Tables B5 and B6).
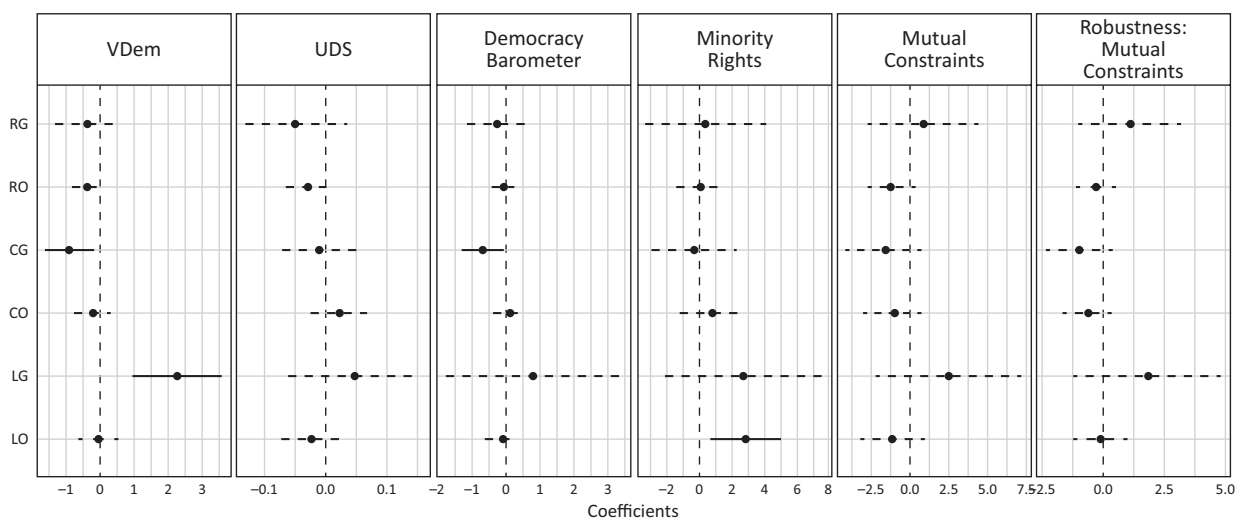
Figure B4. RBC–effect of populism on liberal democracy subdimensions by combinations of host ideology and government status using a lagged dependent variable (regression results: Table B7).

Table B2. Populism and liberal democracy by government status.

	VDem	UDS	DB	Minority Rights	Mutual Constraints	Robustness Check Mutual Constraints
Government	−0.30	−0.002	0.26	2.52	−2.70**	−1.56**
	(0.48)	(0.04)	(0.45)	(1.85)	(1.34)	(0.73)
Opposition	0.21	0.05*	0.62*	3.39**	−2.19**	−1.20**
	(0.39)	(0.03)	(0.35)	(1.51)	(1.10)	(0.59)
Democratic Consolidation	0.19***	0.003**	0.002	0.40***	0.13*	0.18***
	(0.03)	(0.002)	(0.03)	(0.11)	(0.07)	(0.04)
Cabinet Duration	0.01	0.002*	0.02	0.08*	0.04	0.02
	(0.01)	(0.001)	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Government Type (surplus)	0.19	0.02	−0.56	1.24	1.87*	1.61***
	(0.40)	(0.03)	(0.36)	(1.56)	(1.13)	(0.60)
Economic Development	−0.03	0.01*	0.10**	−0.30	−0.05	−0.06
	(0.06)	(0.003)	(0.04)	(0.19)	(0.12)	(0.07)
Post-Communist Country	1.50	−0.35***	−5.65**	−23.57**	11.41*	2.39
	(3.59)	(0.11)	(2.47)	(10.81)	(5.71)	(4.66)
Constant	71.73***	1.21***	55.97***	62.91***	62.22***	41.18***
	(2.53)	(0.10)	(1.74)	(7.77)	(4.51)	(3.20)
Observations	251	263	251	263	262	255
Log Likelihood	−616.74	18.28	−578.01	−987.48	−892.15	−721.81
AIC	1,253.49	−16.57	1,176.02	1,994.96	1,804.30	1,463.62
BIC	1,288.42	18.84	1,210.95	2,030.37	1,839.67	1,498.72

Note: * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.

Table B3. Populism and liberal democracy by host ideology.

	VDem	UDS	DB	Minority Rights	Mutual Constraints	Robustness Check Mutual Constraints
Right	−1.39***	−0.04	−0.81**	−4.22***	−1.63	−0.56
	(0.42)	(0.03)	(0.39)	(1.59)	(1.21)	(0.69)
Center	0.75*	0.05	0.82**	1.94	−1.55	−0.38
	(0.41)	(0.03)	(0.39)	(1.61)	(1.22)	(0.67)
Left	1.71***	0.07*	−0.12	8.99***	0.03	−0.11
	(0.54)	(0.04)	(0.53)	(2.05)	(1.55)	(0.88)
Democratic Consolidation	0.19***	0.003**	0.003	0.42***	0.14*	0.17***
	(0.03)	(0.002)	(0.03)	(0.11)	(0.07)	(0.05)
Cabinet Duration	0.01	0.001	0.01	0.08**	0.03	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.001)	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Government Type (surplus)	−0.16	0.002	−0.69*	0.37	1.67	1.47**
	(0.39)	(0.03)	(0.36)	(1.51)	(1.15)	(0.62)
Economic Development	−0.06	0.005	0.11***	−0.39**	−0.06	−0.07
	(0.06)	(0.003)	(0.04)	(0.18)	(0.13)	(0.07)
Post-Communist Country	0.68	−0.36***	−5.45**	−25.18**	11.36*	2.03
	(3.59)	(0.12)	(2.52)	(10.90)	(5.87)	(4.64)
Constant	72.91***	1.24***	56.12***	66.99***	61.94***	41.17***
	(2.51)	(0.11)	(1.76)	(7.76)	(4.63)	(3.21)
Observations	251	263	251	263	262	255
Log Likelihood	−605.24	17.84	−575.31	−975.35	−892.49	−724.25
AIC.	1,232.48	−13.68	1,172.61	1,972.70	1,806.99	1,470.50
BIC	1,270.85	25.23	1,210.99	2,011.61	1,845.85	1,509.06

Note: * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.

Table B4. Populism and liberal democracy by combinations of host ideology and government status.

	VDem	UDS	DB	Minority Rights	Mutual Constraints	Robustness Check Mutual Constraints
Right Government	−2.51***	−0.20***	−2.58***	−9.15***	−0.80	−0.46
	(0.86)	(0.07)	(0.88)	(3.34)	(2.55)	(1.52)
Center Government	−0.04	0.03	0.91*	1.87	−2.22	−1.24
	(0.52)	(0.04)	(0.50)	(2.05)	(1.57)	(0.86)
Left Government	3.24***	0.28***	0.33	13.40***	1.50	1.67
	(1.01)	(0.08)	(1.45)	(3.91)	(3.01)	(1.97)
Right Opposition	−1.12***	−0.04	−0.60	−3.50**	−2.51**	−1.00
	(0.42)	(0.03)	(0.39)	(1.59)	(1.22)	(0.68)
Center Opposition	0.52	0.03	0.38	1.79	−0.67	−0.14
	(0.50)	(0.04)	(0.49)	(1.96)	(1.49)	(0.84)
Left Opposition	1.34**	0.02	−0.06	7.68***	−0.53	−0.48
	(0.58)	(0.05)	(0.56)	(2.23)	(1.69)	(0.95)
Democratic Consolidation	0.21***	0.004**	0.01	0.44***	0.14*	0.18***
	(0.03)	(0.002)	(0.03)	(0.11)	(0.07)	(0.05)
Cabinet Duration	0.02	0.002*	0.02*	0.09**	0.03	0.02
	(0.01)	(0.001)	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Government Type (surplus)	−0.19	−0.01	−0.54	0.26	1.36	1.30**
	(0.40)	(0.03)	(0.36)	(1.55)	(1.18)	(0.63)
Economic Development	−0.07	0.005	0.10**	−0.40**	−0.06	−0.07
	(0.06)	(0.003)	(0.04)	(0.18)	(0.13)	(0.07)
Post-Communist Country	0.95	−0.34***	−5.31**	−24.96**	11.25*	2.31
	(3.62)	(0.12)	(2.54)	(10.78)	(5.81)	(4.70)
Constant	72.52***	1.22***	55.82***	66.11***	62.33***	41.05***
	(2.53)	(0.11)	(1.78)	(7.71)	(4.62)	(3.25)
Observations	251	263	251	263	262	255
Log Likelihood	−601.04	19.31	−570.74	−966.41	−885.56	−718.38
AIC.	1,230.09	−10.62	1,169.48	1,960.82	1,799.12	1,464.75
BIC	1,278.76	38.74	1,218.15	2,010.18	1,848.42	1,513.65

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

Table B5. RBC–association of populist parties with democratic quality by government status (lagged dependent variable model).

	VDem	UDS	DB	Minority Rights	Mutual Constraints	Robustness Check Mutual Constraints
Government	−0.20	−0.02	−0.41	2.18*	−1.22	−0.36
	(0.37)	(0.03)	(0.31)	(1.31)	(1.27)	(0.68)
Opposition	0.0000	0.0003	0.25	2.40***	−1.25	−0.53
	(0.27)	(0.02)	(0.21)	(0.91)	(0.89)	(0.48)
Democratic Consolidation	0.01	0.0001	0.005	−0.03	−0.02	0.003
	(0.01)	(0.0005)	(0.005)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Cabinet Duration	0.004	0.001	0.005	0.02	0.03	0.02
	(0.01)	(0.001)	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Government Type (surplus)	0.06	0.04	0.06	0.64	0.70	0.51
	(0.30)	(0.02)	(0.24)	(1.07)	(1.06)	(0.57)
Economic Development	−0.001	0.003**	0.003	−0.01	−0.005	0.01
	(0.02)	(0.001)	(0.01)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.03)
Post-Communist Country	0.36	−0.01	0.26	−1.84	0.17	0.18
	(0.44)	(0.04)	(0.32)	(1.47)	(1.45)	(0.75)
Lagged DV	0.96***	0.82***	0.96***	0.96***	0.81***	0.94***
	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Constant	3.21***	0.17***	2.22**	3.06	14.34***	2.56*
	(1.14)	(0.06)	(0.99)	(1.92)	(3.23)	(1.40)
Observations	243	253	237	249	249	242
Adjusted R^2	0.96	0.88	0.96	0.95	0.74	0.88

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

Table B6. RBC–association of populist parties with democratic quality by host ideology (lagged dependent variable model).

	VDem	UDS	DB	Minority Rights	Mutual Constraints	Robustness Check Mutual Constraints
Right	−0.32	−0.03	−0.13	0.11	−0.44	−0.01
	(0.28)	(0.02)	(0.22)	(0.93)	(0.91)	(0.48)
Center	−0.23	0.02	−0.04	0.30	−0.70	−0.48
	(0.29)	(0.02)	(0.25)	(1.05)	(1.03)	(0.55)
Left	0.35	−0.01	−0.06	2.84**	−0.50	0.12
	(0.33)	(0.03)	(0.30)	(1.20)	(1.17)	(0.63)
Democratic Consolidation	0.004	0.0001	0.004	−0.02	−0.03	0.0004
	(0.01)	(0.0005)	(0.005)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Cabinet Duration	0.001	0.001	0.004	0.02	0.03	0.02
	(0.01)	(0.001)	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Government Type (surplus)	0.13	0.03	0.04	1.30	0.60	0.59
	(0.30)	(0.03)	(0.26)	(1.12)	(1.10)	(0.59)
Economic Development	0.01	0.003***	0.01	0.02	−0.01	0.01
	(0.02)	(0.001)	(0.01)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.03)
Post-Communist Country	0.46	−0.01	0.36	−0.81	−0.29	−0.06
	(0.43)	(0.03)	(0.32)	(1.45)	(1.42)	(0.73)
Lagged DV	0.96***	0.82***	0.96***	0.96***	0.81***	0.93***
	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Constant	3.48***	0.17***	1.85	2.79	14.57***	2.89**
	(1.15)	(0.06)	(0.99)	(1.93)	(3.26)	(1.41)
Observations	243	253	237	249	249	242
Adjusted R^2	0.96	0.88	0.96	0.95	0.74	0.87

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

Table B7. RBC–association of populist parties with democratic quality by combinations of host ideology and government status (lagged dependent variable model).

	VDem	UDS	DB	Minority Rights	Mutual Constraints	Robustness Check Mutual Constraints
Right Government	−0.34	−0.05	−0.24	0.41	0.91	1.11
	(0.60)	(0.05)	(0.55)	(2.27)	(2.17)	(1.29)
Center Government	−0.88**	−0.01	−0.67*	−0.28	−1.55	−0.97
	(0.43)	(0.04)	(0.38)	(1.61)	(1.56)	(0.84)
Left Government	2.28***	0.05	0.82	2.74	2.53	1.83
	(0.80)	(0.07)	(1.58)	(2.93)	(2.87)	(1.86)
Right Opposition	−0.34	−0.03	−0.05	0.15	−1.13	−0.27
	(0.28)	(0.02)	(0.22)	(0.96)	(0.94)	(0.50)
Center Opposition	−0.20	0.02	0.10	0.85	−0.95	−0.58
	(0.33)	(0.03)	(0.29)	(1.24)	(1.22)	(0.65)
Left Opposition	−0.03	−0.02	−0.10	2.85**	−1.07	−0.09
	(0.36)	(0.03)	(0.30)	(1.33)	(1.28)	(0.69)
Democratic Consolidation	0.01	0.0003	0.005	−0.02	−0.03	−0.002
	(0.01)	(0.001)	(0.005)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Cabinet Duration	0.002	0.001	0.005	0.02	0.02	0.02
	(0.01)	(0.001)	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Government Type (surplus)	−0.03	0.02	0.05	1.11	0.35	0.45
	(0.31)	(0.03)	(0.26)	(1.18)	(1.14)	(0.61)
Economic Development	0.002	0.003**	0.005	0.01	−0.01	0.01
	(0.02)	(0.001)	(0.01)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.03)
Post-Communist Country	0.39	−0.01	0.33	−0.96	−0.21	−0.08
	(0.43)	(0.03)	(0.32)	(1.48)	(1.44)	(0.75)
Lagged DV	0.96***	0.82***	0.96***	0.96***	0.82***	0.93***
	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.03)
Constant	3.16***	0.17***	2.12**	2.97	14.69***	3.15**
	(1.14)	(0.06)	(1.01)	(1.98)	(3.34)	(1.52)
Observations	243	253	237	249	249	242
Adjusted R^2	0.96	0.88	0.96	0.95	0.74	0.88

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

Table B8. RBC–populism and liberal democracy by government status using alternative coding (see notes below the table).

	VDem	UDS	DB	Minority Rights	Mutual Constraints	Robustness Check Mutual Constraints
Government	−0.41	−0.004	0.37	2.38	−3.08**	−1.81***
	(0.45)	(0.04)	(0.42)	(1.76)	(1.27)	(0.69)
Opposition	0.28	0.05*	0.56	3.47**	−1.96*	−1.05*
	(0.38)	(0.03)	(0.34)	(1.46)	(1.06)	(0.57)
Democratic Consolidation	0.19***	0.003**	0.001	0.41***	0.13*	0.18***
	(0.03)	(0.002)	(0.03)	(0.11)	(0.07)	(0.05)
Cabinet Duration	0.01	0.001*	0.01	0.08*	0.04	0.02
	(0.01)	(0.001)	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Government Type (surplus)	0.20	0.01	−0.57	1.24	1.90*	1.63***
	(0.40)	(0.03)	(0.36)	(1.56)	(1.12)	(0.60)
Economic Development	−0.03	0.01*	0.10**	−0.30	−0.05	−0.07
	(0.06)	(0.003)	(0.04)	(0.19)	(0.12)	(0.07)
Post-Communist Country	1.60	−0.35***	−5.62**	−23.45**	11.55*	2.47
	(3.60)	(0.11)	(2.47)	(10.82)	(5.73)	(4.67)
Constant	71.59***	1.21***	55.95***	62.73***	61.99***	41.05***
	(2.54)	(0.10)	(1.74)	(7.79)	(4.53)	(3.20)
Observations	251	263	251	263	262	255
Log Likelihood	−616.35	18.41	−578.27	−987.51	−892.00	−721.55
AIC	1,252.71	−16.83	1,176.54	1,995.02	1,804.00	1,463.09
BIC	1,287.64	18.59	1,211.47	2,030.44	1,839.37	1,498.19

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

For this robustness check, we recoded two cases where populist parties supported minority governments. These two cases were the Danish Peoples Party from 2001 to 2011 and the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) from 2010 to 2012.

Table B9. Populism and liberal democracy by government status using seat share.

	VDem	UDS	DB	Minority Rights	Mutual Constraints	Robustness Check Mutual Constraints
Government	0.62	0.16	0.40	8.91	0.42	−0.09
	(1.82)	(0.15)	(1.65)	(7.06)	(5.14)	(2.86)
Opposition	1.94	0.35**	−2.04	18.53**	−5.08	−1.50
	(2.07)	(0.17)	(1.90)	(8.03)	(5.86)	(3.30)
Democratic Consolidation	0.18***	0.003*	0.01	0.35***	0.12	0.17***
	(0.03)	(0.002)	(0.03)	(0.12)	(0.07)	(0.05)
Cabinet Duration	0.01	0.001*	0.02	0.08*	0.03	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.001)	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Government Type (surplus)	0.20	0.02	−0.58	2.00	1.38	1.40**
	(0.40)	(0.03)	(0.36)	(1.55)	(1.13)	(0.61)
Economic Development	−0.02	0.01*	0.11**	−0.24	−0.05	−0.06
	(0.06)	(0.003)	(0.04)	(0.19)	(0.12)	(0.07)
Post-Communist Country	1.25	−0.37***	−0.19**	−24.56**	10.62*	1.80
	(3.59)	(0.11)	(2.49)	(10.68)	(5.81)	(4.61)
Constant	71.92***	1.23***	55.87***	64.46***	62.05***	41.21***
	(2.53)	(0.10)	(1.76)	(7.72)	(4.58)	(3.19)
Observations	251	263	251	263	262	255
Log Likelihood	−613.73	22.18	−575.95	−984.76	−892.25	−722.53
AIC	1,247.45	−24.35	1,171.89	1,989.51	1,804.50	1,465.05
BIC	1,282.38	11.06	1,206.82	2,024.93	1,839.87	1,500.15

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

Table B10. Populism and liberal democracy by host ideology using seat share.

	VDem	UDS	DB	Minority Rights	Mutual Constraints	Robustness Check Mutual Constraints
Right	−7.94**	0.03	−5.72*	−5.42	0.36	1.57
	(3.32)	(0.27)	(3.03)	(13.20)	(9.84)	(5.33)
Center	1.16	0.16	1.42	9.30	−2.23	−0.86
	(1.74)	(0.14)	(1.60)	(6.98)	(5.19)	(2.80)
Left	19.48***	1.13***	−9.37	62.57***	0.93	−0.43
	(4.60)	(0.36)	(5.96)	(17.80)	(13.17)	(10.39)
Democratic Consolidation	0.17***	0.003	0.02	0.33***	0.11	0.16***
	(0.03)	(0.002)	(0.03)	(0.11)	(0.07)	(0.05)
Cabinet Duration	0.01	0.001	0.01	0.08*	0.03	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.001)	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Government Type (surplus)	0.02	0.02	−0.66*	1.57	1.49	1.46**
	(0.38)	(0.03)	(0.36)	(1.54)	(1.15)	(0.62)
Economic Development	−0.02	0.01*	0.11**	−0.23	−0.06	−0.07
	(0.05)	(0.003)	(0.04)	(0.18)	(0.12)	(0.07)
Post-Communist Country	0.49	−0.39***	−4.96*	−26.19**	10.13*	1.63
	(3.50)	(0.12)	(2.51)	(10.62)	(5.80)	(4.59)
Constant	72.71***	1.25***	55.69***	66.45***	62.34***	41.30***
	(2.46)	(0.10)	(1.76)	(7.67)	(4.60)	(3.18)
Observations	251	263	251	263	262	255
Log Likelihood	−598.83	25.72	−569.98	−975.75	−888.53	−718.80
AIC	1,219.67	−29.43	1,161.96	1,973.49	1,799.07	1,459.59
BIC	1,258.04	9.48	1,200.34	2,012.40	1,837.93	1,498.15

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

Appendix C. Description of Control Variables and Rationale for Inclusion

In our empirical model, we include a set of covariates that may relate to the presence of populist parties as well as to our democratic measures. This section in the Appendix explains the detailed rationale for the inclusion of each of the control variables. First, we include democratic consolidation as a control variable. We anticipate that both the existence of populism as well as the level of democracy might depend on how long a country is democratic. Furthermore, it has been argued elsewhere that the effect of populists is stronger when democratic institutions are less established (see Huber & Schimpf, 2016b; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012). To capture this logic, we use the time that has passed since democratization in each country was reached (in years) and use data from Polity IV (Marshall, Gurr, & Jaggers, 2017). Second, we control for cabinet duration. The shorter a cabinet lasts, the less likely it is that a cabinet can realize its agenda. Third, we include a measure for cabinet composition. We distinguish between surplus governments and other governments such as minority or minimal winning coalitions. Albertazzi and Mueller (2013) as well as Huber and Schimpf (2016a) highlight that this might moderate the effect of populist parties in government. At the same time, long time surplus governments such as in Austria have been argued to provide fertile grounds for populist's anti-elite rhetoric. The ParlGov dataset contains information on, both, the cabinet duration and composition (Doering & Manow, 2015). Fourth, we control for economic development. Some scholars have argued that populists are especially successful in garnering support from "losers of globalization" (Kitschelt, 1995, Kriesi et al., 2012). Thus, we anticipate that populist parties might be more successful in less developed countries. On the other hand, a long-lasting discussion has emerged on whether democracy and economic circumstances are connected or not (e.g. Boix & Stokes, 2003, Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, & Limongi, 2000). To capture this, we measure economic development with Worldbank data on the gross domestic product per capita (GDPpc) in $1000 to ease interpretation. Finally, we include a dummy for post-communist countries as we anticipate that this distinction might play a role, both in the existence of different populist parties and levels of democratic quality (Gherghina & Soare, 2013, p. 7).

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Article

The Illiberal Turn or Swerve in Central Europe?

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Abstract

Scholars are coming to terms with the fact that something is rotten in the new democracies of Central Europe. The corrosion has multiple symptoms: declining trust in democratic institutions, emboldened uncivil society, the rise of oligarchs and populists as political leaders, assaults on an independent judiciary, the colonization of public administration by political proxies, increased political control over media, civic apathy, nationalistic contestation and Russian meddling. These processes signal that the liberal-democratic project in the so-called Visegrad Four (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) has been either stalled, diverted or reversed. This article investigates the "illiberal turn" in the Visegrad Four (V4) countries. It develops an analytical distinction between illiberal "turns" and "swerves", with the former representing more permanent political changes, and offers evidence that Hungary is the only country in the V4 at the brink of a decisive illiberal turn.

Issue

This article is part of the issue "Populism and the Remaking of (Il)Liberal Democracy in Europe", edited by Lars Rensmann (University of Groningen, The Netherlands), Sarah L. de Lange (University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands) and Stefan Couperus (University of Groningen, The Netherlands).

1. Introduction

On October 19, 2017, a 54-year old chemist set himself on fire in Warsaw to protest the dismantling of democracy in Poland. Piotr Szczęsny died from his injuries ten days later (Dyke, 2017; Nalepa, 2017). His death symbolizes the decay of the democratic order in the so-called Visegrad Four (V4)—the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia—the symptoms of which include declining trust in democratic institutions, emboldened uncivil society, the rise of oligarchs and populists as political leaders, assaults on an independent judiciary, the colonization of public administration by political proxies, increased political control over media, civic apathy and nationalistic contestation.[1] These processes signal that the liberal-democratic project in these polities has been either stalled, diverted or reversed.[2]

Although the extent of democratic decay in each of the V4 countries varies, the notion of a turn from liberalism and pluralism (an "illiberal turn") presumes the existence of a more or less linear trajectory and a consolidated democratic system from which recent events are

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[1] On disruptions see Bernhard and Karakoç (2011); Hanley and Sikk (2016); Deegan-Krause and Haughton (2009); Haughton and Deegan-Krause (2015); Stanley and Czesnik (2016); Stanley (2008); cf. Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski and Toka (1999).
[2] On backsliding see Dawnson and Hanley (2016); Greskovits (2015); Huq and Ginsburg (in press); Rupnik (2007); Hanley and Vachudova (2017); cf. Grzymala-Busse (2017); Levitz and Pop-Eleches (2010); Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2017).

seen as backsliding. We challenge this view. Rather than seeing the V4 as having made a decisive break from an inexorably liberal trajectory—an illiberal turn—we suggest that recent developments in the political systems of the V4 countries bear out a different—albeit no less meaningful and consequential—model of change, characterized by a sequence of "episodes", some of which can be characterized as "illiberal swerves". In those cases in which swerving has persisted, we can speak about an "illiberal turn". In developing this argument, we build on Bernhard's concept of chronic instability (Bernhard, 2015), which allows us to investigate the limits of path dependence. If we hone in on shorter temporal sequences, marked by elections, rather than on tectonic shifts in regimes, we can better distinguish illiberal swerves from outright turns, thereby sharpening our analytical lens on recent developments in the V4.

We view the sequences of electoral cycles as a series of inherently unstable liberal-illiberal pushes and pulls, which signal shifts in domestic and international factors (Thelen, 2003). Discussions of the so-called "illiberal turn" often rely on the concept of backsliding (cf. Greskovits, 2015; Jasiewicz, 2007), which can be distinguished from swerving in at least two ways. First, backsliding implies falling off a liberal democratic trajectory and gives the impression that the liberal project has been largely implemented and stable. The concept of swerving allows for the possibility that the commitment to democratic pluralism has weakened, without implying an idealized anchor-point. Swerving recognizes volatility and uncertainty as an integral part of democracy, without necessarily drawing an immediate link to a regime change. Second, backsliding assumes the independence of a string of observed sequences like a Markov process. But the trajectory of illiberal swerving depends on previous episodes, and indeed is often a reaction to the previous punctuated episode(s) of a liberal expansion (Bustikova, 2014). Moreover, the current revolt against liberalism is not only a revolt against the values of liberalism but also a reaction to (some of) the hypocritical advocates of liberalism who used it as a cover to steal and to amass influence.

At a time when considerable attention is devoted to the agency of political leaders and elite manipulation of the masses, it is crucial to acknowledge that shifts towards less liberal polities are often enacted by popular demand and enthusiastically supported by illiberal "uncivil" society (Chambers & Kopstein, 2001; Kopecky & Mudde, 2003). The tail is also wagging the dog. Political leaders do not typically "hijack" polities. Instead, they modify them within the constraints imposed by legacies, institutions, the political opposition and the voters.

By recalibrating the focus from backsliding and illiberal turns towards swerves, we can more easily see how and when all four countries have converged or diverged over time. From a historical perspective, the immediate post-1989 period gave rise to an episode of "imitative modernization", in which all four countries mim-

icked the idealized template of the liberal democratic, pluralistic polity of the West. Sovereignty issues were suppressed in pursuit of a "return to Europe". Slovakia tested the boundaries of illiberal swerving first. It swiftly diverged from liberalism when it embraced the authoritarian nationalism of Mečiar (1994–1998), but has rebounded. Facing a serious threat of being left behind during the first wave of enlargement in 2004, along with potential negative economic consequences, Slovakia has seen darker days already and may therefore be more inoculated from a future illiberal turn than Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, which did not experience anything comparable in the 1990s. Whereas the October 2017 Czech elections saw growing support for populist (almost 30%) and radical right (10.6%) forces, the November 2017 Slovak regional elections saw the victory of a coalition of right-leaning forces defeating both the populist center-left and the extreme right. Slovakia returned to the liberal path with a vengeance and is currently swerving the least among the V4 countries.

Executive aggrandizement (Bermeo, 2016) has also succeeded the least in Slovakia and the Czech Republic compared to Poland and Hungary, which have gone much further in degrading democratic institutions, such as courts and public administration. In Poland, the first Polish Law and Justice (PiS)-led government (2005–2007) attempted to impose its centralized and illiberal vision of the state but struggled to overcome political issues within the governing coalition and the staunch opposition of the Constitutional Tribunal. The Polish swerve lasted one electoral cycle and was reversed. The second PiS government (2015–) has been more successful in realizing this vision but faces opposition from civil society and to a lesser degree from the President, who vetoed two bills designed to control the Constitutional Tribunal. However, the strength of illiberal civil society was manifest on October 11, 2017, when some 60,000 patriots marched in Warsaw to celebrate the Day of Independence, calling for a "white Europe" and a "Poland without Jews and Muslims".

In Hungary, executive aggrandizement and swerving over two electoral cycles (2010 and 2014) has resulted in the only fully illiberal turn in the V4. The Orbán government has used its supermajority to raise issues of national sovereignty and to attack liberal civil society. This has facilitated a concentration of executive power, enabling the ruling party FIDESZ to mold the country and polity in its image, while keeping its political opponents down. Already in 2012, Hungary amended its constitution to significantly weaken the ability of the Constitutional Court to strike out laws. In 2017, the government set impossible conditions for Central European University to remain in the country.

The notion of swerves—defined as volatile episodes—permits us to identify both similarities and differences across time and countries. After distinguishing between illiberal swerves and illiberal turns, we suggest that Hungary is the only country in the V4 at the brink of an il-

liberal turn, whereas Poland and to a significantly lesser degree the Czech Republic and Slovakia are engaged in illiberal swerving. It is too early to tell whether these will transform into fully illiberal turns. For a country's sequence of swerves to become a turn, our framework suggests that three conditions must be satisfied:

1) Executive aggrandizement;
2) Contested sovereignty that increases polarization;
3) Dominant party winning two consecutive elections.

The next section describes these three conditions in further detail.

2. Illiberal Swerves and Turns

We define illiberal swerving using the first two conditions: executive aggrandizement and contestation of sovereignty. Aggrandizement refers to an increase in the concentration of political power (Bermeo, 2016). It undermines the constitutional order and reduces checks and balances. If sovereignty becomes contested, often with the help of populist appeals, ethnic, religious and social minorities can face exclusion from the sovereign. This limits pluralism in political deliberations. An illiberal turn follows if the first two conditions are present *and* a dominant party confirms its course in two consecutive elections.

Attempts to concentrate power are not new to the V4 region. In Slovakia, Mečiar's attempt at establishing a nationalist, centralized and illiberal political system failed as a result of domestic and international pressure. This took place *before* Slovakia's accession to the EU, giving the EU significant leverage in thwarting it (Vachudova, 2005). In the Czech Republic, one episode of a failed power grab is particularly important: the Opposition Agreement of 1998, an attempt by two major parties to strengthen the majoritarian character of the Czech polity. This gambit failed due to political opposition and the Constitutional Court (2000). Similarly, in Poland, the first PiS-led government's (2005–2007) swerving was blocked by the Constitutional Tribunal.

Sovereignty becomes contested if a polity perceives itself to be under threat, whether real or fabricated by swerving elites. The sovereign is often a native ruler, defined in ethnic terms, but the boundaries of the sovereign are fluid. The views of who does—and does not—constitute the sovereign changes over time and differs across countries (Basta & Bustikova, 2016; Shelef, 2010; Siroky & Cuffe, 2015). Non-politicized minorities (for example, Vietnamese or Chinese minorities in the V4) can be subsumed by the sovereign. For example, the Czech far-right leader Okamura is ethnically half Japanese. Social, religious and sexual minorities can be

excluded from membership in the sovereign, especially if they seek an expansion of rights (Bustikova, 2014, 2015). The boundaries of the sovereign are contextual, defined by historical experiences and shaped by domestic and international constraints.

When sovereignty becomes contested, support for radical right parties often follows. An illiberal swerve cannot be accomplished without access to power, which is limited for most niche parties. Radicalized mainstream parties, on the contrary, are in a prime position to combine exclusionary identity politics with executive aggrandizement (Bustikova, in press). However, if mainstream parties are perceived as having betrayed the sovereign, new, niche parties gain support. This implosion manifests itself in a decrease in support for existing political parties and the emergence of new, populist parties (e.g., ANO 2011, SMER).

Contested sovereignty has therefore contributed to the success of radical right parties, including Okamura's Dawn of Direct Democracy, which entered the Czech Parliament in 2013, Okamura's Freedom and Direct Democracy, which entered in 2017, Kotleba's Our Slovakia, which entered Slovak Parliament in 2016 and Hungary's Jobbik, which is poised to win seats, again, in the 2018 Hungarian elections.[3] In the 2017 Czech elections, the radical right increased its presence in the Parliament and is pushing for a Czexit—a referendum on the EU membership. The nationalist Eurosceptic, Václav Klaus Jr., ran on the ballot of his father's former party (ODS) and won the second highest number of preferential votes (after Andrej Babiš). The leader of ANO, Babiš, however, like all other mainstream parties, expressed clear support for EU membership. Poland has seen two waves of a populist and radical right insurgency. First, the radical-right Catholic nationalist League of Polish Families (LPR) and the agrarian populist Self-Defence (SRP) emerged in 2001. The nationalist, conservative and economically libertarian Kukiz'15 movement followed in 2015.

Uncivil society (illiberal civil society) is an important ally of the Polish, Hungarian and to a lesser degree Slovak and Czech swerving leaders.[4] Government-controlled media outlets in Poland, Hungary and Slovakia—and Babiš's media in the Czech Republic—regularly attack organizations of civil society as "foreign agents" intent on undermining national sovereignty (Guasti, 2016). In Hungary, Orbán pioneered attacks on civil society by tightening rules on NGOs, often with foreign links and funding sources.[5] Orbán also launched a campaign against Central European University and its founder George Soros. In a "national consultation" about the future of Hungary, George Soros was linked to the refugee crisis and Islamization of Europe. FIDESZ hopes that xenophobic mobilization, and the votes of Hungarians living abroad, will help the party to win the upcoming elections in 2018. Un-

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[3] Jobbik has however recently moved to the center, runs on an anti-corruption platform that targets FIDESZ. On refugees, Jobbik embraces a more centrist view, to distance itself from FIDESZ. Paradoxically, Jobbik might present a challenge to FIDESZ's desire to capture a supermajority in the 2018 parliamentary elections.

[4] Anti-Semitism has also grown in V4 and has been strategically adopted over time to portray Jews as a "fifth column" (Bustikova & Guasti, 2012).

[5] Than and Dunai (2017); United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2017).

civil society has created an atmosphere in which racists, nationalists, and ethno-populists can articulate exclusionist narratives targeted at vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minorities and refugees, raise militias to protect the borders, promote extreme religious conservatism (anti-abortion, anti-LGBT rights), and attack the "EU's multiculturalist propaganda".

In Slovakia, uncivil society had focused much of its attention initially on the Hungarian minority but shifted to social and religious issues. This resulted in initiatives like the 2009 language law and the 2015 referendum on gays and lesbians (Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko).[6] For the time being, the Hungarian minority is being accommodated. In Hungary, the main targets of the radical right have tended to be Roma, and from 2015 onwards refugees, with the crisis of 2015 ramping up the mobilization of uncivil society against refugees and facilitating general expressions of racism. The Hungarian government stokes fear and sanctions physical attacks and abuse of refugees by border guards, especially at the Serbian border.[7]

In Poland, the most successful organization in this respect is the Catholic-nationalist network around the Radio Maryja radio station, which has forged a synergistic political-economic relationship with PiS. As a mainstream radicalized party, PiS is powerful enough to put the religious conservative agenda into legislation. PiS has also capitalized on the organizational capacities of far-right organizations, such as the National-Radical Camp (ONR) and the All-Polish Youth (Młodzież Wszechpolska). But rather than co-opting them into mainstream politics, PiS has been content to benefit from associating themselves with the actions of these organizations, while keeping sufficient distance to deny responsibility for some of the more overtly racist elements of their agenda.[8]

In the Czech Republic, uncivil society currently manifests itself in the "Block against Islam" (established in 2015) and in the 2017 "Manifesto of the White Heterosexual Man". Unlike in the remaining three V4 countries, Babiš has so far resisted open cooperation with such organizations. Before the elections, Babiš rejected a governing coalition of ANO with the far right and unreformed communists. However, after the election, ANO has aligned its votes with them and placed far right representatives and communist MPs in charge of key parliamentary committees.

All four V4 political leaders (Babiš and Kaczyński) and Prime Ministers (Fico and Orbán) differ in the degree to which they embrace executive aggrandizement and emphasize sovereignty. The major dividing line between Babiš, the designated Prime Minister as of the October 2017 election, and the leaders of Slovakia, Poland and Hungary is the absence of an exclusionary approach to ethnic and social minorities, which indicates that sovereignty is not at the core of Babiš's political platform. However, Babiš is aligned with President Zeman who strategically polarizes the electorate using nativist hate speech against refugees and Islam. Babiš's hesitation to fully embrace the rhetoric of contested sovereignty stands in stark contrast to the other V4 members, where the issue of sovereignty has been more politically salient.

At present, Slovakia stands out as the only country of the V4 in which calls for a significant expansion of executive power are absent. This is at least in part attributable to the need to build coalitions to govern effectively, which makes the concentration of power much less feasible. Mobilization against Hungarians has subsided over the past five years, and the focus has shifted to Roma, LGBT, and refugees. In contrast to Poland and Hungary, the leadership in Slovakia is currently not on a mission to concentrate executive power and modify majority–minority relations. Despite the prominence of Catholic faith and a politically active Catholic church, Slovakia is not bitterly divided over social and religious issues to the degree in Poland. The current Prime Minister Robert Fico is ruling over an ideologically incoherent coalition that represents the radical right and ethnic Hungarians in the same cabinet. Fico is therefore content with the status quo and has no grandiose plans other than to keep two far-right parties at bay by strategically adopting their rhetoric.

In the Czech case, Andrej Babiš's populist political party ANO won in a landslide with almost 30% of the vote in October 2017. Babiš views politics in technocratic terms and sees the "state as a firm" in which the business of government is not impeded by democratic deliberation in the parliament. He envisions a polity where executive power is highly centralized, preferably in his hands. He aims to run a "semi-technocratic government", constituted by a mixture of ANO ministers and experts. So far, most experts that have been offered ministerial posts have declined. Civil society has also pushed back. Constitutional scholars have rebuked the President Zeman's attempt to interpret the Constitution in a way that would allow Babiš to run a minority government without winning a vote of confidence and thereby subvert the parliament.

The major difference between Poland and Hungary is that the Law and Justice party (PiS) faces a more significant parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition to its vision of a homogenous sovereign. While the governments of Poland and Hungary share a similar desire for a power grab, Kaczyński is an ideologue aligned with the church, whereas Orbán is a corrupt ideological entrepreneur aligned with oligarchs.[9] Orbán has been explicit in his view that ethnic, religious and sexual minorities should not have an equal opportunity to determine the direction of the Hungarian state: "Hungary is a se-

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[6] Passed in 2009 by, PM Fico government, the law declared that the Slovak language is an articulation of national sovereignty, Slovak must be used in all official settings, including at the local government level, and severely restricted the use of minority languages (Bustikova, 2015).
[7] Medecins Sans Frontieres (2016); Dearden (2017). Discussions with Aron Suba.
[8] Personal communication by Benjamin Stanley.
[9] On inquiry into Orbán by the EU anti-corruption body, OLAF see Nolan (2016).

rious country. It is fundamentally based on traditional values. Hungary is a tolerant nation. Tolerance, however, does not mean that we would apply the same rules for people whose lifestyle is different from our own. We differentiate between them and us".[10]

Current developments in Poland are serious. The leader of the PiS party, Jarosław Kaczyński, already holds executive power despite having no formal executive title. PiS deputy, Beata Szydło, who came to power after PiS won a majority of seats in the October 2015 parliamentary election, is widely regarded as a prime minister in name only. Szydło's government swiftly embarked on a path of concentrating power in the hands of the PiS—attacking the independence of the Constitutional Tribunal and the judiciary, and undermining the impartiality of the public administration and public media. The implementation of this project has generated a significant backlash on the part of Polish civil society, external institutions (in particular, the European Commission) and the Polish President, Andrzej Duda (PiS), who vetoed two governmental bills aimed at increasing control over the judiciary. It is not clear whether Jarosław Kaczyński will succeed in implementing his illiberal vision into a fully illiberal turn, or whether Polish swerving will ultimately be diluted, as a result of either opposition or internal PiS power struggles.

Orbán in Hungary has made the most significant steps in an illiberal direction. Orbán and his party FIDESZ have been able to concentrate power gradually over the past seven years, and have successfully reshaped the Hungarian polity. Orbán's playbook (Zalan, 2016) has provided a blueprint for the other V4 countries, particularly for Poland.[11] Orbán seized control of the Constitutional Court and the Central Bank, politicized public administration, and intimidated FIDESZ's political opponents. Orbán's centralization of power and the establishment of an "illiberal democracy" in Hungary has proceeded largely unchecked by opposition forces. Orbán has also been able to skillfully use the EU structural funds to shore up the Hungarian economy, his dominant party FIDESZ, and its oligarchic cronies.

Having characterized the extent of illiberal swerving and turning in the V4, we next turn our attention to the relationship between illiberal swerving and the EU.

3. Illiberal Swerving and the EU

The EU represents the most significant external power to influence the polities of the V4 countries after 1989.

Using both positive incentives and conditional pressures, the EU has influenced Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries in political, economic and constitutional terms. This has been both directly via legislation (*acquis communautaire*), and indirectly, via agenda-setting and institutional adaptation (Lewis, 2006; Malová et al., 2010). To the extent that the EU has been effective, the asymmetrical relationship between the CEE applicant countries and the EU seems to have provided it with its leverage (Vachudova, 2015; cf. Grzymala-Busse & Innes, 2003; Guasti, Siroky, & Stockemer, 2017). In particular, EU conditionality and leverage was applied differentially—weaker pressure was put on the leaders and stronger pressure on the laggards (Schimmelfennig, 2005).

It is tempting to see the current illiberal swerving as a "natural correction" to the "overshooting" of European liberalism. It would be erroneous to suggest that the reforms of the past two decades constituted an attempt to impose upon Central Europe a set of solutions, which were somehow "alien" to the region, and not reflective of what at least some of the political class and the broader public desired. Rather than impugning the EU for the illiberal turn (Schlipphak & Treib, 2017), or for its inability to thwart it (Jenne & Mudde, 2012; Rupnik, 2016), we should consider the possibility that the accession process empowered political elites and civil society in V4 to take ownership of the European integration process. Some have embraced it; others seek more distance. As an elite-driven process, however, the EU enlargement facilitated both liberal and illiberal power grabs.

To illustrate episodic swerving over time, we turn to the World Governance Indicators, which offer the longest view on the V4 countries (Figure 1). We recode the data using Hagopian's (2005) three dimensions of strength, effectiveness, and constitutionalism of democracy to highlight the similarities and the differences between the V4 countries over time.[12] Figure 1 shows the pre-accession (2004) divergence between the V4 and an overall improvement over time, but the development is *not* linear in any of the four countries. Figure 1 also shows that illiberal swerving is *not* new: there have been previous dips in the governance metrics. Finally, it also shows that illiberal swerving is temporary. Only Hungary has arguably made an illiberal turn.

Epstein and Sedelmeier (2008) contend that the EU accession improved the general institutional infrastructure and the legislative capacity of CEE countries. We find supportive evidence in three out of four cases in the V4.

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[10] May 2017 speech, available at http://hungarianspectrum.org/2015/05/22/viktor-orban-hungary-is-a-serious-country-where-gays-are-patiently-tolerated

[11] Zalan outlines a guidebook for an illiberal democracy. It consists of these following steps: win elections promising glory, dismantle courts, modify the constitution, take over the state media, eliminate the power of foreign investors, discredit the opposition and the civil society, change the electoral rules (Zalan, 2016).

[12] To demonstrate the effect of EU conditionality we follow Hagopian (2005) and measure three dimensions of democratic quality—strength, effectiveness, and constitutionalism. We transform the six governance dimension of the World Governance Indicators (WGI) into three dimensions: WGI's voice and accountability and political stability as a strength of democracy; governance effectiveness and regulatory quality as democratic effectiveness; the rule of law and control of corruption as constitutionalism. We select WGI as it offers the longest sequence of indicators for the CEE region. The period between 1996 to 2015 encompasses both the pre-accession, accession and post-accession. We acknowledge that quality of democracy and quality of governance are overlapping concepts.
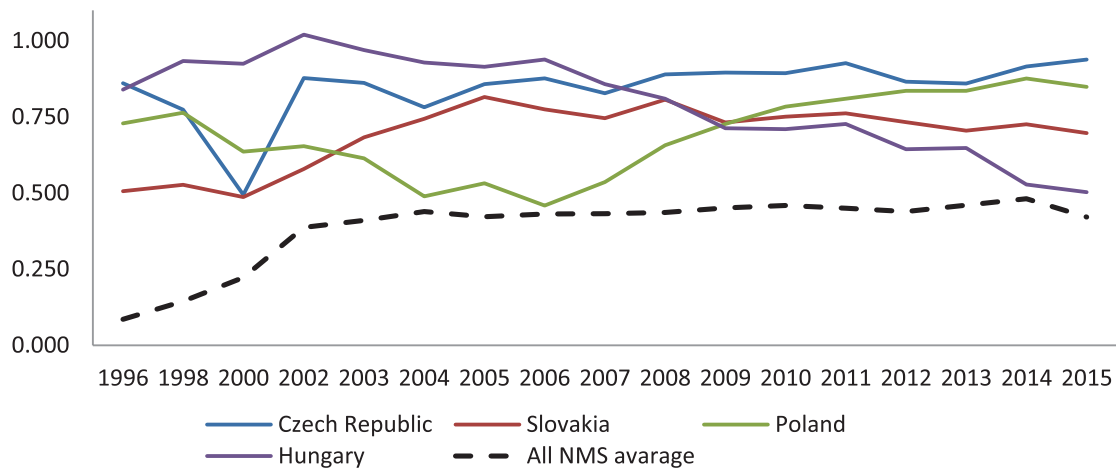
Figure 1. Comparison of Governance in V4 countries between 1996 and 2015. Source: World Governance Indicators. Notes: New member states averages is based on calculations of the authors. All new member states average includes all new member states of the EU (enlargements 2004, 2007 and 2013: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia). Lower scores are associated with swerving.

In Hungary, all democratic indicators decreased between 1996 and 2015. Over time, Hungary performed best in 2002 and 2003 (the height of the EU pre-accession leverage) and worst in 2015 as PM Orbán continued his construction of an "illiberal democracy". In Poland and Slovakia, all indicators have strengthened over time. Slovakia was the second weakest of the V4 in 2015, but the reason lies in its unfavorable 1996 ranking—significantly lower than that of the other V4 countries. Slovakia started as a laggard, and over time experienced significant growth and improvement. Its strongest year was 2005 (the "catch-up" period) and its weakest year was 2000 (Fico's first government).

Poland seems to be immune to swerves, but its development has been exceedingly volatile: negative between 2004 and 2006 (first PiS term) and positive in 2014 (before the crumbling of the Civic Platform). Given the significant progress that the Law and Justice government has made in implementing its illiberal reform program, the 2016–2017 data for Poland will certainly reflect this decline.[13] The Czech Republic was the strongest performer of the V4 group in both 1996 and 2016. The dip between 1996 to 1998 is due to the Opposition Agreement, which was a failed attempt by the two major political parties to transform the Czech political system by strengthening its majoritarian elements. Similar to Poland, we expect a sharp downward trajectory after the October 2017 electoral victory of ANO.

Illiberal swerves are episodic, temporary and reversible, whereas illiberal turns represent more permanent shifts in the state's political orientation. While Poland, the Czech Republic and especially Slovakia have improved over time, whether despite or because of illiberal swerving, Hungary has worsened over time.

4. Illiberal Swerving and Refugee Crisis

The refugee crisis increased contestation over sovereignty issues and polarized the electorate. Driven by populist political voices and unbalanced media reporting, public opinion in all V4 countries is strongly opposed to the reception and integration of refugees (Guasti, 2017). Opposition to the EU refugee relocation quotas is usually couched in logistical terms—CEE countries are not prepared to integrate migrants, it is argued. Others argue that Muslim immigration represents a security threat and a health risk. These arguments persist in spite of the fact that V4 countries have previously integrated migrants without significant difficulties. The Czech Republic integrated thousands of migrants from Bosnia (Muslims) and Ukraine and Moldova in the 1990s. Poland has taken in thousands of Chechen refugees (Muslims) over the last two decades. Hungary was the second largest recipient of refugees from the Yugoslav wars. None of these actions led to political polarization. The number of refugees seeking asylum in the all V4 countries after 2015 seems well within these limits. And still, the salience of the national sovereignty issues has increased significantly, and national politicians have turned against the EU to stay in power.

In 2016, the EU tried to introduce quotas for the distribution of refugees to various countries but met with strong opposition from Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic (and Romania). In May 2017, the Hungarian and Slovak governments disputed the EU refugee quotas at the European Court of Justice, arguing that the quotas are a pull factor for refugees, that they exceed the powers of the EU and that they undermine the sovereignty of CEE states. In July 2017, the European Court of Justice

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[13] We expect most indicators to decrease significantly, reflecting the multi-faceted character of the PiS project, targeting the country's Constitutional Tribunal, judiciary, public media, public administration and the armed forces, and indication private media and non-governmental organizations will become targets in the near future.

upheld the mandatory refugee relocation quotas and the EU Commission sent a formal request to the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland—the three countries currently in breach of their legal obligations—to begin complying with the quotas. Poland and Hungary have so far refused to take any asylum-seeker under the EU scheme, while Slovakia and the Czech Republic have taken in some refugees, but continue to cite security concerns.

Populists and radical right groups have been at the forefront of developing negative narratives about the consequences of accepting refugees. Many V4 politicians (for example, Czech President Zeman and Polish PiS leader Kaczyński) have drawn a clear link between the presence of refugees in Europe and the increased risk of terrorist attacks. Every terrorist attack in Western Europe is presented as proof of a security threat. In January 2016, then Czech Minister of Finance Andrej Babiš summarized these arguments on his Twitter account: "When you see today that more advanced countries, with a different tradition of receiving migrants, are not able to integrate migrants from the Middle East and Africa, then you cannot be surprised that I do not accept any refugees. I honestly do not believe that they can integrate into our society".

Populists and radical right actors grasp this opportunity to strengthen their anti-establishment rhetoric—presenting the disease (governmental elites as corrupted by the EU, and unable to defend national interests) and the cure (populist representatives of the people, who will effectively push back against "Brussels" and the dangers of multiculturalism). The 2015 elections in Poland demonstrated the potency of the refugee issue as an electoral asset for mainstream parties in Poland. PiS exploited public anger at the outgoing Civic Platform government—which had voted in favor of the refugee

quotas—to increase its appeal to voters on the right and also to center-right voters whose concerns were rooted in fears about the consequences of immigration.

Campaigning against refugees backfired against the mainstream SMER in Slovakia when it tried to outbid the far right on the refugee issue. The increased salience of refugees strengthened far-right parties, which cumulatively obtained 16% of the vote.[14] The strategy of Fico's SMER weakened his dominant position in Slovak politics. In the 2017 Czech elections, campaigning against refugees also backfired on the mainstream Social Democrats, who lost 70% of their support, and strengthened the radical right, who went from 6.9% in 2013 to 10.6% in 2017.

The illiberal swerve has a less off mentioned liberal twin, characterized by an embrace of the European project and its democratic values. Amid the populist anti-refugee rhetorical storm, Slovak President Andrej Kiska was alone among the V4 leaders in his appeal to the public to show openness, solidarity, and humanity, and to refrain from racism. More importantly, Kiska said: "I perceive the debate we lead about migrants and refugees as an important struggle for the heart and character of Slovakia". The same can, of course, be said for the other V4 countries, but major politicians defending liberal cosmopolitan values are in short supply in the rest of the CEE.

Still, the European project has not been rejected. Most citizens in the V4 trust the EU more than their governments. Second, V4 citizens trust the EU more than the citizens of an average EU country (Figure 2). In October 2004, several months after the accession of the first CEE wave, more than half of V4 citizens trusted the EU. Hungarians trusted the EU the most (63.5%), followed by the Slovaks (61.3%), and the Poles and the Czechs the
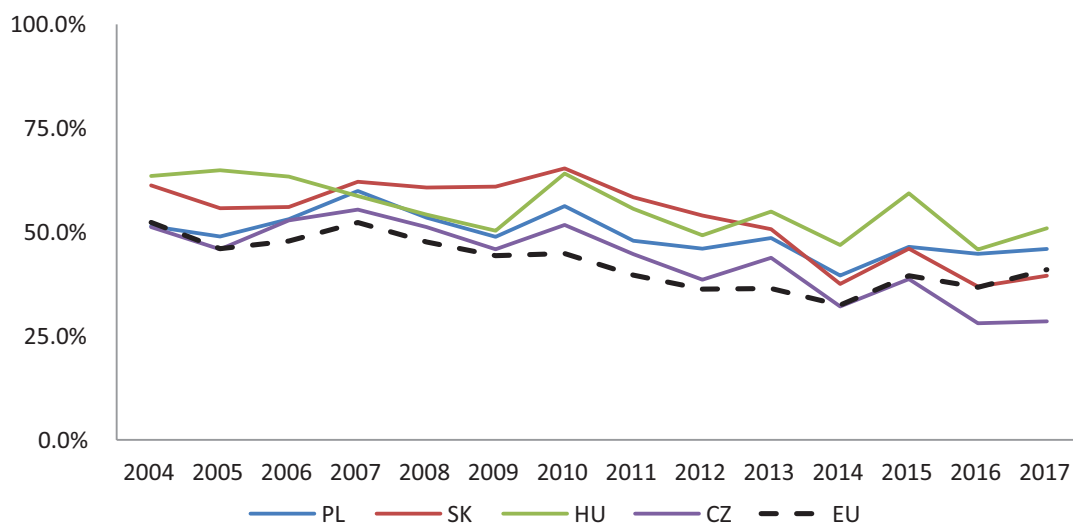
Figure 2. Trust in the EU in V4 countries between 2004 and 2017. Source: Eurobarometer.
Note: Trust to EC used here as a proxy for trust to EU.

[14] On voter volatility in Slovakia see Gyárfášová, Bahna and Slosiarik (2017).

least (51.4% and 51.2% respectively). Between 2004 and 2017, trust in the EU decreased in all V4 countries but the Hungarians still have the highest levels of trust in the EU. Overall, trust in Poland and Hungary is above the EU28 average, while the trust in the Czech Republic and Slovakia is comparatively low.

The refugee crisis undermined trust in the EU (between 2015 and 2017), but it also transformed the nature of Euroscepticism. Initially, Euroscepticism was fueled by fears about the consequences of ceding sovereignty. In 2009, Euroscepticism manifested itself in opposition to the Lisbon Treaty, particularly in Poland and the Czech Republic. During the economic crisis, Euroscepticism was economically driven and directed against the oversight of the European Central Bank in Hungary. Slovak's far-right opposed bailing out Greece, since Slovakia was expected to contribute as a member of the eurozone, unlike the other three countries that are outside the eurozone. From 2015 onwards, Euroscepticism has been framed around the perception that new member states are being treated as "second-class members", particularly concerning the alleged "imposition" of refugee quotas against their will.

In the Czech Republic, the two most vocal opponents of the refugee quotas are the ANO leader Andrej Babiš and President Zeman. In Poland, PiS and the radical-right opposition Kukiz'15 are at the forefront of rejecting the EU refugee quotas. However, even the opposition party Civic Platform is luke-warm about accommodating refugees. Hungary, which has the highest level of trust in the EU among the V4 and much higher than the EU average, shows that illiberal swerving is fully compatible with positive attitudes towards the EU. Further research would be needed, however, to ascertain whether Hungarians value the EU as an idea or as a pocketbook.

Slovakia is a poster child for the positive effects of Europeanization. The country is the only Euro adopter among the V4. In August 2017, Prime Minister Fico broke with the V4 countries to openly articulate Slovakia's place at the core of deepening European integration (Jancirova, 2017). At the same time, the Slovak government's staunch opposition to migrant quotas is completely in line with the other V4 countries.

The EU playbook to thwart illiberal swerving is limited to recommendations and sanctions under Article 7 of the Lisbon Treaty. The vote must be unanimous, however. Kaczyński and Orbán have neutralized the threat of sanctions by forging a coalition to veto any Article 7 vote against each other's country. This stalemate can be only changed domestically. For now, the main focus of both Kaczyński and Orbán is to maintain public support and to limit domestic opposition.

5. Illiberal Swerving and the Global Economic Crisis

Looking back over the last two decades, it is tempting to associate the illiberal turn in CEE with the global economic crisis. Economic anxiety can lead to the destabilization of political systems, and prompt voters to punish parties by opting for anti-establishment, populist challengers (Hawkins, Read, & Pauwels, 2017).

But with the data in hand, we can now ask about the impact of the global economic crisis on illiberal swerving in CEE. The economic crisis and the subsequent Euro crisis varied across the region. There was virtually no negative impact in terms of GDP or labor market indicators in Poland. The Czech Republic experienced a moderate economic contraction and a mild weakening of the labor market. Slovakia's labor market experienced a harsh shock coupled with a moderate economic contraction. Finally, Hungary suffered through a severe economic contraction and moderate labor market impact (Verick & Islam, 2010, p. 29). The economic crisis was an economic stress test, but it also tested the depth of democratic consolidation.

During the economic crisis, trust in the EU in EU28 countries decreased by 8%. It is no surprise that trust decreased in three of the four V4 countries: the Czech Republic (−6.5%), Poland (−5.6%) and Slovakia (−2.3%). Paradoxically, in Hungary, where the effects of the crisis were the most severe, trust in the EU has strengthened (+1.4%).

Kriesi and Pappas (2015, p. 323) argue that the economic crisis generated populist challenges to the status quo roughly commensurate with the extent of the impact of the crisis. Populism significantly rose in Hungary, a country that experienced dramatic economic contraction. Where the crisis was not as severe—such as in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia—populism was very limited, they argue. This was certainly the case until a few years ago. The rise of PiS in Poland, unaffected by the crisis, and the electoral landslide of ANO in the Czech Republic, a country with the lowest unemployment rate in Europe, show that populists can thrive in decent economic conditions. Hungary, however, has undergone a sharp economic downturn, exacerbated by the existence of corrupt oligarchic networks tied to FIDESZ that have penetrated the state administration. The economic crisis certainly fueled illiberal swerving in the V4 but appears neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for it.

6. Conclusion

This article investigates the "illiberal turn" in the V4 countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia). We distinguish "turns" from "swerves", with the former representing more permanent political changes. Three reasons underline this distinction. First, despite similarities in democratic and economic performance, the V4 is a diverse group, and the broad "illiberal turn" brush obscures more than it illuminates. Second, V4 countries have demonstrated that they can overcome authoritarian inklings in the recent past (the Czech Republic after 2000, Slovakia after 1998, Poland between 2005 to 2007). Third, we remain cautiously optimistic about the state of democracy in the V4, but we consider the current situa-

tion in Hungary to be grave.[15] Moreover, we are alarmed by efforts to undermine democratic institutions and the rule of law in Poland and by the authoritarian inklings of Babiš in the Czech Republic. Yet, none of the V4 countries seem to be at immediate risk of a regime reversal to a full-blown autocracy.

Viewing recent developments in the V4 through the lenses of temporary episodic swerves offers a more nuanced perspective on the state of democracy. For illiberal swerving to become a full turn, the key conditions would need to recur over at least two electoral cycles: 1) political polarization that prevents viable consensus about the character of the democratic polity; 2) the capture of the courts that seeks to dismantle the rule of law and balance of power; 3) political control of the media that involves increased control of the state media, and elimination or subjection of private media; 4) legal persecution of the civil society to disable mobilization and protest; and most importantly 5) change in electoral rules and of the Constitution to permanently weaken the political opposition.

As of 2017, Hungary has fulfilled most of these conditions, whereas the Polish PiS has been only partially successful. Some swerving has occurred in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, but there is still plenty of distance from an illiberal turn. Time will soon tell whether these illiberal swerves become full-fledged illiberal turns. If FIDESZ in Hungary, PiS in Poland and ANO in the Czech Republic decisively win another election, they will implement irreversible changes that will take these countries out of the orbit of European democracies. Unpacking the illiberal turn into a series of episodes of illiberal swerves that combine executive aggrandizement and contestation of sovereignty, provides a new way of understanding current developments in the V4. Small shifts need not cause alarmism about an "illiberal turn". It is true that big trees from small acorns grow, but not all seeds bloom, and not all roots grow—for the same reason, not all illiberal swerves will become illiberal turns—because the necessary conditions are not satisfied and countervailing forces show resistance.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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[15] The Bertelsmann Transformation Index ranks Hungary as a defective democracy, unlike its V4 counterparts, which are ranked as democracies in consolidation (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2016).

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Review

A Critical Review of Recent Literature on Populism

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Abstract
This is a review article of the following five recent studies on populism: 1) Ruth Wodak's *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean* (Sage, 2015); 2) Benjamin Moffitt's *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style and Representation* (Stanford University Press, 2016); 3) Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser's *Populism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2017); 4) Jan-Werner Müller's *What is Populism?* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); and 5) John B. Judis' *The Populist Explosion: How the Great Recession Transformed American and European Politics* (Columbia Global Reports, 2016). The review argues for a return to early Frankfurt School Critical Theory to address some of the shortcomings of these studies.

After a period of quiescence in the postwar decades, the appeal of right-wing populist movements and parties has increased steadily in Europe and the U.S. since the 1980s. Although this appeal has ebbed and flowed, the Great Recession of 2008 reinforced these tendencies, as demonstrated subsequently by the rise of Tea Party and Donald Trump's shocking victory in the 2016 presidential election in the U.S.; the successful British referendum to leave the EU; the continued growth and stunning electoral performances of established right-wing populist parties in Western Europe, such as the French National Front and the Austrian Freedom Party; and, in Eastern Europe, the rise to power of right-wing populist parties in Poland and Hungary. These dramatic events have inspired a plethora of new scholarship on populism, which has moved beyond older debates about the agrarian vs. urban roots of populism, or whether or not populism is even a useful term for social scientists (e.g. Gellner & Ionescu, 1969). More recent scholarly debates have focused on how to define populism; whether it expands democracy or represents a threat to it; how new forms

of media abet or inhibit populist movements; whether or not a charismatic leader is a necessary for a successful populist movement; and whether or not populists are capable of maintaining power once elected. Not surprisingly, this new literature on populism has been dominated by political scientists, with less frequent contributions from sociologists and media scholars. In contrast to the older debates about populism, historians have been—with some exceptions (e.g. Abromeit, Chesterton, Marotta, & Norman, 2016; Finchelstein, 2017)—notably absent. Although scholars who study populism in different regions have produced solid comparative studies (e.g. Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012), truly interdisciplinary approaches to populism have also been lacking. In what follows, I will survey a few of the most significant recent works on populism, with a view to some of the blind spots produced by the aforementioned peculiarities of this new wave of scholarship. I will also refer throughout to the studies of fascism and right-wing populism produced in the middle decades of the twentieth century by the Frankfurt School critical theorists. Their truly inter-

disciplinary approach still offers many valid insights into the socio-economic roots and social-psychological mechanisms that underlie populist movements. Largely forgotten or caricatured today, their studies of populist and authoritarian movements could still provide an excellent point of departure for new, interdisciplinary approaches to populism.

In her study, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*, Ruth Wodak draws upon the "discourse-historical approach" (DHA) to analyze the main rhetorical strategies used by right-wing populist parties and politicians. She focuses primarily on Europe, but also casts an occasional glance at the U.S. and the Tea Party. Her book was published in 2015, before Donald Trump's rise to political power. She spells out briefly the methodological and theoretical assumptions of the DHA in the third chapter, thereby justifying her focus throughout on texts (written, spoken or visual) and the meanings they attain only within specific contexts. She argues repeatedly that there can be no one single overarching explanation of the resurgence of right-wing populism in Europe and the U.S. in the past two decades, and that right-wing populist discourses have completely different meanings in different local contexts. At the same time, however, she does identify certain tendencies that transcend what she calls the "micro-politics" of right-wing populism. For example, among the books under consideration here, she provides the richest analysis of the "re-nationalization" of politics in Europe that right-wing populist parties have both spearheaded and benefited from. After providing her reader with some basic background information about right-wing populism and scholarly discussions of it in the first two chapters, and her own theoretical assumptions in chapter three, Wodak focuses in the next four chapters on four of the most important content areas of right-wing populist rhetorical "topoi", namely, nationalism, anti-Semitism, performance and the media, and gender. In the concluding chapter, she ties the various strains of her arguments together, but also presents an original and provocative argument about the "Haiderization" of European politics, to which I will return below. Interspersed unevenly throughout these eight chapters are a series of 15 "vignettes", in which Wodak provides more detailed analysis of right-wing populist texts from specific instances or debates, such as an interview with British National Party politician Nick Griffin, in which he discusses accusations of Holocaust denial, or a series of racist and xenophobic posters supporting the Swiss People's Party. These vignettes are undoubtedly one of the main strengths of Wodak's study, not only because they give her a chance to provide the close textual analysis favored by DHA, but also as a source of empirical case studies, which shed much light on the differences and similarities between various right-wing populist parties in Europe.

It is perhaps not a coincidence that Wodak's discussion of the main content areas of right-wing populism begins with nationalism. Following Theodor Adorno, whose statement, "identity is the prototype of ideology", she cites, Wodak illustrates the creeping "re-nationalization" of European politics in the past two decades with a discussion of language, immigration and naturalization policies. She notes, for example, that in 1998 only six European states had language and/or citizenship exams, whereas by 2010 that number had increased to 18, and by 2013 to 23 (Wodak, 2016, p. 88). She argues that such tests are repressive insofar as they deny the "obvious fact" that "Europe and the EU have become countries of immigration, diverse, multilingual and multicultural" (Wodak, 2016, p. 186). Even when right-wing populist parties' success at the ballot box has been limited, they have had an outsized influence in the resurgence of nationalism, insofar as mainstream parties have often taken over their language and even policy proposals in order to outflank them politically. This is one aspect of what she describes as a "normalization of right-wing populist policies", which has had as a consequence "that almost the entire political spectrum moves to the right" (Wodak, 2016, p. 184). In the final chapter of her book she illustrates this process in more detail with an illuminating discussion of the electoral breakthrough of the Austrian Freedom Party, which received 27.2% of the vote in national elections in October 1999—enough to form a governing coalition the following February with the Christian-Democratic Austrian People's Party. In response, 14 EU member states imposed sanctions on Austria, but these sanctions were soon lifted and an EU panel concluded that the new governing coalition did not violate EU law. Wodak argues that these events were a decisive turning point: "his [Haider's] ascension marks the threshold when right-wing populist parties started to become acceptable for being integrated into a national government in an EU member state" (Wodak, 2016, p. 178). Although Wodak makes a strong case for the "Haiderization of Europe", her almost complete neglect of right-wing populism in France and Italy, begs the question of how Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front and Silvio Berlusconi's Forward Italy parties, which were both influential—albeit in different ways— before Haider's electoral breakthrough, also anticipated and normalized right-wing populist politics in Europe.

In the fifth chapter Wodak makes an intervention in the ongoing debate about the role of anti-Semitism in right-wing populist parties and whether or not it has— as some commentators have recently claimed—been displaced by Islamophobia among "second-generation" leaders, such as Marine Le Pen or Heinz Christian Strache, who have arguably distanced their respective parties from the open anti-Semitism of their successors and have instead moved toward a chauvinistic concept of "Western Civilization" allegedly under attack by Islam. Wodak convincingly criticizes this thesis and argues that anti-Semitism is just as important as ever for right-wing populist parties in Europe, even if it must now be expressed in coded forms. She makes clear that Islamophobia and anti-Semitism can and do continue to exist

side by side. In chapter six Wodak examines the right-wing populist politics of charisma and their use of traditional and newer social media. Although she criticizes a purely psychological concept of charisma, which locates its source in the exceptional "gifts" of the populist leader, her own definition of term as mastering specific performances in specific contexts remains rather formalistic and points to the limits of her predominantly linguistic and text-based approach. In this same chapter she nods approvingly to the analysis of the "Führer personality" by Leo Lowenthal—Theodor Adorno's erstwhile colleague at the Institute for Social Research. What sets Lowenthal and Adorno's analyses of charisma and authoritarianism apart from her own, however, was their much more fully developed social-psychological conceptual apparatus. Their combination of the psychoanalytic concept of "identification" with an analysis of the historically shaped character structures that exist in any given society, made it possible for them to grasp the actual emotional mechanisms at work in charisma in a way that linguistic and textual analysis alone cannot. That said, Wodak's careful analysis here of the mendacious rhetorical techniques used by right-wing populist leaders sheds much light on the subject—and continues felicitously the tradition of earlier studies along the same lines, such as Lowenthal and Norbert Guterman's *Prophets of Deceit: A Study of the Techniques of the American Agitator*. In chapter seven Wodak turns her attention to an aspect of right-wing populist rhetoric that has often been neglected by other commentators: gender. She notes that more men—and more working-class men, in particular—vote for right-wing populist parties than do women, especially in Western Europe. At the same time, she offers a nuanced and compelling explanation of why women occupy important leadership roles in many of the parties in both Europe and the U.S. In more secular Western Europe, Marine Le Pen and Pia Kjaersgaard focus on the hijab or burqa wearing Muslim as the primary symbol of the threat Islam poses to "Western" ideals of gender equality, whereas in the more Christian U.S. populist politicians like Sarah Palin and Michelle Bachman view abortion and even contraception as threats to the traditional, white patriarchal family. Drawing once again on Adorno, Wodak argues that the reactionary attitudes towards gender characteristic of many right-wing populist male voters are linked—in both Europe and the U.S.—to the real and perceived loss of status of white working-class men since the 1970s and that these attitudes co-exist and reinforce other aspects of the "syndrome" of the authoritarian personality, such as ethnocentrism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia.

In *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation*, Benjamin Moffitt (2016) attempts to stake out an innovative interpretation of populism as a political style, whose essence lies primarily in mediated performances by leaders and not in specific content or ideology. Moffitt also attempts to move beyond the limits of most recent commentary on populism by addressing it as a truly global phenomenon, with common characteristics everywhere. To make good on his claim for global coverage, he uses as case studies 28 populist leaders from around the world. The other main way in which Moffitt tries to set his study apart from the voluminous older and newer literature on populism lies in his focus on the dramatic transformation of the media in the past two decades and its effects upon politics. Moffitt argues that populism is qualitatively different today because of the new media, and that the new media has benefited and advanced populism more than any other form of politics.

Moffitt begins with an overview of the literature on populism, in which he discerns four distinct approaches: populism as an ideology, a political strategy, a discourse or rhetoric, or a political logic. He proceeds to explain how his own interpretation of populism as a political style differs from these approaches. According to him, all forms of populism appeal to "the people" against "the elite"; they flaunt bad manners and flout politically correct forms of behavior; and they seek to mobilize supporters with hyperbolic warnings about existing or imminent crises and threats. Furthermore, populism differs from genuine political ideologies, such as liberalism or socialism, in that it relies much less on stable principles than on specific ways of performing politics. He argues that, for populists, politics is more about how the message is delivered than the actual message itself. Moffitt cites approvingly the "constructivist" and "performativist" turns in the social sciences as informing his position. He notes as an advantage of his approach the ability to recognize "the populist style in politics" in many different contexts, and across the traditional divisions between the left and the right. Consequently, Moffitt makes no effort to distinguish left- and right-wing forms of populism. Instead, he contrasts populism as a whole to non-populist forms of politics, such pluralism and especially technocracy, whose appeal to expertise, good manners and stability he views as the diametric opposite of populism.

In chapter four of his study, Moffitt turns his attention to the much-debated role of the leader in populism. He argues—against Cas Mudde and others—that downplaying the role of the leader betrays a Eurocentric approach to populism; the centrality of the leader to populist movements and parties is the rule, rather than the exception, when one views populism as a global phenomenon. For Moffitt, "it is the leader that should be our main focus when studying the phenomenon, given that they are the figures that ultimately 'do' populism" (Moffitt, 2016, pp. 51–52). Populism differs from traditional political ideologies also in that the leader does not represent but actually embodies "the people". But, as Moffitt points out insightfully, charisma is not necessary to become a living symbol of the "general will"; more important are convincing "performances of ordinariness and outsiderness", which make it possible for people to identify with the leader. Moffitt states that

he agrees with Freud's theory of group psychology, according to which such "symbolic unification of the group" functions as a process of identification, although he does not discuss the process of introjection, which leads to the formation of libidinal bonds between the leader and his/her followers.[1] Moffitt's reference to Freud here is isolated and social-psychological categories of any kind are absent in the remainder of his book. As with Wodak's discourse-analytical approach, Moffitt's emphasis on the media and performance provides few conceptual tools that could explain why certain political techniques are successful, while others fail. To his credit, Moffitt attempts to address this problem in chapter six, which focuses on the audience for populism. Qualifying his claim in chapter four somewhat about the primacy of the leader, Moffitt admits here that not all attempts to perform populism are successful and the populist subject is not simply "interpellated" in a passive way, but has an active role in choosing which performances it accepts, through individuals' decision to listen or not, or to join or vote for specific parties. Although Moffitt is certainly correct to emphasize that the relationship between the populist leader and his or her supporters is thoroughly mediated—not direct—his own concept of mediation remains unmediated insofar as it focuses solely on media performances and not the larger social and historical context in which those performances occur. His invocation of Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* here to support his claims demonstrates clearly Moffitt's inadequate mediation of media appearance with social reality. For Debord—thoroughly schooled in Hegel, Marx and Lukács—the "spectacle" was precisely not just the media, but rather the most advanced form of a capitalist *society*, in which even images have been seized by the commodity form. Moffitt has good insights into the key role that carefully constructed, mythical images of "the people" play in the populist ideological repertoire, but he lacks the conceptual tools to decipher such social heiroglyphics.

In chapter seven, Moffitt shifts back to a more constructivist argument, with a critique of commentators who posit a strong, or even weak causal link between crises and populism. Against them, Moffitt views "crisis as a phenomenon that can be experienced only through mediated performance" (Moffitt, 2016, p. 118) and he avers that "a crisis only becomes a crisis when it is *perceived* as a crisis" (Moffit, 2016, p. 120, emphasis his own). One wonders if the legions of persons who lost their jobs and homes after the Great Crash in 1929 or the Great Recession in 2008—which led directly to an upsurge of left- and right-wing populist movements in Europe and the U.S.—just needed to adjust their perceptions. Moffitt does have a worthwhile point to make here, namely, that the performance of crisis is essential to the populist's cultivation and manipulation of *fear* among its audience, but severing the link completely from real

social crises and populism goes too far. In the penultimate chapter Moffitt turns his attention to debates about whether populism is good or bad for democracy. After a brief, but lucid outline and analysis of the main positions of the three main camps—those who view populism as a threat to democracy, those who view it as a deepening of democracy, and those who take an equivocal approach—Moffitt sides with those who remain agnostic and insists that populism will have different consequences in different contexts. Incongruously, he criticizes Cas Mudde—whom he correctly places in the third camp—for not making his normative commitment to liberal democracy and pluralism clear enough, while at the same time arguing that populism often serves as a corrective to overly liberal conceptions of democracy. Moffitt's elaboration of the positive and negative effects populism can have in different contexts is illuminating, but it would seem that his own normative commitments are weaker than Mudde's. Moffit concludes with the undeniable observation that populism has experienced a revival on a global scale in the past few decades and that it is here to stay. His other parting claim, that analyses of populism must keep pace with times, is well taken, although his own passing and underdeveloped reference to Freud can also serve as a reminder that "older" conceptual approaches to populism and group psychology should not be consigned to the proverbial dustbin of history. As anyone who has suffered through *The Triumph of the Will* knows, right-wing populists' discovery of "new media" long predates the twenty-first century.

In *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, one can find a useful distillation of the reflections of two veteran scholars of populism, Cas Mudde and Cristobál Rovira Kaltwasser (2017). The former is a leading authority on right-wing populist parties in Europe and the latter an expert on populism in Latin America, although both have also published comparative studies of populism in different regions. Parting ways immediately with those who reject populism as a merely polemical term, or one too vague to be helpful for scholarly analysis, the authors argue that it is possible to provide a minimal definition of populism which grasps its common features across space and time, and distinguishes it from other political movements, parties and/or ideologies. Accordingly, they define populism as a "thin-centered ideology" which necessarily includes three core concepts. They use "ideology" as a neutral, not an inherently pejorative term, more akin to a "worldview" than "false consciousness". By "thin-centered" they refer to the fact that populism is less comprehensive than other political "ideologies", such as liberalism or socialism, which makes it possible, indeed necessary, for populism to be combined with other ideologies in order to become an effective political force. The three core concepts that define populism, according to them, are "the people", "the elite", and "the general will". Following or alluding to Ernesto Laclau, they refer to the first

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[1] For an insightful discussion of the pyschoanalytic concept of identification and its relevance to contemporary right-wing populist movements, see (Leeb, in press).

two concepts as "empty signifiers", which means that one must examine the particular incarnation of populism in a local context to determine how the opposition between "the people" and "the elite" is constructed. With the concept of "the general will", they allude, of course, to Rousseau and his critique of representative government, but also to what they refer to as the "monist core of populism" (p. 18), which brings populism into close proximity with the later, right-wing and (proto-)fascist political theory of Carl Schmitt. Mudde and Kaltwasser's choice of Rousseau and Schmitt to illustrate the theoretical underpinnings of populism raises the question of the relationship of populism to classical republicanism, but also the question of the historical transformation of populism from a left- to a right-wing ideology between the French Revolution and the emergence of fascism and other new, radical right-wing movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; but they don't pursue these important questions here.[2] In any case, the "monist" character of populism highlights its inherent preference for a purported "general will" over any individual or minority rights. Later in the book, they also define populism as compatible with democracy, but a potential threat to liberal democracy. Finally, they also define their approach to populism as "ideational"; for them, in other words, "populism is first and foremost a set of ideas" (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 62), which can be used in different ways by different actors. This approach has the advantage of permitting them to move beyond sterile debates about whether populism is primarily a movement or a party, or whether populism is tied to a specific type of leader, or to a leader at all.

In the second chapter the authors examine briefly the changing forms of populism that have existed in different regions of the globe in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. They provide a good overview of the transformation of populism in the U.S. over the course of the twentieth century from a predominatly progressive, to a predominantly reactionary movement—here again, however, without any attempt to explain *why* this shift occurred. They also helpfully point to the centrality of producerism, which defines "the people" as virtuous producers and "the elite" as immoral parasites, to both progressive and reactionary forms of populism in the U.S. They approach Latin American populism by way of a historical periodization that distinguishes three main waves: classical populism (1929–1969), represented paradigmatically by Juan Peron; neo-liberal populism (the 1990s), represented by Alberto Fujimoro and Carlos Menem; and left-wing populism (1998 to the present), represented by Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales. Their historical narrative of European populism begins with the Russian *narodniki* movement, which was itself unsuccessful, but which inspired several successful agrarian populist movements in Eastern Europe. Problematically, they erect a firewall between fascism and populism by claiming rather simplistically that fascism was an eli-

tist movement. Here they overlook the crucial anti-elitist elements of fascist ideology, which set it apart from traditional European conservatism and made it so appealing the new radical nationalist movements that had begun to emerge in France, Germany and other European countries at the end of the nineteenth century. These movements should be seen as key sources of twentieth-century European populism—and not just the Russian *narodniki*. They point out correctly that populism disappeared almost entirely in Europe in the prosperous post-World War II decades, and did not reemerge as a force to be reckoned with until the end of the 1990s. Striking from our perspective today in relationship to both Europe and the U.S., where populism also languished in relative obscurity in the post-war period, is the correlation between the Keynesian economic policies and stronger welfare state, on the one hand, and the notable absence of populism, on the other. The correlation between the resurgence of populism in the 1990s and the spread of neo-liberal ideas that preceded and accompanied it, is equally striking. It is even more striking if one views the conservative shift in Western European politics in the late 1970s and early 1980s—represented by Thatcher in Britain or Kohl and the *Tendenzwende* in West Germany—as the watershed moment in the recrudescence of populism, rather than the late 1990s, as do the authors. Who would deny that the former shift was also characterized by a powerful resurgence of the xenophobia that would figure so prominently in later European populist movements? Mudde and Kaltwasser are open to arguments that posit not merely correlation, but causal links between the rise of neo-liberalism and right-wing populism in Europe and the U.S., but it is—as we shall see—John Judis who explores these links most compellingly. Mudde and Kaltwasser also mention in passing populist movements in other parts of the globe—thereby agreeing with Moffitt that populism is truly a global phenomenon—but with the limited amount of space allotted to them in a "very short introduction", their discussion remains necessarily superficial.

Chapter three provides an analytically sharp and useful discussion of the three main types of populist mobilization: top–down personalist leadership, bottom–up social movements and the mixed form of the political party. Mudde brings his formidable knowledge of European right-wing populist parties to bear here, to demonstrate—pace Moffitt—that populist parties can not only thrive without charismatic leaders, but that such charisma is often a function of the much more durable party form. In chapter four Kaltwasser offers a plausible explanation of how and why the charismatic strongman has been so successful in the Latin American context, but he and Mudde also explain that such a leader is one of several types that have proven successful in populist parties and movements. Other types include women, entrepreneurs, ethnic leaders or "insider-outsiders" who can succeed in gaining acceptance as the "vox populi".

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[2] For an examination of this problem, see (Abromeit, 2016).

Although they distinguish helpfully between different types of leaders, they seem to agree with Wodak and Moffitt that all forms of populist leadership involve a process of identification between the supporters and the leader. Mudde and Kaltwasser point out that not all populist leaders are charismatic. And sometimes, it is precisely this lack of charisma which facilitates the process of identification. But Mudde and Kaltwasser do not possess any sophisticated psychological concepts to *explain* such processes of identification, any more than do Wodak or Moffitt.

In the last two chapters of their short study, the authors turn to debates about populism and democracy, and to the causes of and possible responses to populism. In contrast to Jan-Werner Müller, they do believe that populism can enhance democracy under certain circumstances. Displaying once again their analytical acumen, the authors distinguish between four different types of regimes—full authoritarianism, competitive authoritarianism, electoral democracy and liberal democracy—and demonstrate how populism is more likely to benefit democracy under repressive conditions than in a fully open society. They also identify the many ways in which populism can strengthen anti-liberal-democratic tendencies. One problem, however, with this typology is that it posits liberal democracy as the most perfect form of government possible. With this approach, it is difficult, if not impossible, to understand why powerful anti-democratic populist forces develop *within* liberal democracies. This approach may reflect the limits of political science itself, as a discipline, to provide a comprehensive explanation of right-wing populism, and the need for a more interdisciplinary approach, such as that pioneered by Frankfurt School Critical Theorists in the 1930s and 1940s.[3] On this same note, Mudde and Kaltwasser begin the sixth and final chapter with the rather surprising statement that, despite the recent explosion of research and writing on populism, "surprisingly few established theories about the success (and failure) of populist forces exist" (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 97). Like Wodak, they do not seem to believe that there is any single explanation for populism, or even for its global resurgence in the past few decades. They provide a laundry list of conditions, whose existence facilitates populism, such as a perception of threat or crisis, economic downturn, systematic corruption, a weak state unable to collect taxes or redistribute wealth, and an increasingly diversified and competitive media market that focuses more on the sensational issues favored by populists. One of the other causes they mention, namely, the "neo-liberalization of social democracy", that is, the tendency of Socialists and Social Democrats on the Continent, Labor in Britain, and the Democratic Party in the U.S. to embrace neo-liberal economic policies and thereby to abandon any principled opposition to the root cause of growing inequality and insecurity in modern capitalist societies, points to a more comprehensive explanation of the resurgence of populism, but the authors do not develop this idea. The closest they come to a general explanation of the causes of populism is that "many citizens interpret political reality through the lens of populism" (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 97), which of course begs the question of why. To come back once more to the Frankfurt School theorists, at least they realized that questions of perception could be linked to socially and historically formed character structures, which were widespread among groups of individuals who shared common experiences.[4] Such an approach offers the possibility of studying and explaining the reasons why specific forms of perception, and beyond that, specific emotional dispositions, exist among numerically significant groups. These perceptions and dispositions can provide the cement that holds societies together, or—in the case of populist rebellions—the destructive energy that can transform or tear them apart. Mudde and Kaltwasser end their study with some sound recommendations on how best to counteract the negative effects of populism, which include adequate prosecution for corruption; a stronger state able to collect taxes and redistribute wealth; political and civic education in liberal-democratic values; support for domestic and international institutions that monitor and protect minority rights; and defense of free media. But they also caution that it is a mistake to overreact to the perceived threat of populism, thereby playing into their self-presentation as victims of powerful forces and violating oneself the democratic principle of the "freedom of those who think differently".

Jan-Werner Müller's *What is Populism?* (2016) parts ways from the other books under consideration here primarily in its attempt to define populism as an exclusively negative phenomenon, which always represents a potential threat to democracy. To make this argument Müller must also rely on an atypical concept of democracy, in which liberal safeguards to individual and minority rights are included in the definition of the term. Whereas Mudde and Kaltwasser distinguish between democracy and liberal democracy, viewing populism as compatible with the first and a potential threat only to the sec-

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[3] As Adorno put it: "It cannot be disputed that formal democracy, under the present economic system, does not suffice to guarantee permanently, to the bulk of the population, satisfaction of the most elementary wants and needs, whereas at the same time the democratic form of government is presented as if…it were as close to an ideal society as it could be. The resentment caused by this contradiction is turned by those who fail to recognize its economic roots against the form of democracy itself. Because it does not fulfill what it promises, they regard it as a 'swindle' and are ready to exchange it for a system which sacrifices all claims to human dignity and justice, but of which they expect vaguely some kind of guarantee of their lives by better planning and organization" (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950, p. 678).

[4] See, for example (Horkheimer, 1995a). Erich Fromm's very substantial introductory essay to the Institute's *Studies on Authority and Family* (Fromm, 1936) also provides an excellent and still relevant model for a sophisticated understanding of the social psychological mechanisms at work in right-wing populist movements. Unfortunately, this important essay has never been translated into English. For a brilliant socio-historical analysis of populist movements in early modern Europe, see also (Horkheimer, 1995b). Horkheimer and Fromm's writings in the 1930s laid the theoretical groundwork for the Institute's path-breaking empirical studies of right-wing populism and authoritarianism in the 1940s and 1950s.

ond, Müller denies the claims of populists in power—such as Viktor Orban, Hugo Chavez, or Recep Tayyip Erdoğan—to be truly democratic. Müller introduces a new term, "defective democracies", to refer to these regimes, whose success in winning elections is, according to him, not enough to earn them democratic legitimacy. Müller also parts ways from most other commentators—such as Moffitt, who argues that populism is successful only in the opposition and tends to collapse if it gains power—in his much greater attention to what populists do when they are in power. Also in contrast to many other scholars of populism, Müller emphasizes the similarities between fascist and populist ideology. Regarding these last two points of divergence, Müller's analysis of populism is informed in illuminating ways by his impressive earlier research on Carl Schmitt, the history of political ideas in twentieth-century Europe, and his more recent work on the Orban regime in Hungary. For example, Müller convincingly demonstrates that contemporary right-wing populists operate with a monolithic and imaginary concept of "the people", which echoes both Schmitt's definition of the political in terms of a binary "friend–enemy" opposition and the National Socialists' appeal to a mythical *Volksgemeinschaft*. Contemporary populists' appeals to such imagined communities allow them to claim that they represent the "real" people and to exclude those defined as outsiders. For Müller, the "logic" of populism always rests on the self-righteous assumption by populist leaders and followers that "we are the 100%". In most cases, however, it is—according to him—the populist leader who speaks *in the name of* the people. One additional consequence of Müller's thoroughly critical approach to populism is that progressive populism becomes a *contradictio in adjecto*; for example, he argues that the People Party in the U.S. in the 1890s was social democratic, not populist, and he says basically the same thing about Bernie Sanders. No doubt, Mudde and Kaltwasser's approach, which makes room for progressive, bottom–up forms of populism, is more supple here. But Müller's approach has the advantage of capturing one decisive aspect of right-wing populism that many commentators have overlooked, namely, its tendency to depoliticize its followers and to reduce democracy to a spectacle, in which passive citizens do nothing more than watch or listen to their leaders. Populism can be as much about demobilizing, as mobilizing "the masses", as Schmitt and the Nazis also knew. For populists, popular sovereignty is more acclamatory than participatory. This also helps explain why populism often appeals to people who hate politics.

There is much to recommend in Müller's study, particularly in regard to his trenchant and sobering analysis of populism in power. But I would like briefly to discuss two weaknesses I see in his approach, which he shares with Mudde and Kaltwasser. The first is his positing of liberal democracy as the unquestionable telos of modern politics. Here, Müller goes even further than Mudde and Kaltwasser by uttering some cautious words of praise for

Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" argument, that is, "that there were no more rivals to liberal democracy at the level of ideas" (Müller, 2016, p. 5). As he sees it, the main danger to liberal democracy comes not from rival ideologies, but from within democracy itself, in the form of populism. Although Müller does recognize throughout his study the link between increasing inequality and the resurgence of populism—he goes so far to say that the U.S. "requires deep structural reform in this respect" (Müller, 2016, p. 93)—the question is whether or not he possesses the conceptual tools to grasp the reasons why liberal democracy has come increasingly under threat, from within, during the past few decades. Here, an ever-renewed emphasis on the virtues of liberal democracy itself does not get us very far. Adorno's famous statement in 1959 that the survival of authoritarian tendencies *within* democracy is more menacing than groups openly opposed to democracy, is still relevant—despite the different social and historical context in which we are living today (Adorno, 1998, p. 90). Müller is too quick to caricature and dismiss social-psychological explanations of populism, such as Adorno and his colleagues' analyses of the authoritarian personality. As is the case with the other books considered here, Müller accepts that the psychological mechanism of identification is decisive in the dynamic interaction of the populist leader and his or her supporters. What does liberal democratic political theory have to tell us about this mechanism? Not much, I claim. Furthermore, here also like Mudde and Kaltwasser, Müller does not pay enough attention to the fundamental differences and incompatibility between democratic socialist and Marxist theory, on the one hand, and populism, on the other. While it would take us too far afield to discuss this complex point in any detail here, the case of Ernesto Laclau is very instructive in this regard. In his brilliant early work, Laclau sought to develop a synthesis of critical Marxist theory and populism. But as his work developed, and Laclau's defense of populism as the "ontological" foundation of politics, went hand in hand with a rejection of Marxist and socialist theory, insofar as they insisted that politics must always be theorized within a larger social and historical context. This insistence upon the primacy of the "social", and the compatibility of socialism and populism was precisely what the later Laclau rejected. Not surprisingly, Müller is himself explicitly critical of Laclau, yet he—like Mudde and Kaltwasser—approach populism as a fundamentally *political* phenomenon, and make little effort to systematically explore the socio-historical and social psychological factors that have determined its success. To his credit, Müller emphasizes that not all criticisms of liberalism are populist. Presumably he is leaving the door open here for a critical Marxist critique of the ways in which social domination reproduces itself *within* liberal democracy—a critique which is *not* populist, but democratic socialist. But one will not find such a critique in Müller's own work. Insofar as many people on the left—including Laclau and those influenced by him—have been drawn to populism,

the development of such a critique remains an important task.

Of all the books under consideration here, John Judis's *The Populist Explosion: How the Great Recession Transformed American and European Politics* (2016), contributes most to the development of such a critique. Although somewhat misleading, insofar as Judis's discussion of populism extends back historically far beyond the Great Recession of 2008, the title of his book highlights one of its main strengths, namely, an approach to the recent resurgence of populism that is more historical and historically specific than any of the other books under consideration here. Although Judis draws upon political theory—most notably, Ernesto Laclau's emphasis on the fundamentally antagonistic nature of populist politics—to flesh out some of his arguments, at the center of his analysis are deeper socio-economic tendencies and ideologies that have accompanied and reinforced them. He focuses, in particular, on the transition in Europe and the U.S. in 1980s and 1990s from industrial societies governed by more or less Keynesian policies, to post-industrial societies in which neo-liberal ideas and policies had become hegemonic, even among the mainstream leftist parties. Judis views the resurgence of populism in the past few decades primarily as an expression of discontent with neo-liberal policies. So, during periods when neo-liberalism seemed to function well, such as the late 1990s, populism lost support. At other times—most notably in the wake of the 2008 crisis—left and right-wing populist movements exploded in Europe and the U.S. Judis argues compellingly that populist movements "often function as warning signs of a political crisis" and that they arise "only under very special circumstances" (p. 16), which explains why—as most of the other authors also noted—populism was so weak in Europe and the U.S. during the prosperous postwar decades. The populist movements and parties that did exist in Europe during this time—such as the *Poujadistes* in France—were libertarian, anti-tax parties supported by the petty bourgeoisie. Judis shows interestingly how many European right-wing populist parties—such as the National Front in France, which had its roots in *Poujadisme*—followed a trajectory from libertarianism to economic nationalism and pro-welfare state position. With the numbers of immigrants and refugees rising steadily, especially in Northern Europe, right-wing populist parties insisted that the benefits of welfare state policies accrue solely to the "real" people, namely, those within the imagined ethno-nationalist community. Judis also demonstrates a more general tendency in the shifting composition of supporters of European right-wing populist parties, with the petty bourgeois being increasingly outnumbered by workers, and especially workers in regions hit hardest by neo-liberal economic reforms of the 1980s and 1990s. Even relative latecomers to the European right-wing populist scene, such as UKIP in Britain, offer a clear example of this larger pattern outlined by Judis. He argues that UKIP's electoral breakthrough in the 2014 EU election, in which it came in first with 27.5% of the vote, was predicated upon Nigel Farage's abandonment of the party's commitment to laissez-faire economics, which increased support from workers, especially older, white male workers in former industrial areas. He identifies similar tendencies in other right-wing populist parties in Northern Europe. He argues, for example, that Marine Le Pen—whose home district is a former mining region in Northern France—is more of an economic nationalist than her father and that her economic policies are more important to the current success of the National Front than anti-immigration.

Equally impressive and persuasive is Judis' discussion of the role of the "neo-liberalization of social democracy" in the rise of right-wing populism in Europe and the U.S. Although, as he points out, both center-left and center-right mainstream parties embraced the neo-liberal policies that became hegemonic in the 1980s and 1990s, such a shift had different implications for the left. Everyone is familiar with Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, as the paradigmatic cases of such a shift, but Judis also shows how Continental Social Democracy and Socialism participated in the same dynamic from the early 1980s to the present. From Francois Mitterrand's major concessions to neo-liberalism in the early 1980s, to Gerhard Schroeder's defense of the so-called Hartz laws in 2003, which made it easier to fire workers, to the Spanish and Greek socialist parties' more recent embrace of EU-mandated austerity policies, Judis demonstrates a consistent and recurring pattern of the neo-liberalization of Social Democratic parties across Western and Southern Europe. This pattern was reinforced by the EU, which "wittingly or not…institutionalized the rule of neo-liberalism" (Judis, 2016, p. 105) and thereby exerted heavy pressure on Social Democratic and Socialist parties to toe the line. Implied, but never explicitly stated in Judis' argument, is the rather obvious point that if traditional leftist parties, with deep roots in the European universalist traditions of emancipation going back to the French Revolution and socialist movements of the nineteenth-century, fail to articulate a robust critique of neo-liberal global capitalism, then the door is thrown wide open to right-wing populist parties, who are more than willing to criticize neo-liberal globalization from a particularist—that is, ethno-nationalist and xenophobic—point of view. Thus, if one takes Judis' arguments seriously—as one should—much of the responsibility for the rise of right-wing populism in Europe and the U.S. must be placed squarely at the feet of the Democratic, Labor, Social Democratic and Socialist parties that have failed in this regard. As Judis also points out, such a dynamic also explains the seemingly "surprising" success of left-wing populist movements in the U.S and Europe since 2008—such as Syriza in Greece (before it accepted austerity policies), Podemos in Spain, and Bernie Sanders in the U.S.—which have articulated robust critiques of neo-liberal capitalism and the massive inequality it has created. The election of Donald Trump, who ran his campaign on economic populism

and promised to transform the Republican Party into a "workers' party", is also much less surprising if one is willing—unlike Hillary Clinton and the Democratic Party leadership—to accept the obvious fact that the Great Recession thoroughly discredited neo-liberal policies. As Judis points out, the success of both Trump and Sanders "showed how much the Great Recession had radicalized significant parts of the electorate…the contrast couldn't have been sharper with Clinton's campaign that lacked any visionary component" (Judis, 2016, pp. 83–84, 86).

Judis concludes his study by arguing—correctly— that we should not simply dismiss right-wing populists as misguided, because they are addressing genuine problems. The problem, however, is to understand why the manner in which they address these genuine problems is indeed misguided, and why such a misguided approach has become so appealing. I have suggested here that contemporary approaches to the study of populism that rely predominantly on discourse analysis, new media, or even political theory are not adequate to the task. Preferable, in my view, would be a return to the sophisticated, interdisciplinary approach to the study of populism that was pioneered by the Frankfurt School Critical Theorists in the 1930s and 1940s, in which a non-dogmatic Marxist critique of capitalism, psychoanalytically based social psychology and empirical social research were combined to grasp the powerful right-wing populist tendencies that emerged in the twentieth century. To be sure, their ideas would need to be updated to reflect contemporary social conditions, and should also draw upon theoretical insights gained by other more recent approaches. But, with the partial exception of John Judis, contemporary studies of populism seem better at describing than actually explaining the ominous resurgence of right-wing populism in Europe and the U.S. in recent times.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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