

The Rise of Populism: An Examination into the Conditions That
Allow for the Rise of Populist Parties in Europe and the United
States

by

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This paper seeks to understand the conditions that have led to the rise of populism across Europe and in the United States. To that end, this paper sets about defining the term populism, which it concludes to be a mode of articulation that divides the political sphere between a construction of the people, pitted against a construction of some ‘other’ most often political elites. It will also be determined that populism today is largely a response to the dominant ideology of liberal democracy which encompasses most of western society. This paper then takes a look at what main issues are said to be most salient to the success of populism in its opposition to liberal democracy, and will identify immigration, economic issues, Euroscepticism, gatekeeping issues, and the use of media as the most relevant issues. Populist actors from the countries of Austria, France, Italy and the United States will then be examined in context of these issues to see which are most important in understanding their success. Ultimately, this paper will find immigration and gatekeeping issues to be the most important in understanding the success and failure of populist actors in these countries, and conclude that populism arises the strongest in areas where the decision making capabilities of national governments are constrained in some way

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1: Introduction:

Populism is a political term that has been around for over a century. In the 19th century, it was a term used to describe American and Russian agrarian movements. In the 20th century, it was mainly used to describe a certain brand of politics that had overtaken many countries in Latin America. However, the term was also used to describe radical American political figures in the 50's and 60's, such as Joseph McCarthy and George Wallace. Later in the 1980's and 1990's the term began to be applied to radical right European parties such as the Front National in France and the Austrian Freedom Party in Austria. Now, in the 21st century, the term has been used to describe a wide array of actors across the political spectrum. In the United States, both the Occupy Wall Street movement and the Tea Party movement have been described as populist, with both Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump being described as populist candidates. In Europe, the term has been assigned to political parties on both the left (Syrizia, Podemos) and the right (UKIP, Forza Italia). Some countries, such as Italy and Greece, have multiple populist parties in power, leading some to say that those countries' politics have now been defined by populism. Significant events in Europe, such as the decision by Britain to leave the EU, has also been attributed to the rise of populist sentiment.

Populism then is a long enduring political concept, one that seems even more salient today if one wants to understand the current political climate. And yet this term can seem almost impossible to define. How can one label be used to describe different political actors who have seemingly contradictory views and positions from one another? And how has populism come to the forefront of politics in several different

countries, all with their own political rules and culture? These are the questions this thesis will answer in depth, by looking through several ideas and definitions of what populism is and by analyzing several different populist parties across Europe and the United States. At the end, this paper hopes to explain **what populism is** and **what conditions allow for the rise and strength of populist parties?**

2. Methods:

I will be taking a qualitative approach to my thesis question. This will start with a review of the existing literature on populism to analyze how other scholars have defined the term throughout time, and investigate whether there is a consensus or common points of agreement on what the term is, and what conditions allow for its rise. These sources will include what other scholars have said about the resurgence of populism, in order to get a grasp of the basic theories that already exist on the subject, but it will also be important to look at statements from populist parties themselves, to see if what scholars write about them matches up with their rhetoric.

The specific kind of detail I will be looking for are the conditions that allow for the rise of populist parties. Existing literature has a wide variety of opinions on this matter, and I will be attempting to see which explanations best fit the political reality. For example, if one theory states that populist parties arise in countries with strong constitutional courts, and yet most countries with strong populist parties have weak court systems, then that theory will fail to hold water. It will also be important to look for why people claim to support populist parties, and what issues they say are most important to them. This information will be gathered from interviews with supporters of populist parties, as well as looking at the voter composition of populist parties to see if certain attributes (age, class, race) indicate a higher likelihood that a person will vote populist. Additionally, the issues that populist candidates highlight most frequently could also give important insight into what conditions spur the rise of populism. For example, if most populist candidates reference immigration as a key issue that needs resolving, then perhaps a perceived immigration crisis can be said to be one of the

fundamental conditions that create a political atmosphere in which populists can see success.

To narrow my scope, I will be looking at the populist parties of four countries in particular, Austria, the United States, Italy, and France. The US was chosen because it is viewed to be one of the birth places of populism, and thus makes for a particularly interesting study to see how populism has evolved throughout time. Austria was chosen because it is said to have one of the most successful populist parties in Europe, the FPÖ. Italy was chosen as it is a country with several populist actors of importance, and thus makes an interesting case study for a country that has come to be dominated by populism. France was chosen because its populist party, the Front National, is one of the oldest populist parties in Europe, and set the template for many other populist parties to come.

When analyzing these countries, I will be looking at both the rhetoric of populist actors, to see how they self-identify, and the potential causes that may have contributed to their success or failure. The impact of these populist actors can be measured in terms of electoral success and policy success. Electoral success is straightforwardly how successful the parties are in elections, what percentages of the vote they receive, and what positions of power they are able to obtain. Policy success will be measured by what degree populist parties and candidates are able to implement their policy outcomes, or sway other parties to adopt their positions. While electoral success can lead to policy success, it is not necessarily a required condition, as can be seen in the example of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). Despite obtaining only

poor electoral results, UKIP was still able to obtain its main goal of getting Britain to leave the EU.

Because populism has been used to define many different political parties and candidates, it will be imperative to develop my own criteria for what does, or does not make a certain party/candidate populist. Therefore, the examination of candidate/party rhetoric and behavior will be the main method used in determining whether or not a candidate or party fits populist criteria. After looking through the available literature for theories of what are the most salient factors that contribute to the rise of populism, I will then see how much those factors can be attributed to the success of the populist parties I have chosen to study.

3: Review of Existing Literature:

3.1: What Is Populism?

Before an investigation into what factors contribute to the rise of populism, one must first define what populism is. However, populism is a contested term in political thought, with different scholars assigning it different meanings and characteristics. A brief overview of these different ideas of what populism is will be given and some common features will try to be identified.

Jan-Werner Muller defines populism as a “moralistic imagination of politics” that sets a pure and unified people against corrupt elites, where it is possible for the people to have one true representative (Muller, 38). In this way Muller defines populism as a moralized form of anti-pluralism, as it is not possible for different parties to represent different portions of the populace, as in populist thought the people have a singular will that can only be interpreted one way. For Muller then, for a political actor or movement to be called populist it has to identify a section of the population as the true people, and contend that they alone represent their interests, and that the interests of their constituency are the only ones that deserve to be represented, as only they are the true people of the country. These people can then have their interests pitted against the corrupt upper class, an invasive lower class, or both (Muller, 44).

A populist by Muller’s definition would be one that makes sweeping claims to be the sole representative of the people, such as Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan when he said, “We are the people, who are you?” (Muller, 10). The implication here is that those who do not support Erdogan are inauthentic, as they do not belong to the real,

authentic people. In claiming to represent the true will of the people, populists will often claim that there is a singular common good that is willed by the people and that a politician or party can unambiguously implement as policy (Muller, 47). Through this rhetoric, even if populists do not produce desired outcomes, they can still claim the fault lies with institutions or other actors, as they must have misconstrued the will of the people in some way. Because they do not believe their opponents are legitimate, Muller says populists will often engage in attempts to hijack the state apparatus so that it is harder for opposing parties to gain power, as in their view they are the only ones who can have legitimate claim to power. For Muller then, populist governments are inherently corrupt. This often starts with populists occupying or “colonizing” the state, such as what Hungary’s Viktor Orban did in placing loyalists into bureaucratic positions that should have been nonpartisan (Muller, 80). This can also take the form of doing away with checks and balances, by strengthening the executive branch and dismantling the power of the judiciary, or otherwise stacking the judiciary with partisan actors.

Takis Pappas defines populism in a different context, saying that populism can be described minimally as democratic illiberalism (Pappas, 28). The illiberal part of this means that populists are against liberal values such as an open media and multiculturalism, and in conjunction with Muller’s definition, populists for Pappas would also endorse illiberal tactics in elections. The difference for Pappas is the democratic part, as he says populists still harbor allegiances to democracy, and would not partake in actions such as court stacking that would undermine it. Instead they are against what they see as hindrances to the effectiveness of democracy such as multinational institutions and extra-national bodies, such as the EU, that constrain

national sovereignty. The difference between Pappas and Muller then is the definition of whether or not populists can be said to be democratic, as Muller argues that although populists can fairly contest and win elections, their tampering with democratic institutions invalidates their claims to being democratic (Muller, 100).

Ivan Krastev also says populism can be understood as democratic illiberalism, in that populists oppose the representative nature of democracy, and believes features that constrain sovereignty of the people such as protection of minority rights should be done away with (Krastev). In this way, Krastev says modern populists are primarily a reaction against features of globalization. Krastev also invokes a similar definition of populism to Muller, in that populism is the view that society falls into “two homogenous and antagonistic groups:” the people, and the corrupt elite (Krastev). Thus populist politics is the expression of the general will of the people. This is the same definition given by Oscar Reyes who says populism is a particular species of antagonism that pits ‘the people’ against ‘the elite’ (Reyes, 105). Joseph Lowndes speaks of this idea of antagonism more broadly, saying that populism depends on a “sense of internal homogeneity” that is contrasted with “a threatening heterogeneity against which the identity is formed” (Lowndes, 148). In this sense populism need not be defined as the people vs, the elites, but more broadly the people vs an outside group that is not part of the authentic people. Yascha Monuk defines this concept in even broader terms by saying that what defines populism is “the claim that anybody who disagrees with them does not have a legitimate role to play in democratic politics” (Frum). All of these definitions point to the conclusion that in populism, there are no legitimate competitors.

Kurt Weyland takes a divergent approach from focusing on the antagonistic elements of populism, instead focusing on the structure and method through which populism is implemented. As such, he says two characteristics are essential to populism. First a personal leader appeals to a “heterogeneous mass of followers” who have been excluded from mainstream development (Weyland, 5). Second, Weyland emphasizes the way the leader reaches his followers, which is often in a “quasi-personal” manner that bypasses established intermediary organizations such as parties (Weyland, 5). This use of new media can be seen from populist addressed through the radio, to personal TV ads, to the new use of social media. Here then, what most defines populism is who is being reached out to, and what methods are being used to appeal to the specific group. The Weyland definition is unique as it ascribes a certain ordering to the way populist organizations interact with its constituency, and the rest of political actors. Most other definitions define populism in terms of what it is against. But is this not a feature of all political movements, do not all politicians and parties partially define themselves in terms of what they oppose? If the most singular feature of populism is that it identifies itself with one segment of the population that it sets against others, then it is no wonder populism has become a broad term that has been applied to numerous political actors and movements. It is for these reasons that Benjamin Arditi argues that we should not think of populism as an overall ideological system or organization, but rather as “a dimension of political culture in general” (Arditi, 42). In this sense, populism is less of an ideology with its own set of beliefs, but rather a general way of articulating the political scene that is available to any actor.

This style of politics comes about in the gap between the redemptive and pragmatic side of politics (Arditi, 45). As Arditi explains, this gap can come about in three specific ways. First, on the pragmatic side, democracy can be seen as a way of governing societal conflicts without resorting to oppression or violent infighting. In this view, the important elements of democracy lie in the electoral institutions and representative democracies. On the redemptive side, democracy can be seen as a way to better society through collective action, making civil society and organizations the most important elements to democracy. When a gap between these two views widens, and the pragmatic approach to democracy is no longer seen as improving society, populists can occupy the empty space and promise to renew democracy and do away with dirty business politics and party maneuvering (Arditi, 45). Another source of tension can be seen in the gap between promises of power to the people and the actual ability of democracies to respond to the electorate. When governments no longer seem able to respond to the wills of the people, parties claiming to restore power to the people can increase in popularity. Finally, populism thrives in exploiting the tension between the alienation that arises in the face of democratic institutions (Arditi, 45). This can be seen as a reaction against bureaucracy and the numerous agencies that are seen as required to make democracies run, but can often result in feelings of powerlessness and lack of agency in the electorate (imagine the DMV experience). Populists promise to do away with bureaucratic institutions and create a form of democracy that is more personal. These aspects of populism are why Pappas says populists are inherently democratic, or why Muller calls populism democracy's shadow, as it is these perceived deficiencies in democracy that allow for populist actors to take shape. In a sense, populism is what

happens when the implementation of democracy does not live up to the ideals of democracy.

Following in this line of thought, Cas Mudde and Cristobal Kaltwasser say that populism is “first and foremost” a political strategy, one employed by leaders who wish to govern based on direct and unmediated support from their followers (Mudde; Kaltwasser, 4). Because of the broad nature of populism, Mudde and Kaltwasser say populism can be considered a “thin-centered” ideology, with the characteristics of separating the electorate into two camps; the “pure people” against the “corrupt elite” and argues that politics should be an expression of the “general will of the people” (Mudde; Kaltwasser, 6). Because of the thin-centered nature of populism, Mudde and Kaltwasser say that populist actors often combine populism with a “host” ideology, that helps inform their conceptions of the people and the elite (Mudde; Kaltwasser, 21). This is what allows populism to manifest on both sides of the political spectrum. For more “left-leaning” populist forces, the host ideology can often be socialism, thus separating the people and the elites on the basis of class. For more “right-wing” populism, the host ideology can often be a form of nationalism or nativism, with separates the antagonistic spheres on the basis of race or citizenship. In the European context, the European Union can often shape the form of populism, resulting in Euroscepticism becoming a host ideology for a number of European populist actors.

With concepts such as “the people,” “the elites”, and “the general will” appearing in almost all definitions of populism, it is important to investigate how populists often define these terms. As Mudde and Kaltwasser argue, the populist conception of “the people” is often an “empty signifier,” meaning it can change

depending on the will of the populist to fit different constituencies and articulate different demands (Mudde; Kaltwasser, 9). It is assumed that the receiving audience implicitly knows that they are the people being referenced, and that they share a similar identity that distinguished them from outside forces. While the term is inherently flexible, the most often used features through which to construct a common identity of the people is political power, socioeconomic status, and nationality (Mudde; Kaltwasser, 9). When the people are defined in relation to their political power, it is often as a reminder that they are the ultimate source of power in a democracy, and that they have the ability to revolt and overthrow the establishment. Such was the rhetoric of the US Populist Party in the 19th century (Mudde; Kaltwasser, 10). References to the people in terms of socioeconomic status and nationality are usually put together in a reference to the “common people” which is put against the dominant social group whose tastes and values have become out of touch with the common person. Overall, the populist conception of the people is vague for a purpose, in order to appeal to as many people as possible. What is more important is defining who the people are against.

While the populist definition of the people is inherently flexible and vague, the elite are always defined on the basis of power. They are the ones who control the media, the economy, and of course, politics (with the exception of the populists and their allies of course). While the notion of who holds the power can be shifted around, much in the way the notion of the people can, one key point for populists is that power does not rest with the elected officials, but with “shadowy forces that continue to hold on to illegitimate power to undermine the voice of the people” (Mudde; Kaltwasser, 12). This

allows for populists to shift the blame in the event that they do not achieve political success. Additionally, the elite always have the feature of working against the interests of the country to undermine the people. For European countries, populists will often point to the EU as the unaccountable elites who are working to undermine the integrity of the country in favor of the interests of the EU. The concept of the people vs. the elite can also be connected with nativism, in where the corrupt (native) elite are undermining the native people by favoring the (alien) immigrants (Mudde; Kaltwasser, 104).

Finally, the general will of the people is when the populists act on what they consider to be for the best interest of the people in dismantling the elites and treating them, and everyone else who are not part of the people, unfavorably. This is what leads to many claims that populists are authoritarian or anti-pluralist, as the populist claim that the general will is discernable and absolute morally justifies illiberal attacks on any apparatus that can be seen as a threat to the people. This is why Mudde and Kaltwasser also define populism as democratic, but at odds with liberal democracy, as populism believes nothing should constrain the will of the people, and is therefore unconcerned with protecting minority rights (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 81). With liberal democracy being the dominant mode of the world, this opposition to it is what allows populists to claim that they are against the world elites, and validates their claims to address subjects that are not touched upon by the establishment (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 19).

We seem now to be closing in on what makes populism distinctive. It is less of a full blown ideology, and more of a mode of articulation, or a label that can be used to describe political actors who behave in a certain way. These actors seem to have the recurring feature of dividing the political sphere into two antagonistic groups, one

classified as the people, and another classified usually as the elites, but can also be any outside group not associated with the people. And while populism is not inherently undemocratic like Muller suggests, its ideology does not rule out acts that can be called authoritarian, or certainly illiberal. The fact still remains however that many political actors at times claim to speak for, and be the sole representative of, the people. In the United States, almost every politician takes pains to present themselves as different, a bit of an outsider, not like the usual Washington crowd. The last thing separating populists from non-populists is the extent to which this mode of identification dominates their discourse.

Similar to Mudde and Kaltwasser, Francisco Panizza defines populism as an anti-status quo discourse that divides the political space between the people and its ‘other,’ with the people being an empty signifier that can be based on economic, political, or other terms, and the elite or other tending to denote those in power (Panizza, 4). Because of this, Panizza says that populism refers to a mode of identification rather than an individual or a party (Panizza, 8). Thus calling someone a populist is less of a political label that comes with a set of presumed positions, such as labeling someone a Republican or Democrat, but rather saying that this person/party uses a mode of persuasion to redefine the people and its adversaries. To put another way, a movement would not be called populist because its politics or ideology contain contents that are identifiable as populist, but rather because it shows a “particular logic of articulation of those contents” (Panizza, 33). It is not necessarily the message, but how that message is being delivered. The key question then is not whether or not a movement is or is not populist, but to what extent a movement is populist, to what

extent does the populist logic dominate its discourse? (Panizza, 45). No political movement will be entirely exempt from populism, as all to some extent try to define a common identity of the people against an enemy. The degree that a movement can be defined as populism then depends on how much this logic dominates their discourse, or to put another way, what kind of political alternatives a movement can offer. This is why populism is tied closely to ideas of sole representation, as for populists, there are no political alternatives, no one else but them are qualified to represent the people.

For the purposes of this paper then, populism is a label that can be assigned to any political actor, party, or movement whose discourse is dominated by a logic that separates the political sphere into two groups, 'the people' and an 'other.' The people here being a constructed identity based on pre-existing social or economic identities, and the 'other' often defined in terms of dominant power that is not connected to the people, or an over-privileged underclass that is favored by the dominant social group over the real people. The ideas of these pre-conceived groups are flexible enough to be posited onto other host ideologies such as socialism or nativism. Another fundamental aspect of this logic is that the populist movement alone can represent the people in its struggle against the other, and that other political actors are inherently illegitimate.

While this does not make populist parties undemocratic per-se, it is in accordance with a logic that allows for the exclusion of other political actors or apparatuses such as the media or the courts, as they are deemed illegitimate or unnecessary constraints on the will of the people. Now that we have a working definition of populism, we can examine what attributes may arise in populist actors.

An action that may be attributed to populist actors is harsh responses to NGO's that criticize them. While the suppression of civil society is not exclusive to the populist rhetoric, it is a particular moral issue for populists, as any outside organization that claims to work for the benefit of the people may undermine the populist claim to exclusively represent the people. In this mindset, populists must strive to prove that civil society isn't actually civil society. This can often take the mode of discrediting NGOs as foreign agents, such as Viktor Orban has done in Hungary (Muller, 86).

Another feature that is considered crucial for populists is the presence of a strong charismatic leader. Since populists claim to strive for a more personable expression of democracy than the current liberal paradigm, it is often advantageous for them to present a single figurehead who can be said to embody the popular will of the people, and who can reach out to the public directly. This is why many populist parties that achieve success have that success attributed to the leadership style of a single actor (think Silvio Berlusconi for Forza Italia, Jean Marie-Le Pen for France's Front National, Christopher Blocher for Switzerland's People's Party, Jorg Haider for the Austrian People's party, and countless other examples). However, populist parties that have experienced the death of a leader, such as the Peronist party in Argentina, were still able to maintain support after the death of Peron (Panizza, 18). Even when a populist party has its leader resign and create another party, such as when Jorg Haider exited the FPO and created a rival party in the BZO, most of the support stayed with the FPO, and while they suffered short-term losses, they were able to regain their position shortly after, while the BZO quickly faded. Perhaps then it is less that populist parties need a

specific charismatic leader, and more that they just need a strict organizational structure that comes with a top-down leadership style.

Regardless of their overall importance to the success of the party, all populist leaders attempt to position themselves outside the political realm, either coming from a non-political background or portraying themselves as not like the other politicians if they do have a history in politics. Often, success in business or other private pursuits can translate well to populist leadership, as this allows the potential leader to show that they have qualities that are different and more valuable than that of ordinary establishment politicians (Panizza, 21). Examples of this can be seen in Switzerland's Christopher Blocher, or more recently, in the US's Donald Trump. It is important for populists to appear to be outside the traditional political party structure, as in populist discourse political parties are often seen as divisive institutions that should be eliminated, or at least purified of factional interest (Panizza, 22). By acting outside the system, the populist leader can claim to have a more direct relationship with the people, and leaves him un-beholden to the corrupt elites that dominate party politics. Finally, populist leaders often attempt to change the national discourse by addressing topics that are often considered taboo by the mainstream. This can often take the form of racially charged speeches, as it taps into a segment of the population that is often dismissed by the mainstream as the "irrational prejudice of uneducated people" (Panizza, 27). An example of this can be seen in the United States' George Wallace, whose use of racial coding further radicalized the discourse surrounding race relations in the US, thus allowing him to expand his influence beyond his southern constituency.

While race and immigration are a common topic that populist parties, especially those on the right, use to radicalize the discourse, theoretically their policy agenda could form around any issue that is not deemed to be adequately addressed by the establishment. It does not even necessarily have to be the same issue that unites a certain conception of the people. If one group of people are unsatisfied with the water supply in their town, while another is unsatisfied with the schooling, both groups can still find solidarity in the fact that neither of their demands have been met. The ability to weave these issues together as part of the same overall issue of disenfranchisement and neglect by the powerful is one of the main aspects of the mode of articulation known as populism (Panizza, 37). Any situation that creates feelings of powerlessness in the electorate, especially situations that the establishment is ill-equipped to alleviate, allows for an opportunity for populists to create a rupture between the people and the elite. In this sense, populist actors are successful in the extent that they can universalize their claim on behalf of the people to converge various social groups together into one identity, or create what can be called a hegemony (Lowndes, 146).

This is often accomplished by a style of speech that is characterized by direct use of language and the proposal of simple solutions that can be understood by anyone. An example of this can be seen in attempts to exploit xenophobia among an electorate in order to bring about a common identity of nationality. Here, if a country is suffering from unemployment, populist actors can blame the problem on an influx of foreign workers and say the establishment is to blame for their lax immigration policies. Here, the complex problem of economics and immigration can be boiled down to a simple solution of limiting the number of immigrants allowed into the country. In this way, a

populist can mobilize a mass electorate of disenfranchised voters over an issue that is salient, with a solution that is easy to understand.

Aside from rhetoric that emphasizes an antagonistic pole between the people and the other, populists can also be defined in their actions taken to curtail the power of actors of institutions they see as illegitimate, or steps taken to bolster their own power. Such actions can include rejection of democratic rules, tolerating or encouraging violence, or indicating a willingness to curtail civil liberties of opponents, especially unfriendly media sources (Livetsky; Ziblatt, 21). Rejection of democratic rules can take the form of rejecting or expressing willingness to violate constitutions, banning certain organizations, restricting civil or political rights, or in the case of before taking power, refusing to accept credible electoral results. One of the clearest examples actions like this can be seen in Mexico's current president Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO). After narrowly losing his first presidential run in 2006, AMLO denounced the results as rigged, and held a protest rally where he claimed himself to be the true president of Mexico (Weyland, 24). When re-counts of the election still showed his defeat, he claimed all institutions were corrupt, and organized several blockades in protest. This rhetoric is clearly populist in his insistence that he alone is qualified to represent Mexico, and those against him are corrupt and against the interests of the true people. Furthermore, his attempts to undermine the institutional structures with protests and blockades is indicative of populist tendencies to do away with institutions that curtail their power.

Finally, it is common for populist actors to demand changes of election rules to make it more proportional based and direct. This can take the form of calling for a

change to proportional representation style elections systems, or for the implementation of popular referendums, so that the people can directly vote on the issues that matter most (Meret, 76). This is part of the populist promise to make democracy more direct, and put power back in the hands of the people. It also tends to help smaller parties, who may have no way to advance their interests in majoritarian electoral systems.

3.2: What Causes Populism?

Now that we have a working definition of populism, and an idea of what attributes those actors have in common, we can look at what conditions may arise to enable these actors to achieve success. In one sense, the cause of populism can be quite obvious. Since populism is a logic of discourse that pits one construction of the electorate known as “the people” against the establishment, and sometimes underclass, populism is caused by situations in which that outlook becomes a popular mode of explanation. For Ernesto Laclau, this is often “conditions of crises and change of cultural values and social structures” where there is a “crisis of the dominant ideological discourse” (Stavrakakis, 36). For the purposes of today then, we would expect to see populism rise to prominence in places where the promise of liberal democracy is seen to not have been fulfilled. These would be places that have not been positively impacted by globalization, or the increase in transmission of goods and services that has resulted from it, and also places where the dominant economic logic of neoliberalism has not had a positive impact on citizen lifestyle.

What often compounds these feelings of being left behind is also the feeling that nothing can be done to change courses. With the strengthening of the EU in the 1990s and the emergence of globalization, theorists became worried about the rise of what

they dubbed “liberal technocracy” where the economic decision capabilities of national governments were taken out of the hands of world leaders and put into the hands of elite experts who were not responsible to the wishes of ordinary citizens. This is why some have called populism a “illiberal democratic response to undemocratic liberalism” (Muller, 18). Under this theory, voters support populist parties out of fear of modernization and globalization, or out of simple feelings of anger, frustration, and resentment (Muller, 25). This critique of European technocracy is not unfounded either. Following World War Two, many European governments sought to fragment political power, either through instituting more checks and balances or empowering more unelected institutions that were beyond electoral accountability such as constitutional courts (Muller, 162). In the minds of the architects of postwar Europe, it was the democratically elected parliaments that had been twisted around to help give power to the fascists. If a similar situation was to be avoided, changes to the existing parliamentary structure were needed. Thus it can be said that the DNA of postwar Europe has been built on taking away power from the electorate. While the intentions of stopping the potential rise of another Hitler or Mussolini may have been good, the unintended consequence has been a feeling of powerlessness and futility in the people, who are supposed to be empowered by democracy. As a Gallup International poll found in 2006, only a third of respondents felt that their voices were being heard by the governments of their country (Krastev).

As outside actors, populists are uniquely positioned to capitalize on grievances and wants that have yet to be addressed or recognized as issues by the establishment. Often then, we can see populists benefitting from a switch in power dynamics, one that

newly disenfranchises members. The collapse of communism in the 1990s and the emergence of liberal democracy as the biggest political game in town can be seen as one such power shift, one that was slow to take effect, but one that had definite winners and losers. As neoliberalism arose starting in the 1970s, it focused industry at the firm level of shareholder value maximization rather than reinvestment and growth and the pursuit of flexible labor markets (Friedman, 15). While this economic order created vast wealth, the wealth was highly concentrated, and included side effects such as lower growth rates, lower investment rates, and lower productivity growth, culminating in the 2008 financial collapse, which left many jobless and others insecure about their future. It should perhaps be unsurprising then that populist parties first began to achieve notable success in the late 1990s and early 21st century. When dislocations arise in the existing political order, populists have the opportunity to take the newly disenfranchised, and the never before franchised, and weave them into a single identity from which to draw support. As Francisco Panizza argues, these failures of representation take place at times of “political, cultural, social, and economic upheaval, as it is at these times that previously stable relations of representation...become unsettled and de-aligned” which opens up new opportunities to form ties of identification (Panizza, 11). With the general trend towards fragmenting political power in Europe after WW2, along with the rise of globalization in the 1990s, populist actors can position themselves as champions of the people, promising to restore popular sovereignty to the essence of democracy, and thus appealing to those who feel left behind by liberal democracy.

However, it is not just simply the shifting of political dynamics that makes people attracted to populist positions. It is also the seeming inability by the political establishment to offer any meaningful alternatives. Indeed, Chantal Mouffe argues that it is the “lack of an effective democratic debate about possible alternatives” that has led to the popularity of populism across the west, as when citizens begin to feel alienated and isolated from decision making powers, parties that claim to restore power to the people become an attractive option (Mouffe, 51). Mouffe also sights the absence of emphasis on popular sovereignty in most democratic regimes as a cause of populism, as it seems most leading political establishments see popular sovereignty as a block to implementing human rights or free market regulations (Mouffe, 52). In this way, Mouffe says it has been taken for granted that liberalism goes together with democracy, when they are in fact two different concepts; concepts that at points can come into conflict with each other (such as when ideas of individual liberty conflict with ideas of popular sovereignty). It is this failure, Mouffe says, of the political establishment to meaningfully address these tensions between liberalism and democracy that has led to populist success, as they are some of the few willing to articulate the issue, and offer a solution as to how it may be resolved (Mouffe, 53).

A contributing factor to governments not providing discussions of meaningful alternatives is the increasing dominance of the neoliberal economic hegemony that began in the 1990s. With the rise of liberalism as the dominant social and economic order, certain economic and social steps were deemed necessary for a country to adopt in order to keep its markets competitive with the rest of the world. Despite this, low-skilled manufacturing jobs were still increasingly moved to developing countries where

expenses were lower than in Europe, thus leaving low skilled European workers unemployed, and without the necessary education needed to make up the new demands of the labor market (Venho, 27). Due to this fact, for some countries, especially those with less economic power, crucial social and economic decisions have been effectively removed from their political terrain, leaving them unable to adequately address societal problems within the political sphere (Mouffe, 54). Instead other areas of power such as the legal system have become more and more responsible for organizing and regulating social relations.

The feelings of isolation don't just come from economic insecurities either. As Uri Friedman argues, those most alienated by globalization are mostly older cohorts of "white people who simply want to turn the clock back to a time when the people in their towns looked like them, sounded like them and even had the same traditional loyalties as most of them" (Friedman, 14). Essentially a time when there were fewer immigrants and especially fewer Muslims living amongst them. In this way, the alienation caused by globalization is not just about economic identities but also questions about one's identity and the identity of those one is surrounded by. This has led to some people asking, "do I still live in my own country surrounded by people who share the same values and allegiances?" (Friedman, 14). Once again, in a system where power is not held in the hands of the electorate, and one that says there are no alternatives to the current neoliberal form of globalization, it is unsurprising that people become receptive to parties that contend alternatives do exist, and that power can be put back in the hands of the people. Rather than just fueling negative resentments towards immigrants or the establishment, it is important to recognize the success of populist parties comes in part

from the fact that it provides some people with the hope that things could be better and different.

Such is the desperation and hope for something different that people become increasingly indifferent to how this change is achieved. When important decisions are made outside of the democratic arena, other forms of undemocratic processes can also achieve success. Therefore, if populists say that the route to change is through dismantling democratic institutions that place checks on the power of popular sovereignty, people are likely to respond. This can be seen in how among all age groups across the west, in countries from Germany to Britain to the United States, people are much more likely than 20 years ago to say they support a “strongman leader who does not have to bother with politicians or elections” (Frum). So as governments develop more and more technocratic institutions to keep up with the changing global landscape, thus further increasing the feeling in citizens that their votes do not matter, the way for other forms of undemocratic governance, such as populist authoritarianism, becomes much easier.

On a broad scale then, it can be said that the rise and success of populist parties is related to their success at politicizing certain issues that are either intentionally or unintentionally not being addressed to an adequate degree by the existing political establishment. This is especially true in conditions where citizens feel that the political system is unresponsive or does not listen to their demands. This can lead to feelings that the existing dominant political parties no longer provide meaningful alternatives to each other, leading to feelings that politicians are “all the same” and that there is “no difference” between the mainstream political options. Therefore, it would seem that

when the decision-making capabilities of governments becomes constrained, whether by multi-national corporations, globalization, international neo-liberal policies, or any other factors, the electorate can gradually become disillusioned with their government, making feelings of political isolation increase, which makes people feel that they have lost control over their country. This can make parties that claim to represent the true will of the people, and have the power to take control of the government in the interest of the people, become more attractive.

If we can say then that feelings of disillusionment caused by constraints in alternatives brought forth by the government establishment is the cause of populism, what are the specific issues or methods that populists use to direct that isolation and anger, and construct their identity of the people? Over the course of examining the relevant literature, three main issues seem to be brought up most frequently as the best explainers of why populism has achieved such popularity and success throughout the late 20th century and into the 21st. These are, issues of immigration, issues of the economy, and in European countries, backlash against the EU. Furthermore, two less emphasized but still frequently highlighted explanations are the frequent use of new social media to bypass traditional forms of marketing appeal, and the failure of established parties to either successfully coopt the populist messages or bar them from representation. A brief overview of the supporting arguments for why each issue is a good explainer and how they relate to each other will now be given.

The first explanation of immigration issues is the most frequently given explanation, with arguments that most populist parties have strong anti-immigration rhetoric. This has led scholars such as Jan-Werner Muller to conclude that populists will

prosper most in places where identity politics predominates (Muller, 159). This is thought to be because populist parties, especially radical right populist parties, often combine populism with nativist rhetoric to construct an outside demographic with which to pit their conception of the people against. Thus economic issues are re-framed not as issues with the economy, but issues with immigrants stealing jobs. Takis Pappas notes that nativist rhetoric often increases in places where diversity sharply increases, and thus it is hardly surprising that nativism has risen recently in Europe due to the rising levels of immigration (Pappas, 27). In economically affluent and socio-culturally homogenous states such as Austria and Switzerland, immigrants are portrayed not only as threats to cultural values, but to the stability of the welfare state as well. When nativism is combined with populism, it is often through channeling the resentment towards immigration felt by the electorate, and directing it at the political establishment, making claims that “the elites don’t care about you...they care more about *those* people” (Frum). In this way the political establishment is accused of betraying the trust of the people by favoring an outside group.

Populist nativism thus constructs the identity of the people strictly around ethnic or chauvinistic definitions. Either ethnic in terms of the non-native aliens threatening the values of the homogenous nation-state, or chauvinistic in that they represent threats to the economy or functioning of society (Mudde; Kaltwasser, 34). With stances of welfare chauvinism, populists will often accuse elites of destroying welfare states in order to incorporate their “new electorate” of immigrants. This will often lead to campaign slogans along the lines of welfare “for the people” first (Mudde; Kaltwasser, 35). Often the success in this line of rhetoric is related to the populist’s ability to

develop a “credible narrative of crisis” occasionally leading to even modest increases in refugees to be hailed as an “invasion” by populists (Mudde; Kaltwasser, 106). Of course real world crises can also strengthen the force of these arguments, such as in the wake of 9/11 when the political consensus concerning migration, especially from Middle Eastern countries, shifted towards a more negative light. As Kirsi Venho notes, following 9/11 and other terrorist attacks, anti-immigration became one of the most prominent characteristics held in common by the platforms of European populist parties (Venho, 5).

It is commonly accepted that immigration is a main topic of concern for voters of right-wing populist parties. One study from Elizabeth Ivarsflaten, comparing the motivations for right wing populist supporters across several countries, found that immigration was a far more significant motivating factor than other potential causes such as economic views or protest voting (Malone, 25). Indeed, going back to the societal vs. chauvinistic reasons for opposing immigration, a survey conducted by the European Social Survey in 2002 found that the right wing populist electorate is more worried about immigrants’ negative influence on the country’s culture rather than the country’s economy (Malone, 27). Additionally, the Foundation for European Progressive Studies found that populist parties in 2017 lost support overall as European countries became more adept at managing the refugee inflow (European Progressive Studies, 8). Susi Meret, with her in depth study of populist parties in Denmark, Italy and Austria concluded that for all three countries, the strongest effect on the populist vote came from voters who “perceive immigration as a threat against culture and identity” (Meret, 287). Within the European Union specifically, a survey report found that while

50% of Europeans felt immigration from within the European Union was a good thing, only 36% felt that immigration from outside the EU was good, with 56% viewing it as a negative thing (Venho, 26).

The next major issue argued to be a key factor in determining populist success is the economy. Economic crises are often accompanied by breakdowns in social order or loss of confidence in the political system, events which often strengthen populist messages of a better alternative. Furthermore, the processes of urbanization and economic modernization taking place in most western countries has brought about shifts in the demographic balance between social classes as well as between ethnic groups (Panizza, 13). The increasing mobility of capital and labor that has characterized the post-industrialization process has caused concerns among segments of society that had previously enjoyed more sheltered economic conditions (Meret, 282). This uncertainty about the economic situation and the future can be seen as a contributing factor for those who decide to support populist parties. Thus, these processes of economic turmoil and social mobility alter established identities and loosen traditional relations, opening up new forms of identification for populists, as well as other political actors, to exploit.

While before, the concept of welfare chauvinism was explored in terms of its critique against immigration, it can also be used as a rhetorical device to attack the economic policies of the political establishment. Neoliberal populist parties such as Forza Italia and UKIP often criticize the welfare state of the political establishment for introducing high taxes and wasteful welfare spending, which they say negatively impacts the “hard-working common people” while rewarding the “undeserving and unproductive” electorate of public sector workers and immigrants (Mudde, Kaltwasser,

35). In this way, the identity of the people is constructed in terms of economic class, with the outside 'other' designated as the corrupt elites, rigging the system to unnecessarily burden the people, while also rewarding the inauthentic immigrants. While this argument certainly has an ethnic connotation, and can thus be viewed primarily as a factor of immigration, it also directly addressed economic policies, making it also enabled by certain economic factors.

Overall, any outside political actor will benefit when the economy goes bad, as they can authentically claim no part in the policies that led to whatever situation caused the economic downturn. Consequently, when the economy tends to be stable and relatively profitable for the majority of citizens, traditional parties will reap the benefits while the rebel parties struggle to find another issue to politicize. Because of this, it is often thought that anti-establishment parties would be more successful when the party is at the margins, or at least outside the government, and less effective when put in charge (Meret, 34). From this perspective, it is easier for populists to mobilize the electorate in difficult economic circumstances, while it would be more difficult in times of economic growth. Indeed, economic issues are often at the forefront of the European electorate's mind. A European Union report from spring 2015 found that the three most important issues for the European people were identified as the rise of living costs, unemployment and health, and social security (Venho, 26).

In the European populist party context, adopting a view of Euroscepticism is another way in which populist parties can gain appeal and construct a common identity of the people. When constructing an 'other' to set in opposition to the people, the EU is often a popular identity to frame the elites around, as its policies of integration and

centralization of power in the EU bureaucratic apparatus makes it an easy target for claiming that an undemocratic power is trying to undermine the state. Thus populists will often attack their national governments for “selling out” the country to the EU, which they claim only serves a cosmopolitan elite (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 35). These accusations were made even stronger in the wake of the 2008 financial recession where some countries were hit especially hard by EU austerity policies. For countries like Greece in particular, left-wing populism has arisen to criticize what they see as an indifferent EU who uses the European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund to enrich themselves at the expense of the common people (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 35). While these attacks are extreme, they are based in some reality, as the strict rules of integration for the EU have led to some political actors implementing policies they openly oppose and are not in the best interests of their constituency, solely in order to comply with EU membership (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 102). In these instances, it is easy to cast the EU as a malicious ‘other’ or ‘the bureaucrats in Brussels’ as they are commonly dismissed as (Meret, 77). The attack on the EU as disinterested bureaucrats often has an even stronger resonance than attacking the political elite of one’s own country, as it is easy for some countries to view the EU apparatus as geographically as well as politically distant.

It is for these reasons that we can often observe a platform of Euroscepticism in most populist parties. Most populist parties genuinely believe that the European Union either has too much power in comparison to national governments, or that deeper integration with the EU is not the solution to the problems of Europe. Especially after the financial crisis, the view that the EU was not working as intended became a popular

outlook. And it is true that the EU has been struggling with the financial crisis, to the result that it has been forced to cut expenses in almost all sectors of the daily lives of European citizens (Venho, 28). Finally, deeper integration with the EU is often connected to the idea of weakening state sovereignty, which increases anxiety in citizens, and gives rise to the feeling that the state no longer represents their views, which as stated before, is fertile ground for fueling a populist movement (Venho, 31).

Another frequently highlighted factor that causes the rise of populism is not a single political issue that populists can politicize, but more of a failure by the current political establishment. These various failures can be an inability to coopt the populist message, failure to keep the populists out of power, or engaging in corruption and other scandals that weaken their position and legitimize populists claims of corrupt elites. For the purposes of this paper, events that improve the positions of populists that are caused by missteps in the political elite will be dubbed “gatekeeping” factors. There is evidence to establish that populists fare better in countries with weak party systems, as it has been shown that in countries where “coherent and entrenched party systems broke down, chances for populists clearly increased” (Muller, 137). Countries with weak parties are often ones that have only been recently democratized as they have only short histories of parliaments and political institutionalization. Furthermore, countries whose parties are prone to frequent major realignments, such as Hungary and Poland, and countries whose parties are even prone to collapse such as Greece and Italy, all have populist parties that have achieved high levels of success (Pappas, 30). Put another way, populists are more likely to thrive in countries where political institutions are weak and where polarization is strong. It is during these kind of party breakdowns, where existing

social and political institutions are unable to regulate citizens into stable social identities that populist practices have the best chance of succeeding, as populists are always seeking to change the terms of political discourse to articulate new social relations and redefine the political frontier into new identities of ‘the people’ and ‘the others’ (Panizza, 9).

The most common situations of party systems breaking down are instances of exposed corruption. Corruption situations easily allow for populists to cast the established politicians and political parties as the ‘other’ of the people, as it allows populists to easily take on the form of “politics of anti-politics” and say, with some evidence, that the public life is controlled by unaccountable and self-serving political elites (Panizza, 12). These situations can lead to the collapse of left/right templates to establish the political discourse, as parties that may have held office for a long time become easier to sweep away from power. In these situations, populism can be seen as an ingrained way in which politics is conducted, as it arises from the gap between the leaders and the led, and most easily arises in situations where existing political organizations are unable to mediate the gap effectively (Panizza, 14).

However, political establishments do not need to be weak or corrupt in order to give rise to populist parties, they can merely be inattentive. As Mudde and Kaltwasser explain, since populist parties often employ radical language, they normally see pushback from mainstream political parties as well as from civil society organizations and the media. The degree of these responses to populist parties normally determines whether a populist party will achieve brief electoral breakthroughs, or establish electoral persistence (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 60). Often the level of pushback against populists in

parliamentary systems depends on how important populist parties are helping one side establish a majority coalition. If a coalition with a populist party would not be helpful or feasible, the populist parties often remain excluded. However, if the balance of power shifts and a populist may be able to tip the scales for either side, populist parties can be come to be seen as attractive partners (De Lange, 35). The assumption with these moves is always that the populist parties can be contained and pose no real threat. However, being established in government often gives populist parties political legitimacy, and can strengthen their appeal in subsequent elections. If a populist party can be established for long enough, they can begin to be seen as legitimate by the electorate, and no longer a radical or risky choice (Mazzoleni, 89). This can be directly contrasted to when mainstream political actors are successful in coopting the populist message. In Austria for example, the current Austrian Chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, was able to win the election by borrowing elements of the FPÖ's populist rhetoric (European Progressive Studies, 17). This can also be seen in Britain, where the Tories increasingly hardline position on Brexit has resulted in the near total decline of UKIP in the political sphere, and even in France, where Emmanuel Macron won the French Presidency while repeatedly attacking the national establishment (European Progressive Studies, 17).

Some scholars argue that some political structures are better equipped at fighting populism than others. As John Malone in his examination of radical right populist parties concluded, "an electoral system must be based on proportional representation in order for a right wing populist party to translate...support into electoral success" (Malone, 3). This is often due to the fact that proportional representation often gives rise to more parties that can be competitive, thus offering an easier threshold to achieve for

populist parties. As Pippa Norris explains, in PR systems, a party will only need a small vote share in order to get into parliament, meaning politicians are able to more freely embrace radical views (Malone, 21). This is why when comparing populist parties, we can see a greater percentage of populists in PR parliaments such as the ones in Austria and Denmark, while in France and the UK, the Front National and UKIP have virtually zero representation, despite sharing similar levels of popularity as the populists in Denmark and Austria (Malone, 58). With the case in France, this can be especially seen in the contrast between Front National EU parliamentary success, which is based on PR and which the FN does quite well in, and national success, where the FN is barely represented (Malone, 59). This is once again contrasted with countries such as Austria and the FPO, who actually have higher representation on the national level than the EU level.

Finally, some scholars argue that the success of populist parties can be in part, attributed to their ability to engage in new forms of media to mobilize the electorate. Historical precedence points to the emergence of the radio as a form of mass communication being associated with the first wave of populist leaders in Latin America and elsewhere (Panizza, 13). In the United States, Ross Perot was able to reach millions of people with highly successful “infomercials” he was able to broadcast (Panizza, 13). Some scholars say that the invention of devices such as the radio and television appeal to populists especially as they allow them to bypass party machinery and establish direct communication with the electorate they seek to influence. As Arditi explains “the very possibility of securing a virtual immediacy between voters and candidates seems attuned to the populist claim to a direct appeal to the people and its

fascination with leaders who enjoy supra-partisan legitimacy” (Arditi, 51). Furthermore, the spread of information through new media can be said to have a “cognitive mobilization” effect on the electorate, as they become better informed, more independent, and no longer accepting of the dominance of political elites (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 103). Furthermore, the spread of social media has also made citizens much more aware of the alleged wrongdoings of political elites, allowing for further circulation of outrage and indignation at political wrongdoings.

4: Case Studies:

Now that we have a working definition of populism and theories about what issues are most salient to their emergence, the analysis of countries and their populist actors can be undergone to see which theories best fit. For each country, a brief history of the most prominent populist actors will be undertaken to get a picture of how populism has developed throughout time. Next, a look at the rhetoric and voter composition of each populist party will be undergone to see how populists attempt to construct their versions of the people and ‘the other’, and what type of people this message appeals to. Finally, an examination on how the major possible factors defined above; immigration, the economy, Euroscepticism, gatekeeping, and use of media, affect the populist parties will be undertaken to see which is most fitting in describing the success of the populist party, or if even any are. At the end, a clear picture of what issues matter most to contributing to populist success should begin to emerge.

4.1: Italy

Italy has had many prominent populist actors throughout history. Indeed, populism is a mode of articulation used by so many Italian politicians that some have said Italian democracy has become dominated by populism. Because of this, there are many Italian populist parties that can claim importance and prominence. However, for the purposes of this paper, only the two populist parties that form the current majority coalition in Italian politics, the Northern League (now just the League) and the Five-Star Movement will be examined. In this way, the paper hopes to understand the conditions that have arisen to empower the current populist parties that hold power

today. So while Silvio Berlusconi and his Forza Italia have been historically very strong and very important to understanding Italian populism, they will only be referenced in relation to the other two populist parties that currently hold power in Italy.

The Northern League (Lega Nord/LN/The League)

History

Up first will be an examination of the Northern League, which today holds around 17% of the Italian electorate (BBC). The history of the Northern League (LN) properly begins in the 1980s. Around this time, regionalists movements were becoming widespread in the Italian political landscape, the strongest of which appeared in the wealthiest regions of Northern Italy, particularly the regions of Piedmont, Lombardy, and Veneto (Meret, 91). These movements originally started with the goals of preservation of regional language, culture and tradition, but soon moved to demands for regional self-government, with a particular emphasis on fiscal and economic autonomy from Rome (Meret, 91). This led to the official creation of the Autonomist Lombard League in 1984, which was headed by future LN leader Umberto Bossi.

The name of the Lombard League was chosen to invoke a sense of shared history of the Northern Italian towns and villages that had banded together to fight the occupation of Federick Barbosa, the Holy Roman Emperor. In conjunction with this, the symbol of the Lombard League was Alberto Giussano, a hero who is believed to have led the victory over Barbossa's troops at the Battle of Lugano in 1176 (Meret, 147). These historical references were specifically chosen to symbolize the revolt of the Northern people against the powerful forces that had been based in Rome, drawing a

clear parallel for what the Lombard League hoped to achieve in the present day against the Italian government, also based in Rome. These values of Northern opposition could be seen in the League's political opposition to the South, whose economic legislation they claimed hindered the private initiative and economic growth of the north, for the sake of increasing the public sector in the south (Meret, 148). In this way, the Lombard League was able to promote itself as a movement in complete opposition to the political establishment and the elite. Thus the Lombard League can be said to be populist as its main discourse in separating the political field was to construct a shared identity of the northern Italian 'people' against the corrupt 'other' of the southern Italian political elites.

The Northern League first gained government representation in the early 1990s by forming a coalition with other far right parties such as Alleanza Nazionale (AN) and Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia (De Lange, 21). This was achieved in part by a major shift in the Italian election system following the collapse of the old Italian party system, which was under pressure from several corruption scandals that became known as the Tangentopoli (Bribe Town) affair (De Lange, 32). These accusations led to the Clean-Hands trials which resulted in the arrest of several prominent Italian politicians for illicit financing and corruption (Meret, 150). The electoral shift that resulted from this took the voting system from a purely proportional system to a majoritarian system. While this was unbeneficial to the League in some ways in that it could no longer count on the few seats it was able to acquire due to the nature of the PR system, the new system also brought an emphasis on coalition formation, which helped the LN in achieving influence in the Italian government by lending its electoral support to the far

right, thus ensuring its victory. Together with the AN and Forza Italia, the far right coalition won a clear majority in the Italian parliament, and thus the LN was able to receive several important positions in the government (De Lange, 32). While the LN was apprehensive of an alliance with Berlusconi, they saw the danger of running alone in the new system, and thus joined the right wing coalition out of necessity.

The LN was able to obtain this support in part due to their presence at the fringe of the government, meaning they were unaffected by the political scandals that had discredited the more mainstream parties. The LN was thus able to position itself as an alternative to the corrupt status quo but also as a political force that would safeguard the interests of medium to small entrepreneurs that were big contributors of the economic growth in the north (Meret, 151). Thus, the LN rhetoric of battling against the “parasitic and clientelist capital in Rome” paid off. In the 1994 election, the League won over 20% of Northern Italian votes. However, this coalition only lasted nine months as the LN began to feel that it was not getting enough concessions from the Berlusconi government, and thus triggered early elections. The LN had been apprehensive about partnering with Forza Italia from the beginning, as the populist appeal of both parties resulted in them courting the same electorate, although Forza Italia had the advantage in that their appeal went beyond just Northern Italy (Meret, 152). Thus after the first few months of the coalition government, the LN’s rhetoric became diffused with that of Forza Italia, and the party lost a significant part of their electorate to their coalition partner. Being part of a governing coalition also hurt the LN’s anti-establishment credibility, as political compromises to obtain influence hurt its ‘clean’ profile in the eyes of its supporters (Meret, 154). This especially became clear after Berlusconi

attempted to pass controversial bills such as the “save the thief bill” that would exempt him from being investigated for illegal political financing. Thus the LN’s association with Berlusconi changed their image from anti-establishment champion to just another political puppet. To stop the rapid decline of their base, the LN decided to cut ties with Berlusconi and exit the coalition.

Following its stint in the government, and its inability to achieve any major policy goals, the LN started to face electoral decline, going down from 15% of support from the Italian electorate in 1992 to just over 5% in 2003 (Meret, 20). This forced the party to find a new political strategy, which began its exploration of filling new political niches, particularly those created by the dilemmas posed by increasing globalization and intercultural relations in connection with increased immigration. Thus, starting in 2001, the party began to take on increasingly anti-immigration positions in an attempt to find new issues with which to garner support (Meret, 21). With its return to the political margins, the LN began to develop into an even more radical populist party. This can be seen in their attempt in 1997 to launch a referendum for Padanian independence, so that the North could have autonomous governance independent of the south (Meret, 157). This can be seen as the ultimate expression of the parties’ populist rhetoric. They hoped to take their distinction of the political sphere between the northern people and the southern elite and make it a reality, so that they could govern the northern people directly, without interference from Rome. This came from a belief that the identities between northern and southern Italians were so great that the south could not legitimately claim to represent the political interests of the north. This was indeed an ambitious goal, and while more than half of respondents in the north were open to an

idea of a separation, most considered the idea impracticable if not impossible to realize (Meret, 157).

Following the failure to achieve Padanian independence, the Northern League continued to lose support, and by 1997 the party realized that life at the margins of politics was no longer offering them advantages. Starting in 1999 they focused less on the Padanian question and increased political activity on other issues (Meret, 158). Immigration soon became their central issue, with the party criticizing in particular the new Turco-Napolitano Law which gave new immigrants rights and guarantees to healthcare, welfare benefits, education and housing (Meret, 158). The LN criticized this law as unfair to existing Italians, and an underhanded plot to transform Italy into a multiethnic and multicultural society. Stances like these slowly transformed the Northern League from a party mostly concerned about the liberation of Northern Italy to increasingly a party dominated by questions of identity and immigration issues. It was around this time that the Northern League began implementing a discourse of Christian and Western values into their speeches in an effort to appeal to catholic voters (Meret, 159). In this way, the populist discourse of the Northern League changed from defining the political sphere between the Northern people and the Southern elites, to defining the people as true Christian Italians against a foreign, often Muslim immigrant force. This can be seen in the reaction a proposed construction of a mosque in Lodi, a Lombardy town, that was met with heavy resistance by the Northern League, who insisted that Padanian soil should remain Christian and not become Muslim (Meret, 175).

In 2001, the party once again entered a coalition with Forza Italia and the AN. Like last time, this entrance into government resulted in a series of important and

influential ministerial positions for the party, but also corresponded with a decrease in electoral support from its northern strongholds (Meret, 160). This time however, the LN was able to implement some of its policy goals, most notably the Bossi Fini law, which introduced stricter rules on immigration and harsher measures against illegal immigration (Meret, 161). Rather than trying to moderate their positions as before, this time the LN continued to radicalize while in government, continually adopting harsher anti-immigration rhetoric as well as politicizing certain social issues by taking stances against issues such as abortion, homosexuality, and religious freedom. This change in rhetoric is significant as the early manifestoes of the Lombard League have no direct references to immigration or specific Christian values. But as the second half of the 1980s saw an increasing number of migrants arriving from North Africa and Albania, going up from 50,000 in 1986 to 160,000 in 1990, anti-immigration sentiments began to develop among the native Italian population, creating an issue for the Lombard League, and later the Northern League, to develop around (Meret, 165). Thus, with the Bossi Fini law the Northern League sought to make integration criteria more reliant on knowledge of Italian language and culture, by introducing tests of both, as well as the institutional systems of the Italian republic, in migrant applications (Meret, 173). Recently, the anti-immigration has become so central to the Northern League, eclipsing the Northern independence issue so completely that current leader Matteo Salvini dropped the “Nord” part of the party name, making it now just The League (Kirchagessner). With the most recent wave of immigration hitting Europe, this strategy has paid off immensely for the League, who saw an increase of 4% of vote shares to 17% in a period of less than four years, allowing them to overpass longtime ally/rival

Silvio Berlusconi as the strongest right-wing party (Zaffrano). Currently, the League is in a governing coalition with the Five Star Movement.

Rhetoric

In terms of the League's populist rhetoric, it has increasingly become linked to nativism, with the LN exploiting fears caused by immigration flows, using them as scapegoats for increases in criminality, rape, and unemployment (Meret, 19). By emphasizing the cultural differences, especially in reference to the differences between the "Islamic" culture of the immigrants contrasted with the western Christian values of Italy, the League has constructed an identity of the people based around national and regional identity, with the other being constructed as an invasive immigrant underclass being favored by a corrupt elite. In fact, the Northern League has often accused the political establishment of taking orders from outside influencers, which can be seen in a memorable statement when Bossi declared that the "US would like to colonize Europe by creating a multiracial society" and that he would be on guard against "the political design...of globalization" (Meret, 159). Here the populist rhetoric works in conjunction with nativism, as it is not just the immigrants themselves who are undermining the country, but it is also the outside foreign elites who are enabling them. Back when the Northern League still primarily spoke in the interests of the northern people, it was made clear who should be prioritized in the economy, with official party statements saying "the Lombards must be given priority when looking for jobs, housing, care and social benefits" (Meret, 167). This statement emphasizes the LN's view that southern Italians as well as immigrant were unjustly favored in the allocation of social benefits and public employment (Meret, 167).

While the anti-establishment rhetoric can still be seen today, it was most obvious during the parties' time as the Northern League, when much of its rhetoric was based in opposition to the south, for the betterment of the north. This can be seen in the Lombard League's claiming that the Italian political establishment were the main ones responsible for creating the early 1990s national debt crisis. In particular, the League claimed that the money generated by the North was being used to maintain the inefficient south (Meret, 148). These claims fit in with the populist dimension of illegitimate representation, as by framing the south as corrupt, especially in context of using the North to sustain them, while only repaying the south, the Northern League attempted to portray the southern Italian government system as untrue representatives of the northern people. This type of language can be seen in a speech by party leader Umberto Bossi after the initial formation of the Lombard League into the Northern League in 1989. When addressing the goals of the party Bossi said "I believe that our movement expresses the desires and hopes of many people of the North and of all those looking for freedom, respect for traditions and justice against unfairness of power" (Meret, 150). The last allusion to unfairness of power in particular shows the parties' belief that the south was unfit to govern the north. This rhetoric can be seen even clearer in Bossi's speech following the failed Padanian secession referendum, wherein Bossi says "This congress has not made peace with Rome, on the contrary, it declared the total war against it by sending Padanian troops inside the government structure of the centralized state" (Meret, 158). The characterization here of the Northern League being at 'war' with Rome further emphasizes the political establishment as the enemy of the people, who deserve to be overthrown.

The early attempts of the Northern League to construct a conception of the people based on northern Italian heritage can best be seen in an early statement by Bossi which proclaimed “Lombards! It does not matter how old you are, what kind of job you have and what political orientation: what matters is that you are – we are – all Lombards” (Meret, 168). This conveys a clear attempt to emphasize ethnic regionalism as the most important social bond that ties the electorate together. Once this identity is constructed, it is easy to portray potential immigrants as well as southern politicians as the oppositional ‘other.’ In the eyes of the Northern league, the only way to safeguard local and regional interests was to brush away differences based on social class and religion and to construct a political identity primarily based on the ethnic community. In this light, even before it took a turn towards anti-immigrant stances, the conception of the people defined by the Northern League has always had a basis on ethnicity. Later, when immigration became a concern for the northern Italian electorate, the LN intertwined this issue with their anti-establishment rhetoric, saying that the influx of immigration was a result of an agreement between the political establishment and big capital, who had produced an “assembly line” that “attracts and facilitates the entrance of illegal immigrants in the country and then...regularizes them” and all of this “against the will of the people that wants to be free and to be its own masters at home” (Meret, 171).

In this way, before the LN achieved entrance into the government in 2001 and was able to address some of their immigration concerns, the immigration regime supported by the government was seen as a way to introduce a multicultural society against the popular will. The LN saw this as a by-product of globalization, where the

implementation of a multicultural society is supported by an alliance between the world finance and the left wing, with the goal to make the world one big market place where men and capital can be moved around at will in order to achieve the biggest profit (Meret, 174). The LN say that the goal of this is to create a 'global consumer' with no relation to past, origins and traditions and with no identity other than what is given by the commercial consumption at the moment. Conspiracies like this are commonly used by populists to attribute an ethos to their constructed 'other' who often has the main goal of disrupting the common ties of the people to take away their power. The fact that globalization does tend to have an isolating and alienating effect on portions of any country's population helps give credit to the LN's story. It is in this way that the LN can be said to champion issues left off the table by the political establishment. Thus the backlash against immigration is not simply nativist, but firmly grounded in an anti-foreign and anti-elitist worldview.

It is not surprising then that following their entrance into the government in 2001, the LN continually referenced Christian values and heritage in order to construct a common identity of the people that could not be disrupted by globalizing influences. This reference to Christianity was an important turn for the party, as it had often had an anti-clerical position in the past, mainly to put itself in opposition to the catholic church in Rome. Thus this change in rhetoric can be seen as an attempt to broaden the LN's conception of the people outside of the northern regions. This nativist, populist rhetoric extends to the League today, with leader Matteo Salvini continuing to attack immigrants, especially those from North Africa, who he claims are invading Italy (Kirchgaessner). Indeed, much of Salvini's personal appeal is based on his opposition to

immigrants, with local supporters saying Salvini is the strongman needed to “restore law and order in a country...buckling under the weight of the migrant crisis (Giuffrida). As supporters have said of Salvini “He’s one of us...he makes a speech, eats with us, drinks with us...he comes across as aggressive, but he’s not a bad person” (Giuffrida). Thus, throughout the history of The League, we can see that their discourse has been dominated by a form of populist nativism that seeks to construct an identity of the people based around ethnic regionalism, such as northern nationality, and social values, such as Christianity. Against this conception of the people, The League has constructed several identities, ones at first based around the southern Italian political establishment, but later one that grew to include immigrants and globalizing foreign forces.

Voter Composition

Now that the central elements of how the Northern League defines the political sphere have been identified, a look will be taken at what kind of voters are most likely to respond to this message.

The Northern League is unique in that its constituency is over-represented in small entrepreneurs and self-employed business owners (Meret, 45). This can be explained by most of the electoral support for the Northern League coming from the affluent northern regions of Italy, where the economy is primarily based on small family businesses. This situation can partly explain the Northern League’s early emphasis on the economic injustices perpetrated on the north at the hands of the less affluent south. Another significant factor in the makeup of the LN’s voter composition is that men make up the core support of the party, with levels of women supporters only reaching the same level as men in times of ‘normalization’ such as the parties’ first governmental

coalition in 1996 (Meret, 218). This can be seen in how the percentage of female voters the LN receives increases during the parties' first coalition government, and declines once they exit the coalition and increase their radical stances (Meret, 218). This has also been speculated to be because Forza Italia, which appealed to much of the same electorate as the NL, was particularly popular among Italian housewives, and thus siphoned off most of the NL's potential female vote. Another factor that could drive away potential female votes was the League's often 'macho' rhetoric, characterized when Bossi said in 1996 that "the League has a hard on" (Meret, 218). However, following the 2008 financial crisis, the parties message seems to have reached beyond its core support of men, as their share of the female vote increased while the share for rival right-wing parties Forza Italia and Alleanza Nazionale decreased (Meret, 219).

In terms of age demographic, starting in 2008 the Northern League began to receive more support from younger cohorts than older cohorts (Meret, 223). This could be due to the economic recession around this time leading younger people feeling more insecure about their future, prompting reactionary votes against the establishment. Additionally, the change in leadership to the younger Matteo Salvini (44 years old) has been attributed to an even further increase in the youth vote for The League, with one Lega youth organizer saying, "Thanks to Matteo Salvini, a lot of youth wants to join the Lega" (Schultheis). The Northern League has also gained increasing popularity among working class Italians, receiving around one third of working class votes around 2008, up from around 11% in 1996 (Meret, 230). Some have theorized that this increase in support is due to a reaction against labor market competition following the increasing globalization and internationalization processes recently fueled by the international

economic crisis (Meret, 230). In education, the voter composition of the LN reflects their occupational composition of mainly small entrepreneurs and the self-employed, with those having academic degrees being less likely to vote for the League (Meret, 235).

Immigration

Now that the rhetoric and voter composition of the party has been analyzed, a look at how salient the major issues identified in section three are to the success of the party will be undergone, starting with immigration.

As has been identified previously, immigration has become a central issue for The League, starting in 1996. However, it has only been with the most recent wave of immigration sweeping Europe that the anti-immigrant rhetoric of The League has led to electoral success, with The League obtaining 17.5% of the votes in the most recent Italian election (BBC). The League continually uses immigrants as scapegoats for issues such as unemployment and criminality, and often highlights the mainly Islamic composition of the Northern African migrants, and sets that in opposition to the mainly catholic, Christian Italian society. While the NL was originally a party more about northern independence, when the fallout from its first stint in government began to affect its electoral strength it turned to anti-immigration rhetoric in order to exploit a new political niche from which to draw supporters (Meret, 20). This had the result in the Northern League becoming the most clear-cut anti-immigration party in Italy (Meret, 145). While this initially only moderately increased support for the LN, and only then among men, as immigration has become a more important issue for the Italian electorate, the support for The League has also increased.

At first the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the party was put mostly in economic terms, claiming increased immigration had a negative effect on the regional development, and wealth (Meret, 149). However, when the LN began to adopt Christian values into their political stances, taking conservative stances on abortion and homosexuality, their arguments against immigration took on a social value, emphasizing the need to defend western ethnic and cultural identity against people of non-western origins (Meret, 165). Due to this, the LN often emphasizes the differences between Christian and Islamic values, and claims the two are difficult, if not impossible, to fully combine. This led to the Northern League to vigorously oppose immigration reform they saw as too lenient, such as a 1998 law that considered immigrants legally present on Italian soil as potential citizens with certain social and civic rights (Meret, 171). The LN found it unacceptable that immigrants should have access to the same social and civic rights as northern Italians, and saw it as another example of the government favoring an illegal invading force over the true Italian people. In May 1999 the party collected over 700,000 signatures against the law, but their demand for referendum was refused by the constitutional court (Meret, 171). When the League entered their next governing coalition, they attempted to introduce a new immigration law that would present more rigid criteria for entry, which emphasized the ability to speak Italian, knowledge of Italian traditions, habits, history and of Italian institutional systems. Under this view, the LN argued that “achieving citizenship should be the conclusion of a process leading the foreigner to his perfect integration with the territory and citizens of the state where he has decided to live” (Meret, 173). In short, the LN only wanted immigrants who shared certain Italian values and beliefs to be allowed into

the country. However, the LN was not able to achieve enough support to significantly implement this bill.

Undoubtedly, the shift towards a stronger anti-immigration rhetoric has won The League support in places that have felt negatively impacted by immigration. The shift from northern independence to immigration helped the LN carve out a sizeable political niche that helped set them apart from other parties such as Forza Italia which threatened to engulf much of their shared electorate. Indeed, even in relation to other right-wing parties such as Forza Italia and the AN, the Northern League voters are often the ones most concerned about the impact of immigration on different social and economic aspects of Italian society (Meret, 225). This anti-immigrant sentiment can be reflected in how 71% of LN voters oppose the constructions of mosques on Italian soil, higher than any other party, including FI and AN, and that the supporters of the LN are the only ones who are against giving immigrants with a regular residence permit the right to vote at the administrative level (Meret, 256). Additionally, most reports show that LN voters are primarily anti-immigrant due to social reasons rather than economic. Again, most of the core LN electorate comes from the generally more affluent northern regions, where voters often have sizeable pensions and own their own homes. Indeed, most of the anti-immigrant sentiment comes from the feeling that after working hard for their achievements, LN voters are incensed to see “illegal immigrants wandering around, doing nothing and not paying taxes like we had to” (Giuffrida). The sentiment expressed here is less that immigrants pose an economic risk, and more that they are unworthy of receiving the benefits of Italian citizenship. This sentiment can be seen vocalized in recent League speeches, with Salvini describing African migrants as an

invading, lazy force that drags down the rest of the country (Kirchgaessner). Clearly then, these anti-immigrant stances and rhetoric has rewarded The League with a consistent voting base that has kept them politically competitive after their original issues of northern independence lost political relevancy.

The Economy

Due to its core electoral base of small entrepreneurs and low skilled white collar workers, the Northern League has held with a neoliberal economic policy. This has been characterized by the party as an aim to make “more market and less state” by cutting bureaucracy and speeding up efficiency (Meret, 163). This included attempts to privatize state owned enterprises, and close the ones deemed unproductive, lower personal and corporate income taxes, and other economic and legislative measures that would particularly benefit small and medium-scale enterprises. While most of these policies are aimed at pleasing their constituency, the moves to privatize state owned corporations and to cut bureaucracy fit in with the parties’ anti-establishment tendencies, and furthers their rebuke against corrupt, inefficient government. Additionally, these policies of enabling smaller business owners works as a rebuke against globalizing tendencies, as the LN saw big business and big capital as threats to the business interests of their local communities (Meret, 164). Bossi was also able to characterize this as an attack on Italian culture, as he claimed “small and medium companies...are the only real carrying structures of the ‘Made in Italy’ today, we have to recognize that big capital has squandered, through major political compromises, the largest economic resources, keeping the small and medium companies on short ration...and the small and medium companies are the major predestined victims of the

unsuccessful financial politics of this political regime” (Meret, 164). Once again, the LN’s rhetoric seeks to set the interests of the Italian people in opposition to corrupt government deals made with foreign interests. Thus their economic policies not only protect their base, but also fits in with their anti-establishment stances and ethnic protectionism as well.

In some cases, the anti-immigrant stances of the Northern League have run counter to the economic interests of their affluent industrial sector base, whose supply demands could not be meted without immigrant labor (Meret, 170). This has led to the LN to support severely controlled quotas of immigrant labor. Under the LN’s model, immigrants could enter the country for working reasons, as long as long as their contract arrangements with employers was highly regulated. This allowed The League to appease the interests of their more affluent base while still taking a strong stance against immigration that was for non-working reasons. In their current coalition with the Five Star Movement, the League continues to push a liberal economic agenda by promising generous tax cuts (Giuffrida).

European Union

For anti-establishment parties that gain government positions, it can be tricky to continue with such rhetoric without criticizing the government one is now a part of. For many populist parties them, the European Union is seen as an attractive target for continued anti-establishment rhetoric, as the EU can easily be portrayed as “the elites in Brussels” as coined by the French National Front (Meret, 34). What is interesting about the Northern League then is that during its early years in the 1990s, the LN was actually one of the Italian parties most supportive of further European integration (Meret, 78).

The EU was initially useful for the LN, as they were able to compare what they saw as an example of efficiency in the EU with what they considered a highly centralized, bureaucratic and largely inefficient Italian public administration organization (Meret, 177). This, coupled with the northern Italian region's geographical proximity to Brussels, led to the LN to use the slogan "far away from Rome, but closer to Europe" as an indication that northern Italy perhaps had more in common with the EU than its own government. Further European integration would also be beneficial for the development of small and medium sized industries in the Northern Italian region, where most of the LN's electoral support resided.

Thus, for a while, a pro-EU stance fit in with the parties' anti-establishment and economic stances. However, when the LN first entered into a serious government coalition in 2001, they adopted the policies of other protest parties in power before them by shifting their anti-establishment rhetoric to the EU instead of continuing to direct it at the government which they were now a part of. Now the Northern League portrays the EU as a supranational organization that limits national freedom and autonomy. This has dovetailed with increasing resentment towards EU policies such as free movements of people, which the LN has capitalized on as well. The LN has gone as far to say that the EU constitution does not "represent the values and principles on which European history and society is built" and demanded a clear reference to Christian roots in the EU constitution (Meret, 178). These anti-EU stances, while still within the context of a pro-EU government, helped the party maintain a degree of differentiation in comparison to other parties in the coalition, and allowed the LN to continue enabling its anti-establishment rhetoric, despite its new governmental responsibilities. In this way, the

LN rhetoric surrounding the EU has changed from being an ally against the corrupt elites of its national government, to being one of the elites itself.

Gatekeeping Issues

For Italy, it is impossible to fully understand the conditions that allowed for the rise of populist actors such as the LN, AN, and Silvio Berlusconi without mentioning the corruption scandals in the 1990s. This event, known as the Tangentopoli affair, led to the dominant Christian Democrat Italian party to be booted from office for the first time in decades, and is what resulted in many northern Italian voters to switch their support to the Northern League. It was this event, and the resulting changes in electoral rules that resulted from them, that allowed for the coalitions in which the LN achieved government power to be possible in the first place. As stated before, this was due to an emphasis on coalition formation causing more mainstream parties to court the favor of more radical actors in order to form a ruling coalition (De Lange, 34). So not only did this event shatter the faith the Italian public had in mainstream political actors, it also made those actors more likely to align themselves with fringe elements. In this way, the LN first achieved mainstream success due in main part to protests against the establishment, as the decline in political trust made anti-establishment parties' messages all the more impactful.

Unfortunately for Italian politics, the scandals did not stop there, as the following government coalitions headed by Silvio Berlusconi also came under multiple allegation of bribery, corruption, and clientelism, ultimately resulting in Berlusconi being banned from running for political office. This has resulted in a particular climate to Italian politics where feelings of disbelief and political distrust are widespread among the

whole population, and not specific to one party. This has led to the Italian electorate being more likely to identify with statements such as “People like me have no influence on what the government does,” and “people we elect to parliament soon lose contact with their voters” (Meret, 265). Additionally, 75% of Italian voters claim to be disaffected with the government, 62% feel discouraged by it, and 46% feel both (Friedman). In this situation, with high political distrust and low political efficacy, populist actors who claim to offer an alternative to the establishment and promise to return power to the people are more likely to succeed. In this respect, it was advantageous for the LN to distance itself from Berlusconi, as unlike other far-right parties such as the AN, the LN has been able to maintain its oppositional, alternative position even after all these years. In this way, the distance the LN has been able to maintain from the mainstream parties have allowed it to capitalize on growing dissatisfaction, which has grown with each new corruption scandal uncovered in Italian politics.

Conclusions

After reviewing all the major issues as pertains to the Northern League, it would seem that immigration and gatekeeping failures are most salient for explaining the success of the LN. In terms of gatekeeping issues, it was the Tangentopoli affair that paved the way for the LN to enter government control for the first time. While the party would soon exit the coalition, it was still able to exert influence, such as the passage of the Bassanini law which attempted to give regional and local administrations more decisional power in education, health care, and urban planning (Meret, 157). During periods when political scandals were not prominent in the public mind, and when the

LN was not in a governing coalition, the party was still able to maintain relevancy through the anti-immigration issue, which the party adopted as their primary method of identity formation after their original central issue of Padanian independence lost political saliency. Most of the parties' significant legislation victories were also tied to the immigration issue, exemplified by the parties' drafting and passage of the 2002 Bossi-fini law which introduced stricter rules on immigration and harsher measures against illegal immigration (Meret, 161). However, when the party tried for even stricter regulation in 2006, they were blocked by the more Catholic components of the Italian parliament, who were generally more tolerant towards immigration (Meret, 173). This shows that initially the parties association with anti-immigration gave it strong regional prominence, with most northern African immigrants arriving in northern Italy, but did not translate to significant influence nationally. This has changed in recent years with increasing levels of immigration leading to more of the Italian electorate holding a negative view of migrants. This, coupled with further corruption scandals plaguing the Berlusconi coalitions, are what have led to the power The League enjoys today.

In terms of economic issues, the economic platform of the party seems more to be a result of appeasing their existing electorate rather than the reason for their electoral support. While the LN has occasionally softened its anti-immigrant stance to allow for industrial workers to enter in order to meet the economic demands of their constituency, it can be argued this shows the importance of the immigrant issue for the party that they would chance alienating their more affluent constituency by taking up the issue in the first place. Furthermore, while Italy has been hit hard by the economic recession, most of the LN's base are still relatively well off, and indicate that they are against

immigration for social rather than economic reasons. In terms of the EU, the position of the LN radically reversed course in the mid-2000s from being in support of the EU to against it. However, this was more a factor of their entrance into government rather than an attempt to curry favor among anti-EU voters. In terms of use of new media, this issue seemed unimportant to explaining any success of the LN.

The Five Star Movement: (M5S)

History

Relatively new by political party standards, the Five-Star Movement is today the most supported populist party among the 15 old EU member states, garnering around 30% of the Italian electorate (European Progressive Studies, 43). The Five-Star Movement began life on the blog of Beppe Grillo, who used his media status as a comedian to organize meet-ups for the politically disaffected across Italy in events known as Vaffanculo days (which translates to F*** Off Days) (Schultheis). Fed up by the current political establishment, Grillo saw the organization as a “non-party” that eschewed the division between left and right, and sought to provide an alternative (Zaffrano). These V-day meetings were used by Grillo and his allies to collect signatures in support of a law calling for voters to choose their candidates directly rather than through party lists (Zaffrano). Eventually the political movement took steps towards obtaining political office, running its first candidates in Italy’s 2009 local elections (Schultheis). The party would continue to field candidates in local elections only, until 2013 when the M5S succeeded in winning important cities such as Parma, and won 25.6% of the vote overall, making them the largest party in opposition

(Zafranno). Three years later in 2016 the party further increased its success by winning major cities such as Rome and Turin (Fuschillo). Finally, In the most recent Italian parliamentary elections in 2018, The Five Star Movement obtained 32.6% of the vote, becoming the largest party in the Italian parliament (Zaffrano).

Rhetoric

As can be seen in the use of *vaffanculo* to describe his oppositional rallies, Beppe Grillo and the Five-Star Movement are viscerally hostile to the Italian political establishment. Grillo often directs the word at political parties and some politicians in particular, and has firmly stated that he believes ordinary citizens are better qualified to run the country than professional politicians (Bickerton). When in parliament from 2013 to 2018 the M5S took a hardline stance against most positions of the main party in power, the Christian Democrats, often saying their actions were carried out against the interests of the Italian people and favored only the groups already in power (Zaffrano). In this way the M5S divides the political sphere into the classic populist format, with the true Italian people pitted against the corrupt government elites. Their division is much simpler than that of The League, as the only pre-requisites for being part of the authentic people is to simply not be a part of the political establishment. Indeed, Grillo has often stated that his driving motivation for starting the Five-Star Movement was his disgust of the political establishment and what he saw as the dereliction of their duty (Troconi, 12). Grillo often talks in such a manner as if the actions of the political establishment forced his hand, and that he only runs the party reluctantly out of a sense of duty to the people. Grillo has equated the Italian political establishment to that of the church, both strongly guarding access to positions, which are only given with the

“blessings” of higher ups (Troconi, 13). Grillo hopes to reverse this with his movement, in the hopes of showing that politics can be done by anyone, and is not the exclusive domain of professional politicians.

The frequent financial scandals that have plagued the Berlusconi coalitions have given Grillo more ammunition for his rhetoric, who began invoking the slogan ‘Clean up Parliament’ in 2005 (Troconi, 18). In his blog, Grillo often called out specific politicians, calling for the resignation of 23 Italian MPs in particular who had all been convicted of various financial crimes. As the M5S gained momentum, Grillo declared “We are moving away from giving the politician carte blanche and toward the participation of the citizen” (Troconi, 18). Before fielding candidates for office, Grillo often endorsed abstaining from the vote, saying there was no difference between either coalition. “The answer to this regime is not to vote. It’s the only democratic weapon we’ve got left” (Troconi, 20). Claiming both sides are no different is a common populist tactic, as they often try to dissolve the lines between left and right ideology so the people can re-orient themselves around the preferred populist differentiation of the people vs. the elite. In order to keep himself distanced from the political establishment Grillo never runs for office himself, but rather claims to be the amplifier of the group’s activities. Grillo has also attacked journalists, who he claimed were simply paid pawns of the government. After the success of the V-day rallies Grillo called for more demonstrations, this time against the journalist ‘caste’ where Grillo called for the abolition of professional register of journalists as well as the financing of newspapers and the Gasparri law on the system of radio and television (Troconi, 22). Grillo often lumps in journalists with politicians and industrialists in what he calls the “three

destroyers” of Italy (Friedman). The rhetoric of the Five-Star Movement then can be said to be characteristic of the classic populist paradigm, in which the political sphere is divided into two antagonistic dimensions, with the people on one side, and the corrupt political establishment on the other. This anti-establishment rhetoric is at the heart of the Five-Star Movement, as founder Beppe Grillo has repeatedly said the goal of the movement is to take back the country from the corrupt elite and return power to the people. To this end Grillo has criticized not just the political establishment but journalists and businesses as well. Indeed, oftentimes Grillo has characterized the M5S as more of an anti-establishment, anti-corruption movement rather than a traditional political party.

Voter composition

Surveys have found that support for the Five-Star Movement comes overwhelmingly from younger cohorts, with the party receiving 31% of the 18-22 year-old demographic, and 35% of the 23-28 year-old demographic, higher than average support from among the total electorate (Schultheis). For comparison, Forza Italia, the former largest party, only garnered 15% of 18-22 year-olds and 19% of 23-28 year-olds. This is attributed to the high levels of dissatisfaction with the Italian establishment among young people. As one Milan professor put it “the traditional parties are the main people accused by the Italian millennials: because they failed to improve their conditions during the past governments, because they are not in tune with their language and their demands” (Schultheis). The Five-Star Movement then was able to tap in to the discontentment felt by the younger electorate and provided the most attractive alternative to the regular establishment parties.

Immigration

Though immigration is not a central issue for the M5S the way it is for The League, it has played a role in recent campaign rhetoric, with current political leader Luigi Di Maio at times calling for the immediate expulsion of all immigrants, and suggesting that Italy should focus on improving its own birthright rather than “resigning” itself to immigration (Schultheis). Di Maio has also referred to rescue vessels that pick up immigrants in the Mediterranean as “sea taxis” (Zaffrano). Like with The League, this anti-immigrant sentiment for the M5S helps set them in opposition to the main political establishment, as it allows them to heavily criticize how the migrant crisis has been handled, and leads them to promising to solve the problem themselves. Again, like The League, the Five-Star Movement has not always been anti-immigrant, and Grillo in the early 2000’s was actually quite critical of what he called the ‘natural racism’ of Italians (Troconi, 19). However, with anti-immigration sentiment becoming more widespread in Italy the M5S reversed course, with Grillo himself becoming more outspoken against immigration, characterizing the previous regime’s approach to the issue as too soft.

Economy

The Italian economy has been hit especially hard by the 2008 economic recession. The inability for the Italian political establishment to adequately respond to the crisis, coupled with financial scandals, have eroded public faith in the government. It is this wave of resentment and disillusionment that have helped strengthen the Five-Star Movement’s message, and the atmosphere created by this crisis has allowed their rhetoric to resonate within the Italian populace. In terms of economic policy, the Five-Star Movement has pledged to introduce a universal basic income for all Italians and to

invest an additional two billion euros in the labor market (Schultheis). These stated goals can be seen as attempts to alleviate the insecurity younger Italians have about their future job prospects.

Gatekeeping

As stated before, recent economic and migration crises along with corruption scandals in the government has led to widespread disillusionment among the Italian electorate, especially with younger cohorts. Just like for the Northern League, the Five-Star Movement has been able to tap into this disillusionment with its anti-establishment message and promises to return power to the people and used it to increase its electoral success by positioning itself as the main alternative to the political establishment. Thus, one can see the failure of the Italian political establishment to abide by democratic rules and adequately respond to the demands of the people as one of the key factors that has led to the emergence of the Five-Star Movement. Scandals concerning bribery and corruption in particular have led to citizens abandoning the mainstream parties. Younger voters, the main demographic for the M5S, state a profound disinterest in politics, saying Italian politics are always about “some scandals or corruption” and that the traditional parties have “no messages to young people” (Schultheis).

This has led some to vote for the Five-Star Movement simply because it is new and different. As one young M5S supporter said “the other parties...have already ruled during the last decades. The results of their government weren’t so good, so much that they have led to a deep crisis” (Schultheis). This quote reveals that the main supporters of the M5S are a younger generation who feel left behind by the older parties who have failed to offer concrete plans to help them find employment success in the future.

Indeed, most young Italians feel uncertain about their prospects at finding jobs or keeping the ones they already have, leading some to the view that the political corruption of the Italian old guard has stifled opportunities for others, as important positions are kept in the hands of the few. Thus the main view of the mainstream Italian parties is that “they don’t really think about the problems of other people” (Schultheis). Another quote from a young Five-Star Movement supporter echoes this sentiment, stating that “In Italy right now, left and right are blurred, so there’s a huge confusion...the way we see it, Italy’s problem is that we’ve lost credibility because our politicians don’t really represent us” (Schultheis). And most revealingly, as another Five-Star supporter said, “I want to vote Five-Star because they are completely new” (Schultheis). With all this, it seems apparent that the success of the Five-Star Movement stems from the crisis of the Italian political system, and the ability of the M5S to capitalize on that crisis and provide a clear alternative, unmarred by political sins of the past.

Media

One of the most unique aspects of the M5S is its starting place in the blog of founder Beppe Grillo. When Grillo launched his blog, beppegrillo.it, back in 2004, it was used as a discussion site for economic and social issues, but also with denouncing the failures of the Italian political establishment (Fuschillo). In 4 years, Grillo’s blog grew to such a size to be dubbed one of the most influential blogs in the world (Fuschillo) It was from this internet space that Grillo was able to bypass most traditional forms of political communication and appeal directly to his supporters. It was from this blog that he was able to organize his V-Day rallies and network with other political

actors to form a basis of a political organization. In this way, the Five-Star Movement was truly born from the people's engagement in new forms of media. In particular, Grillo's alliance with Gianroberto Casaleggio, a web strategist, has gifted the party with a technological and organizational infrastructure that has effectively diffused party stances and ideals down from Grillo and other leaders towards the supporters and other readers who follow the blog and other M5S sites (Troconi, 14). Indeed, many supporters have stated the usefulness of the M5S' online movement, with many praising how the movement's ideas are explained clearly in accessible online sites that anyone can read and understand (Schultheis). Of his blog, Grillo has stated that it is a "tool that we have for creating true democracy—a new form of democracy that has been called 'direct democracy'" (Troconi, 18). The blog and other use of internet by the party then can be seen not only as an efficient and direct method of sharing their message with supporters, but an extension of that message as well. An example of the promise that power can be brought to the people, and democracy can be made more immediate and personal.

Conclusions:

Overall, gatekeeping issues, mostly involving scandals of corruption, are the most salient issues that help explain the rise of the Five-Star Movement. It is clear from interviews and studies conducted of the voter composition of the M5S that the main support for the party comes from disillusioned Italian youth who have felt let down by the mainstream Italian parties, and are willing to support the M5S because of its promise to change the status quo, or simply because it is something new and different. This widespread lack of trust in the Italian political establishment has made the rhetoric of the M5S, which divides the political sphere between the Italian people and the

corrupt establishment elites, particularly powerful, as it is not only emotionally appealing, but based in historical reality. Other polarizing topics such as immigration and the economy are relatively minor aspects of the parties' platform in comparison to its main anti-establishment stances. The party has paid lip service to the danger of invading immigrants, but it seems that the issue of anti-immigration has been thoroughly covered by the Northern League, leaving the M5S to focus more on its attack against Italian elites. Economic crises has enflamed resentment towards the Italian government, and increased anxiety about the future among younger Italians. While the backdrop to this crisis has paved the way for the rise of the M5S, it is still particularly the inability for the Italian government to adequately handle the situation that has primarily strengthened the positions of the M5S. Other issues such as Euroscepticism play little to no role in the parties' platform or success. Finally, the use of new media has been particularly beneficial to the M5S, as it has allowed the party to reach voters in a more direct way that offers organizational advantages, clarity of message, and provides an example of their promise to bring democracy closer to the people.

Overall conclusions on Italian populism

For both the Northern League and the Five-Star Movement, issues of political corruption have been particularly salient in explaining the emergence and strength of these parties. The Tangentopoli scandal first provided a route for Silvio Berlusconi, and his far right coalition which the LN was a part of, to achieve success. This opened the door for the LN in garnering it more political influence and opportunity to share its message with more of the Italian electorate. Later, the various bribery and corruption

scandals of Berlusconi resulted in further erosion of trust in the Italian electorate, which coupled with looming economic and migration crises, helped pave the conditions for the rise and strength of the Five-Star Movement. Thus Italy would seem to be a prime case of a situation where the rise of populism resulted in more populism. As populist actors arise and achieve success, an alluring option for other challengers is to adopt the same rhetoric to try and co-opt the populists' message. If this occurs, populism can manifest on all sides of the political spectrum. Thus the rise of Berlusconi can be seen to pave the way for the emergence of the Lega Nord and the Five-Star Movement. It was the failure then of the Italian political establishment in the 1990s and the Berlusconi coalition in the 2000s to abide by democratic and electoral rules and instill faith in the public that led to the erosion of trust necessary to empower the populist appeal of the LN and M5S.

Additionally, anti-immigration sentiment was particularly helpful in providing a niche for the LN to exploit and maintain political relevancy when their first issue of northern independence lost importance. The ability of the LN to tie immigration into their anti-establishment positions and paint the picture of the ruling elite favoring an undeserving underclass who threaten the values of Italian culture, along with the increase in immigration in recent years, have resulted in great electoral gains for the LN, as many have come to see Matteo Salvini as the strongman leader needed to 'clean up' the country. As the League has entered into a coalition with the M5S, the latter has seemingly adopted the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the former, and has included harsher immigration measures in their platform along with promises of a universal basic income. For the Five-Star Movement, use of new media in particular was helpful in facilitating the rise of the M5S, as well as providing the party with an advantageous

organizational apparatus capable of clearly distributing the parties' message. Issues such as economic concerns and Euroscepticism were secondary in explaining the rise of both parties in relation to the main issues of political corruption and anti-immigration.

4.2: Austria

Austrian Freedom Party (FPO)

While other smaller populist parties have briefly appeared in Austrian political history, only the FPO has ever managed to maintain a steady presence in the Austrian electorate. Therefore, in the examination of populism in Austria they will be the only party analyzed.

History

The FPO formed in 1956 following the dissolution of the League of Independents (VDU) that was founded in 1949. The FPO was considered the heir to the German national-liberal Leager that had supported the Nazis, and was thus marginalized in politics following the conclusion of the war (Panizza, 60). Starting in the 1960s, the FPO attempted to redefine itself as a centrist third party by constructing a platform as a progressive, liberal party. However, this change brought little success, and the party continued to garner just around 1-2% of the vote up until the mid-1980s (Panizza, 60). Most crucial for the FPO during this period was a deal they made with then SPO Chancellor Kreisky to pass new electoral laws that were more favorable to minority parties (Malone, 29). As a direct result of these new laws, more parties were able to get

on the ballot, allowing the FPO to increase their parliamentary representation without raising its total votes.

Most accounts agree that the fortunes of the FPO began to increase under the new leadership of Jorg Haider, whose drastic transformation of the party resulted in a dramatic upsurge in electoral support (Panizza, 60). Under Haider's direction, the party transitioned into primarily being a protest party against the grand coalition of the SPO and OVP which had ruled the country for the past 50 years. This began with a campaign directed against the federal government, accusing the two ruling parties of corruption and excessive political patronage, as well as for rising unemployment (Panizza, 60). It was at this time that the party began to take on its populist discourse, presenting themselves as the champions of the "little man" against the corrupt establishment. Haider also decided that the FPO would put more emphasis on immigration, and soon anti-immigration stances became the central issue of the FPO's agenda (Malone, 30). These changes soon resulted in positive results for the FPO as in 1990 the vote share of the FPO rose above 10% for the first time in the parties' history. This represented the party moving away from liberal economic roots to a new form of anti-immigration and anti-establishment politics. The FPO also began to call for more plebiscitary forms of democracy, calling for more popular referendums and increased power to the Austrian federal president, who was elected directly by the people (Meret, 201). In response to Haider's rhetoric, the SPO and OVP adopted a policy of containment towards the FPO, refusing to cooperate with it on the national level. However, this did not extend to the regional level, where SPO and OVP operators often still cooperated with FPO officials

(De Lange, 23). Despite this policy of exclusion, the vote share of the FPO continued to grow, going from 9.7% in 1986 to 26.9% in 1999.

The growing success of the FPO came to a head in the November elections of 1999 when the FPO garnered 27% of the electorate, becoming the second largest party in the Austrian parliament (Panizza, 60). This marked a turning point for Austrian politics. While previously the FPO had played a distant third to the SPO and OVP, now the FPO and the OVP were of equal size, and the OVP was looking at further electoral deterioration in future elections (De Lange, 23). Thus, the OVP felt the safest option would be to align with the FPO, hoping that the burden of government responsibilities would be too much to bear. This resulted in the FPO entering a position of government power for the first time in its history. Unfortunately for the FPO, the OVP seemed to be correct in its assessment, as the party lost a considerable part of its electoral following in the 2003 elections, which went down to 10% (De Lange, 23). The main issue for the party was that it was difficult to maintain its anti-establishment image while simultaneously being a leading party in government, and some of its neoliberal economic reforms became opposed by its blue-collar base. This loss of support led to party infighting, most critically with Haider leaving the party in 2004 to form a new party the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZO) (Malone, 30). While this new party was briefly successful, it largely diminished after Haider's death in 2008, and most of the members went back to the FPO (Zandonella, 12). However, before this occurred, the split deeply hurt the organizational structure of the FPO, and made them unable to organize an effective political strategy. This led to the party changing leadership five times in two months before finally settling on Heinz-Christian Strache to be the new

leader of the FPO. However, the damage had already been done, and the FPO's support was cut in half, going down to only 10% (Meret, 187).

In some ways these events were a blessing for the FPO. With most of the party's government members joining the BZÖ, the FPO was suddenly freed of governing responsibilities. This resulted in the party becoming even more radical, doubling down on its anti-immigration rhetoric. This began in 2006 with the party launching a campaign called "Austria must remain free" which was aimed at collecting signatures against admitting Turkey into the EU (Meret, 188). While this campaign was not very successful, it represented a strong shift towards anti-Islam for the party, as well as an increased emphasis on Christian values. This new emphasis seemed to work for the party, as in the 2006 elections it gained 11% of the vote and 21 parliamentary seats (Meret, 188). Two years later in 2008 the party achieved 17% of the vote share, proving it was stronger in opposition than in office (Meret, 186). Under Strache, the FPO was able to rise once again to their 1996 high, and garnered 42% of young voters in 2011 (Costantini, 32). This was mainly achieved by shifting away from former neoliberal economic stances and towards a platform more concerned on social issues, particularly anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic positions. By cornering this issue as the main issue of the FPO, when the Syrian humanitarian crisis occurred in 2015, resulting in tens of thousands of refugees passing through Vienna, the FPO was uniquely situated to take advantage of the discontent this created. Thus in 2015 the FPO achieved its best success yet, gaining 31% of the vote (Venho, 23).

While the dominance the SPÖ and the ÖVP had over parliament was broken in 1999 with the emergence of the FPO onto the electoral scene, and into a governing coalition,

the presidency continued to be held by either a member of the SPO or OVP (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 30). However, this ended in 2016 when Alexander Van Der Bellen of the Green Party and Norbert Hoffer of the FPO were the two candidates to make it to the final round of voting. This represents a significant shift in the Austrian electorate, who seem fed up enough with the mainstream parties that a plurality of them are willing to elect more fringe parties to the highest levels of government. While Hoffer was the early favorite to win, opposition by the SPO and the OVP, who supported their ideological rival in Van Der Bellen of the Green Party, helped to ensure the FPO's defeat. Despite this, the FPO still holds the support of around 26% of the Austrian populace, and has entered into another governing coalition with the OVP (BBC). However, since this election the support for the FPO has gone down, as the OVP has begun to increase its hardline position on immigration and has begun to siphon off conservative votes from the FPO (European Progressive Studies, 35). This can still be counted as a good development for the FPO however, as the OVP leaning more to the right means it may be more inclined to form coalitions with the FPO rather than the SPO in the future. While this recent election can seem only a return to form for the FPO, nearly recapturing their early 2000s success, its support has actually shifted from being mainly concentrated in urban areas of Vienna and Salzburg to being more evenly distributed throughout the country. There are now only three states where the SPO is stronger than the FPO (European Progressive Studies, 58).

Rhetoric

Since Jorg Haider assumed leadership of the FPO, the rhetoric of the party has moved in a clear populist direction. This began with the construction of the SPO and

OVP into one singular ‘other,’ two parts of the same corrupt establishment whose excessive political patronage stifled the power of the people and led to inefficient bureaucracy and increased unemployment. In making these claims, Haider and the FPO presented the other two main parties as unfit representatives of the populace. The party then positioned itself as the sole representative of the people, claiming they alone represented the “little man” in his fight against the “establishment” (Panizza, 60). Themes of anti-immigration also began popping up in FPO rhetoric around this time, adding to their defined political sphere an invading underclass that was threatening Austrian values, whose presence was being perpetuated by the corrupt establishment. In this way, the FPO combined the populist rhetoric of the Northern League’s anti-immigrant framework and the Five-Star Movement’s corrupt elite framework. By articulating these diverse forms of resentment, towards foreigners and the establishment, the FPO was able to position itself as the only party that defended the interests of the people against an uncaring political establishment and the foreigners who were threatening Austrian jobs and their traditional way of life. Thus the political frontier created by the FPO consisted of an “us”, defined as all hard working Austrians who believed in national Christian values, and a “them” composed of the parties in power, bureaucrats, foreigners, and left-wing intellectuals (Panizza, 61).

This rhetoric can be seen on full display in an early speech by Haider, who when addressing the issue of how many immigrants should be allowed in to Austria said “The question is, who should decide which path we take? In my opinion: the people. Whoever doubts the role of the people as the highest sovereign, questions the very essence of democracy. People have the right not just to go to the polls every four years

but are entitled to have a say in questions which are decisive for the future of their country” (Panizza, 61). This rhetoric shows a belief that the people have more authority to make meaningful decisions than the elected representatives, especially when it comes to questions of who should be allowed into the country. This shows a clear populist preference for power to be held in the electorate itself, rather than in elected individuals, along with the nativist belief that only certain groups of people should make up the populace. This anti-establishment appeal is also reflected in Haider’s personal slogan “They’re against him, because he is for us” which posits the idea that all those against Haider are also against the Austrian people (Costantini, 25). Another poster of Haider had the words “Die Unbestechlichen” or “the incorruptables” emblazoned across, once again putting the ‘ideologically pure’ FPO in contrast to the ‘corrupt’ establishment. In the early era of Haider’s reign, before the FPO achieved significant electoral success, the FPO would often criticize the state of Austrian democracy and call for the implementation of a new era (a Third Republic” where citizens could express their will more directly (Meret, 93).

Crucial in the rhetoric of the FPO is the idea of Heimat, which has no direct English translation, but roughly means pride in the cultural history of Austria. While for many people this simply means pride in Austrian culture, rather than disdain for others, the FPO has constantly used Heimat in reference to xenophobic and nationalistic ideals. The idea of Heimat can be found numerous times in the FPO party platform, particularly in a passage that states “We are protecting our homeland Austria, our national identity and autonomy. We are committed to our country, Austria, as part of the German language and cultural community” (Malone, 37). This shows that the

parties' formulation of the people has explicit ties to only the Austrian populace that believes in these values, and that those who do not share it are attackers, and that this identity must be 'protected' from the 'others.' In this way, the concept of Heimat for the FPO involves exclusionary rights to the homeland, and allows them to paint their anti-immigrant rhetoric as not about being against foreigners, but rather about safeguarding the interests of Austrian cultural identity.

After Strache took control of the party, and began increasing its anti-immigrant rhetoric, FPO posters with anti-Islamic themes began to appear. One such poster reads "45% of Muslims do not want to integrate. The OVP and the SPO simply accept this. The FPO does not" (Costantini, 36). Once again this shows an attempt to link issues of anti-immigration with anti-establishment rhetoric, insinuating that the mainstream parties have failed to address the issue of immigration adequately, but that the FPO will not. The official document of the party's ideology, the Handboch Freiheitlicher Politik (HFP) contains various anti-Islamic statements, such as the worry that teaching Islam in Austria will be used to radicalize Muslim school children into following Sharia law over western democratic thought, the opposition of the building of any Minarets in Austria, and an unsourced claim that without appropriate measures, half of all Austrian children will be Islamists by the year 2050 (Venho, 23). Thus the divide between the true Christian Austrians and the illegitimate Muslim foreigners is made all the clearer in the parties' guidebooks. This rhetoric, along with the anti-establishment leanings of the party, show a clear attempt to create a populist discourse that divides the political landscape between the true Austrian people and its enemies, with the FPO as the only defenders of the people.

Voter Composition

Traditionally, the voter base of the FPO has largely been working class males without a higher education degree. In the 1999 parliamentary elections, the FPO received 31% of all male votes compared to just 22% of all female votes and did 7% better among non-college educated voters compared to other parties (Malone, 33). However, as time has gone on the FPO has actually received more support from white collar workers than blue collar workers, with the percentage of white collar supporters actually passing those of blue collar voters in 1999. This could be attributed to the neoliberal policies the party was supporting at the time, which was unpopular with blue collar workers. However, this could also have been due to the internal struggles of the party at the time, as in 2008, after the BZO had largely collapsed, the FPO went back up to around 34% of manual worker support (Meret, 231). What is perhaps a more important explainer for FPO voting than any of these identities is views on immigration. In the most recent national survey, it was found that 93 percent of FPO voters believed that Austria should only accept a few immigrants, or none at all, with 80% believing that immigrants actively undermine Austrian culture (Malone, 36). In 2002, half of FPO supporters believed the cultural life of the country is undermined by immigrants, with only 26% of OVP supporters, the right wing coalition partner of the FPO, agreeing with the same statement (Meret, 251). These numbers indicate that the anti-immigrant stance of the FPO has earned them a core following of supporters.

Additionally, the FPO is overrepresented among the self-employed as well as retirees. This could be due to these groups being more susceptible to substantial changes in the economy and more receptive to perceived threats to homogeneity and tradition,

and thus more likely to respond favorably to the xenophobia of the FPO (Costantini, 7). However, aside from retirees and entrepreneurs, the youth vote for the FPO has also significantly increased between 1990 and 2013 (Constantini, 19). In 1999 the FPO received 38% of votes cast by first time voters, up from 3% just 20 years prior. This has been theorized to be due to the fact that younger cohorts do not identify with parties in the same way the older generations do, and that for younger people, the FPO does not have the same stigma that it does for older generations (Meret, 223). However, the fact that the level of first time voter support for the FPO dropped dramatically after their entrance into government supports the hypothesis that first time voters supported the FPO in order to send a message to the political establishments. After the 2002 election the FPO went back to being overrepresented by older (over 60) cohorts rather than younger.

Economic leanings could also be a contributing factor as around half of FPO supporters believe the government should intervene less in the economy, with 62% agreeing that the state should give more freedom to private firms (Meret, 246). However, this could also be a factor of the high level of business owners that comprise the FPO electorate. It could also be due to lower levels of trust in government institutions among FPO voters, as it has been shown that FPO voters have the lowest levels of trust in government among the Austrian parties (Meret, 267). This is likely due to the kind of people attracted to the anti-establishment rhetoric of the FPO already are predisposed to be critical of the government. FPO voters also have the lowest trust in other people, with 67% responding that you can never be too careful when it comes to trusting strangers (Meret, 270). Overall though, as the FPO has increased in support

throughout time, by all accounts becoming a mainstay party in 2018, it has enjoyed broad appeal from all demographics, although a significant gap between male and female voters remain. What seems the most significant predictor for FPO voting then still seems to be anti-immigrant attitudes.

Immigration

Since the beginning of the 1990s, shortly after Jorg Haider took control of the party, anti-immigration stances have played a central part in the FPO's platform. It is important to note that before the 1980s, immigration was not a strong issue of relevance for Austrian politics. Thus the grand coalition government of the OVP and SPO had never made serious attempts to discuss the issue. However, in the beginning of the 1990s immigration shot up as an issue for the Austrian electorate, going from the tenth most important issue in 1990 to the second most important issue in 1992 (Meret, 194). It is around this time that Jorg Haider took the FPO in an anti-immigrant direction, in the hope to exploit what seemed to be an unaddressed political niche. This began with advocating for stricter immigration policies such as enacting voter ID requirements and only granting full citizenship after an immigrant has been living in the country for ten years (Malone, 30). Later, the party launched a popular initiative known as "Austria First" where the party tried to collect signatures in favor of more rigorous measures against immigration, more efficient border controls, an expansion of the police force, more stringent rules for achieving Austrian citizenship and a limitation of the percentage (no more than 30%) of students with another mother tongue in Austrian school classes (Malone, 31). While none of these measures were adopted, the FPO

succeeded in the sense that they were able to bring more attention to the immigration issue.

Later that year the SPO-OVP government coalition passed more restrictive measures for immigrants in Austria, requiring immigrants to send authorities documented information about their working permits, health insurance and housing conditions (Malone, 32). The passage of these laws so soon after the FPO lobby showed that the establishment parties saw the appeal of anti-immigrant messages and feared the FPO could make increased electoral gains if they did not tighten the immigration rules. However, the FPO did just that and once in government was able to pass stricter immigration laws, such as the “Alien Law Package” passed in 2002 that introduced a stricter set of conditions for entry and re-entry and more restrictive settlement and residence requirements (Malone, 32). In the same year, the FPO-OVP government passed the Integration Agreement, which introduced obligations for non-EU migrants applying for a residence permit to acquire basic knowledge of the German language and possess enough abilities to participate in the social, economic and cultural life in Austria (Meret, 195). Later in 2005 the Austrian National Council introduced new changes to the Asylum Act, including new controversial measures such as force-feeding asylum seekers during hunger strikes and granting the right to expel asylum seekers who had a pending trial (Meret, 196). In these ways, the FPO was at the forefront of polarizing the debate around immigration in Austria. Indeed, in the period that the FPO first gained a government position, 1999-2000, most FPO voters said that the most important factor for them in voting FPO was the parties’ position on immigration (Meret, 19).

However, before the FPO one can argue that racial tensions have always been a part of Austrian history and society. As Kirstin Constantini theorizes, many of the prejudices against immigrants can be traced back to the period of ‘guest workers’ and even partly to the social stratification of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy (Constantini, 14). During the Austro-Hungarian empire those of German descent were favored heavily in military and government bureaucracy, with all leading officials required to speak German, even if stationed in a region with a completely different native tongue (Constantini, 15). Thus many who could not speak German were excluded from position in power. Then in WW2 many Austrian officials and citizens were complicit in Nazi ideology and war crimes, and Austria had a significant Austrian Nazi party in its government. It is in fact this party that is the political ancestor of the FPO. Thus one could argue that Austrian citizens have a history of being open to narratives that favor German values over others. Thus, when the FPO arrived on the political scene with their anti-immigrant messages, it is perhaps not surprising that by 1997 electoral support for the FPO became quite high. In the late 1990’s Austria began to receive increased asylum requests from Middle Eastern countries, resulting in an influx of Muslim immigrants. The FPO took full advantage of this situation, emphasizing the differences between the two cultures and characterizing the development as a foreign invasion.

Often the FPO takes its anti-immigrant stances in relation to their effect on the Austrian welfare state, saying the party seeks to protect welfare from social abuse. The FPO points to immigrants as one of the most onerous costs on the Austrian welfare state, saying the presence of immigrants makes the future of the welfare state very tenuous, unless the government imposes more rigorous restrictions (Meret, 191). The

FPO claims that without changes, the “welfare state cannot be financed and the bills of hundreds and thousands of seniors’ pensions in Austria cannot be safe anymore” due to “the doors to the Austrian welfare state are wide open for looting” (Meret, 191). In this way the FPO not only positions immigrants as threats to Austrian culture, but also parasites on the welfare state, who take advantage of relaxed legislation. This is a notable shift in positions towards the welfare state from the parties’ neoliberal roots, which advocated for less government redistribution. However, from 2008 onwards the party began putting more emphasis on pro-welfare issues rather than neoliberal issues, and instead positions itself as a party mainly concerned with social and Heimat issues, hoping to safeguard the interests of the “own people and the own state” (Meret, 191).

As stated before, Heimat has a different meaning for FPO supporters, who mainly characterize it as the parties’ purpose to preserve and maintain the cultural heritage of the country. This often takes the form of Austria being “for Austrians” and that “the protection of cultural identity and social peace in Austria requires a stop to immigration” (Meret, 197). In this way Heimat in FPO terms is more correctly defined as exclusive rights to the homeland. Thus the FPO says its anti-immigrant rhetoric is not racist, but rather based in preservation of country and culture. As the FPO says, due to the small size of Austria and limited resources, “Austria is not a country of immigration” and therefore the right to Heimat is reserved only for native Austrians (Meret, 198). In this way the FPO is completely against any forms of multiculturalism in Austria. Particularly, the FPO feels that Heimat is seriously threatened by increasing numbers of Muslims in the country. Thus the party emphasizes the differences between Islamic and Christian culture, pointing towards increasing numbers of Muslims and

non-religious people as indications that the Christian values of Austrian culture are diminishing. In the view of the FPO, there can be no culture of understanding or relation between Christians and Muslims, and the only solution is containment (Meret, 199).

Today, the FPO's isolationist and anti-immigrant stances have paid off, as with the Syrian refugee crisis, immigration has become the number one issue for the Austrian electorate, resulting in large gains for the FPO, reaching 31% of the vote in 2015. Recently, the anti-immigration sentiment has increased to such an extent that other parties, most notably the OVP, have begun to adopt the rhetoric of the FPO, hoping to increase their electoral gains using the same strategies as the FPO (BBC). This has involved recent proposals from the mainstream parties to ban the wearing of headscarves for children and plans to seize immigrants' phones at border checkpoints. The Austrian government has also veered towards the right in recent months with drastic cuts in social benefits for asylum seekers and complete exclusion from many social services for periods of up to five years (European Progressive Studies, 66). From all of this, it can be seen that by identifying itself with the immigration issue, the FPO was able to tap into immigrant resentment that had been building up in the country and had gone unaddressed by the mainstream parties. The fact that increases in anti-immigrant sentiment can be linked with increased electoral success for the FPO, along with other political parties beginning to borrow the rhetoric of the FPO, shows that the success of the FPO is closely tied to the immigration issue.

The Economy

From its founding in 1956, the FPO ran on a neoliberal platform that pushed for virtues of personal liberty and advocated for less government interference in the economy. This helped the party create a clear contrast between them and the establishment parties who were strongly in favor of the welfare state. When Jorg Haider took control of the party he stayed in line with its former neoliberal roots, advocating for the privatization of state-owned enterprises as well as lower taxes and a reduction of regulation on business and individuals (Panizza, 60). For a while these policies helped appeal to voters who felt stifled by increasing government regulation, and fit in nicely with the anti-establishment rhetoric that Haider was cultivating. These opposing economic policies also helped the party when unemployment began to rise in the early 1990s, which brought about dissatisfaction with the economic policies of the SPO. Indeed, times of economic dissatisfaction and rising unemployment often open the doors for outside actors, who can endorse opposing economic policies in order to set them apart from the 'failed' policies of the parties in power. This can be seen in Austria once again in 2000-2004 when unemployment rose from 5% to 7%, resulting in increased support for the FPO (Costantini, 33). Haider also linked immigration with economic problems, saying that the influx of asylum seekers and immigrant would take jobs away from Austrian citizens, thus worsening the economic situation (Costantini, 24). In this way the FPO was able to use economic developments to influence the dissatisfaction of Austrian citizens, especially when framing them within anti-immigrant sentiment.

The neoliberal policies of the FPO and the OVP coalition began to hurt the FPO when its adopted economic stances began to negatively impact its blue collar base. This, along with the fracture in the party caused by Haider's exit and the creation of the BZO, resulted in decreased support for the party. Thus, under Strache, the party began to move away from neoliberal policies and focused instead on social issues such as anti-immigration. The party continued to frame economic policies in terms of anti-immigration sentiment, but pivoted towards framing the context in terms of immigrants draining the welfare state. This shows that at some points, the FPO's economic positions were a hindrance for the party, and that its most successful economic policies came from reframing the issue in terms of immigration. Thus while the FPO has benefitted from being in opposition during times of economic downturns, it has not benefitted greatly from its own economic policies, and often frames them in an anti-immigration context.

European Union

Traditionally, Austria has been one of the more Eurosceptic countries within the union, with only 37% of the Austrian populace believing EU membership was positive in 2011 (Brattberg, 39). In 2012 this dropped to 23% (Costantini, 38). The Eurosceptic position of the FPO then was not particularly hard for them to sell to the Austrian people. Furthermore, with the anti-establishment rhetoric of the FPO urging its supporters not to trust the government in Vienna, it is also unsurprising that it was easier to sell the idea that the government in Brussels, even further away, was likewise untrustworthy. Thus the FPO has used anti-EU sentiment to bolster its positions by setting it in opposition to the pro-EU SPO party. In particular, the FPO's anti-EU

positions have attracted larger amounts of younger people to the party, who have become disillusioned with the EU's economic policy in the wake of the 2008 financial recession (Meret, 2003). Much like with their anti-immigrant rhetoric, the FPO says Austria should be run by native Austrians, and should thus not be constrained by the EU. Under Strache, the FPO released posters stating, "Elected Representatives, not EU traitors!" to paint its opposition as unfit actors, this time in context of selling out the country to the EU (Costantini, 39). The FPO has also framed the EU's policies as the cause of the economic and immigration crises the country is now facing. In this way, the FPO has linked the EU with the national government in its constructed 'other' of corrupt elites that are against the interests of the people.

It is worth noting that prior to the 1990s the FPO was in favor of EU membership, affirming in 1985 that "the future of Europe lies in a close community of all its countries and peoples. In spite of all the difficulties of unification the goal remains a unified and strong Europe to which there is no reasonable alternative" (Meret, 2003). Of course this was before Jorg Haider assumed leadership of the party and took it in a more anti-immigrant, anti-EU direction that ultimately led to renewed electoral success for the party. Thus it can be said that the FPO has achieved more success in anti-EU stances than with pro-EU stances. Despite this, the FPO must often support EU measures or endorse the EU when entering into coalitions with the OVP. This can be seen when they entered into their OVP led coalition in 2000. With the Eurosceptic attitude that the party had formulated in the 1990s coming into conflict with the pro-EU OVP, the FPO was forced to give a government declaration of their commitment to Europe in order to reassure other EU states that Austria would be a willing member. To this extent, the

FPO released a statement saying “Our government program identifies itself resolutely with Europe and with the fundamental values which characterize the new Europe. We are Austrians and we are European and proud of it...there is no alternative to the participation in the EU” (Meret, 204). This severely hurt the parties protest image, and resulted in a decline for electoral support, losing about two-thirds of its electoral support. In this way party became trapped between party ideology and short-term pragmatic political goals. History seems to be repeating itself as despite its strengthened anti-EU rhetoric following 2008, the FPO in 2017 said it was committed to maintaining the European project (European Progressive Studies, 35). Thus this anti-EU rhetoric seems more a tool used by the party when in opposition, but quickly abandoned when in power.

Gatekeeping Issues

One of the biggest reasons the FPO’s anti-establishment rhetoric and accusations of corruption found such a foothold in the Austrian populace is that for the better part of half a century, politics in Austria was completely dominated by the SPO-OVP coalition, leaving little room for alternative political views, and stifling political debate. The conditions that led to the dominance of the SPO-OVP coalition can be said to be the result of an overcorrection to the problems that had faced Austria prior to World War 2. Before the second world war, political conflicts in Austria had erupted into a civil war in 1934. When Austria was reestablished in 1945, in order to avoid the conflicts that had dominated Austria prior, the three existing parties, the Democratic Socialist Party (SPO), the Christian Democrat Party (OVP) and the Communist Party (KPO) decided to govern together in coalition (Panizza, 59). When the KPO soon dissolved due to Cold

War tensions, just the SPO and OVP were left to govern in coalition. The SPO and OVP devised a form of cooperation by establishing control in a variety of fields, dividing up the most important posts in banks, schools, and nationalized industries between their respective elites (Panizza, 59). While this succeeded in achieving cooperation, it also left very little space for political contestation, as any opposition could threaten the delicately balanced compromise.

While this system was stable, one could question whether it was democratic, as the parties became so closely interlinked that the differences between the two became hard to distinguish. Through this alliance, the grand coalition was able to keep politically divisive issues such as European integration and immigration off the political and public agenda (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 105). While this had the intended effect of keeping the issues away from the public, it also alienated certain members of the electorate who felt their voices were no longer being represented. These conditions allowed for a gifted speaker such as Jorg Haider to articulate the forms of resentment against the governing coalition, accusing it of clientelism, inefficient bureaucracy, and corruption (Panizza, 60). Ultimately, the strength and appeal of these claims came, in part, from the fact that they were not completely unfounded. These claims of corruption and rigging of the political system became especially potent when the OVP and SPO adopted a strategy of exclusion towards the FPO, refusing to work with them for 15 years following Haider's takeover of the party. While this strategy was taken with the hope that it would stifle the FPO, instead Haider was able to plausibly claim to be a victim of the political establishment's corruption, saying this strategy showed the governing parties only cared about keeping themselves in power, and would not tolerate any opposition to their

complete dominance of Austrian society. Thus these strategies of exclusion only reinforced the FPO's narrative and populist appeal.

However, these policies were a bit of a double edged sword for everyone involved. While the FPO could plausibly assert corruption and collusion to keep certain political actors out of power, those policies also worked in that the OVP and SPO were able to keep the FPO from having any meaningful power in Austrian politics for quite a while. Even as recently as 2017, when FPO leader Hofer and Green party candidate Van der Bellen were the final two candidates for the run off for the Austrian presidency, SPO and OVP leaders worked together to encourage voters to support Van der Bellen in able to keep the FPO from office (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 30). Van der Bellen would go on to win the election by just 300,000 votes. So while the alliance of the OVP and SPO can work in strengthening the anti-establishment rhetoric of the FPO, it can also effectively keep them from positions of power. The FPO would also not have been able to gain admittance into government without the OVP choosing them as a coalition partner over the SPO. While the electoral success of the FPO, in particular their siphoning of votes away from the OVP did put the OVP in a situation where aligning with the FPO would be in their best interests, if they had so desired, they could have continued their alliance with the SPO and shut the FPO out of government.

Thus to some extent the FPO is still dependent on one of the established parties choosing them for a coalition partner if they want to gain influence in government. While the OVP hoped that time in government would diminish the FPO's appeal, and for a time it did, it also had the effect of normalizing the party, legitimizing it as an established player in the party system. Take for comparison Europe's reaction to the

first and second time the OVP formed a coalition with the FPO. The first time the EU immediately placed sanctions on Austria and strongly condemned the OVP for enabling the FPO. The more recent occurrence however has earned barely any response from the EU. This signals a level of acceptance that the FPO has achieved, as it has done what no other populist party in Europe has in becoming to be seen as a legitimate actor in the parties' political system. So much so that its second entrance into coalition is almost seen as politics as normal. While many were relieved when Hofer lost the recent presidential election, what may have been missed is that almost half of Austria did not see the FPO gaining the most important position in the country as a negative occurrence. This, along with the FPO's consistently high parliamentary results shows that for many in Austria, the FPO no longer seems like a fringe, radical choice, but a sensible third option for those who do not feel aligned with the interests of the OVP or SPO.

Overall, by positioning itself as the only real alternative to the SPO-OVP coalition, the FPO has been able to rally those who feel disillusioned by the establishment into a solid base who vote for them to send a message to the establishment. Voting for the FPO has become synonymous with voting against the establishment, with 66% of FPO voters in 1999 saying a prime determining factor in their vote was to 'send a message' to the establishment (Malone, 35). Indeed, even more than the parties' anti-immigration stances, FPO voters consistently show that the most important issue for them in voting for the FPO was a wish for a change in the system (Meret, 19). As shown above, this resentment towards the establishment stems from the stranglehold on politics and other aspects of life the OVP-SPO coalition enjoyed through their mutual cooperation. In this

way, the Austrian case enforces the stance that populist parties are more likely to emerge and be successful in countries where patronage and clientelism nourish the political system. Thus the success of the FPO can be attributed in part by their ability to articulate the dissatisfaction felt by some with the main parties, and position itself as the only parliamentary force that could seriously challenge them.

Conclusions

Overall, issues of immigration and gatekeeping failures were the most salient issues that contributed to the rise and success of the FPO. In terms of immigration, before the FPO had even gained electoral success, their politicizing of the immigration issue led to the SPO and OVP to enact more restrictive immigration measures, requiring immigrants to send authorities documented information about their health insurance and housing conditions (Malone, 32). The passage of these laws so soon after the FPO's lobbying shows that the OVP and SPO were concerned that the FPO could harness the anti-immigration sentiment within Austria to achieve electoral success, which they eventually did. When the FPO did gain admittance to governance, they kept up the anti-immigration stances by passing the Alien package laws which enacted stricter guidelines for entry. Indeed, since the FPO has taken power in Austria most recently we can observe Austria leaning more towards the right in terms of the immigration issue, enacting drastic cuts to social benefits for recognized asylum seekers and the complete exclusion of immigrants from many social services (European Progressive Studies, 66). These occurrences, along with documented uptick in support for the FPO during times of increased immigration such as the early 1990s and 2010s, indicates that the success of the FPO is closely tied to the immigration issue.

In terms of gatekeeping issues, it is clear that the FPO has only been able to gain its biggest success when an established party, such as the OVP, chooses to work with them. By allowing them into the government, the OVP has helped normalize the FPO, giving them the appearance as a sensible third party option rather than a fringe, radical choice. While this did hurt the parties anti-establishment appeal initially, under Strache the party doubled down on its anti-immigrant rhetoric, and with that becoming the center of the part rather than opposition to the establishment, the FPO now seems to be able to enter the government without any backlash or loss of support, as can be seen in the most recent Austrian elections. Cooperation with the OVP was also crucial for the FPO succeeding in government, as the FPO had much weaker electoral backup than the OVP, and was thus dependent on them for support in initiatives. In the case of the most recent Austrian presidential election, we can also see the parties working together to effectively keep the FPO out of power, as the OVP and SPO lent support to Green party candidate Van der Bellen in order to assure the defeat of Hofer. Of course tactics like these are a double edged sword, as it was this kind of alliance that allowed the FPO to claim corruption and clientelism on part of the SPO-OVP grand coalition. Indeed, it can be argued that it was the SPO-OVP's stranglehold on Austrian politics and civic life that led to the rise of the FPO, as it created many who felt their views were no longer being expressed or heard by the government. This allowed the FPO to direct this anger against the establishment and formulate their populist identity of the people against the corrupt elites.

In terms of economic issues, the FPO originally advocated for neoliberal economic policies, that helped set it in opposition to the pro-welfare stances of the main parties

and fit in nicely with their anti-establishment rhetoric that criticized unnecessary government interference and inefficient government bureaucracy. However once in government, these neoliberal policies began to alienate the parties' working class base. Thus once Strache took over, the party shifted towards being more centered around social issues such as immigration, with an emphasis on Heimat. In this way, it can be noted that taking hardline economic stances actually hurt the FPO, and that it is more successful when focusing solely on issues of immigration. In terms of EU issues, while the FPO has used anti-EU rhetoric to appeal to younger voters disillusioned by the EU, it has also been forced to adopt pro-EU stances and rhetoric when in coalitions with the OVP. Thus, anti-EU rhetoric is more of a tool used by the party to drum up support while in opposition, that they quickly abandon once in power. There were no cases of the FPO using new media to empower their populist appeal.

4.3: France

The National Front (FN)

Unlike the Northern League and the FPO, the FN, despite being an active party for half of the past century, has never achieved significant electoral success in the French government. Thus for the National Front, while an examination of the areas they have had success in will be undergone, a look at why this party has not been able to achieve success to the same degree as the other two will also be examined.

History

One could argue that few countries suffered during the second world war the way France had. Thus following the war, there was little tolerance for French parties occupying the far-right political space. It wouldn't be until the 1950s that a far right group would emerge again in the form of Jeune Nation, founded in 1950 by those disenchanted with the Republic's defeat in the Indochina war (Stockemer, 7). While this party never achieved significant success, it paved the way for other far-right parties to follow in its footsteps. Most notably, the Pujadist movement and the UDCA party emerged focusing around the question of Algerian independence. The 7 year war in Algeria offered a window of opportunity for the French far-right to regain political relevancy, as the event inflamed nationalist feelings in the French population and contributed to heightened anti-Arab sentiments in France (Stockemer, 7). It was during this time that Jean-Marie Le Pen, future leader of the National Front, began to achieve political success, winning a seat for the UDCA party when he was just 28 (Stockemer, 7). While the Poujadist movement was short lived it was quite successful, gaining 51 seats in the French parliament and 11.5% of the popular vote in 1956 (Stockemer, 8). However, with the changing of voting rules away from PR under Charles de Gaulle, the movement no longer had enough support to stay in parliament, and the party soon dissolved, once again fracturing the French far-right. It was from the ashes of this movement however that Le Pen would gather the disperse far-right elements into a single unified party, the National Front.

This wouldn't be achieved until 1972, when Francois Duprat and the ON party, with help from Le Pen, drew up a political manifesto that called for the reimplementation of

extreme right values such as belief in the natural order, the defense of traditional values, anti-parliamentarianism, and xenophobia (Stockemer, 10). These ideas formed the platform of what would become the FNUF, Front National for a United France, the precursor to the FN. The FNUF hoped to achieve a “French renaissance and a new defense” and chose Jean-Marie Le Pen as the leader that would help them articulate their goals. It was Le Pen who would shorten the party name to just the National Front (FN). It was also Le Pen who moved the party in a populist direction, establishing an identity cultivated around the true French people centered primarily around nationality, with immigrants and ineffective political leaders as the ‘other.’ The party strove to go beyond the left/right distinction and instead articulated the political arena as those who defended French cultural values, and those who did not. However, what those values should be was contested within the party itself, as initially the FN failed to formulate a cohesive political program as division arose between the more extreme elements of the party and the more moderate elements, who were led by Le Pen. This schism led to initial poor results of only 1.3% of the national vote (Stockemer, 11). However, after ON members clashed violently with communist league members in Paris on June 21st 1973, the more extreme members of the FN became banned from politics, allowing for Le Pen and his supporters to take over control of the party (Stockemer, 11). While this gave Le Pen more control of the party, it also weakened electoral support, and the FN would stay at the fringe for the next decade.

With Le Pen in control, the party moved away from attacking the establishment directly and pivoted towards increased pressure on issues of immigration and infringement on French national identity. While this initially improved result, the FN

faced another setback when the parties' second in command Duprat died in a car bombing, leading to the leaving of his supporters from the party and Le Pen failing to receive enough signatures to run in the 1981 French presidential elections (Stockemer, 13). However, just two years after this in 1983 is when the FN achieved its first electoral breakthrough. This came in the small town of Dreux that had witnessed a steady increase of immigrants during the 1960s and 70s (Stockemer, 15). By organizing their campaign around anti-immigrant appeals, and linking the increase in immigrants with crime and unemployment, the FN was able to gain 13% of the vote in Dreux and other nearby counties, and thus established a solid base from which to expand. That same year Le Pen was able to gain 11.2% of the vote in the first round of municipal elections, using much of the same strategies the party utilized in Dreux (Stockemer, 16).

This momentum led to the first national success for the party when two million voters endorsed the FN in the European elections. While these elections are based on PR rules, and only 57% of the French electorate voted, the results were still impressive, and indicative that the FN had made great strides in just a short amount of time. This victory helped increase the FN's political visibility and attracted recruits at the grass-root level. Two years later in the 1986 legislative elections, the FN entered the National Assembly for the first time, with 35 out of 577 seats and 9.65% of the vote (Stockemer, 17). All of this success culminated in the high point for the party in the 20th century, when during the 1988 presidential elections Le Pen won 14.8% of the vote, doubling its share since in the 1984 European elections, an almost unprecedented amount of political progress (Stockemer, 18). However, this success coincided with the beginning of a backslide for the party, as the voting rules changed to a two-round run-off, resulting in

no FN candidate receiving a majority in the first round vote. Furthermore, the main establishment parties began to push back against the FN's success, implementing policies of non-cooperation with the FN, and the media in particular began to cover the FN and Le Pen in particular in a very negative light. When the party failed to field any candidates in any major cities and gained only 11% of the vote in the following 1989 European elections, it indicated that the party's momentum had stalled (Stockemer, 18).

The party was able to make a comeback in the mid-90s, earning 14% of the vote in the 1992 regional elections, more than triple of what the party had received in 1986 (Stockemer, 19). Corruption scandals among the ruling parties helped revitalize this comeback, as Le Pen gained 15% of the vote in the 1995 presidential elections (Stockemer, 21). This comeback continued in 1997 when the FN was able to attract one million new supporters to receive 15% of the vote in the legislative elections (Stockemer, 21). This victory solidified the FN as the third largest political force in France, showing that in under two decades the party had gone from the political fringes to the center of national politics, despite the organizational and institutional opposition. However, at the height of the party's power another split, this time between Le Pen and number two Bruno Megret, reversed fortunes. The two came into conflict over whether to align with the mainstream right-wing parties, or to continue to operate in isolation. In 1999 when Le Pen assaulted socialist candidate Aline Paulevast and was suspended from running, Megret was the next in line to fill the top spot, but Le Pen nominated his wife instead (Stockemer, 22). Le Pen and his supporters then voted to expel Megret from the party, who formed a new party called the National Republic Movement. These actions split the FN's vote, and it only received 5% of the vote in the next European

elections (Stockemer, 22). However, the FN was soon able to recover and made record success yet again in 2002, earning 17% of the vote in the presidential election, allowing Le Pen to move on to the final round, the first time a leader of a nationalist party had acceded to the second round of presidential elections in France (Stockemer, 22).

However, just like the first breakout of success for the FN, this success resulted in widespread backlash against the FN and Le Pen. Although he made it to the second round in the presidential election, all parties rallied against him, sending incumbent Jacques Chirac back to the presidency with the largest margin of victory seen in French presidential history (Ray). The public seemingly followed this reaction, as in the 2007 presidential elections the vote share of the party dropped considerably, reaching only 10% of the vote, with their parliamentary success dropping 5% (Stockemer, 23). It was at this time that Jean-Marie's daughter, Marine Le Pen, began to take a more active role in the party. While Marine Le Pen continued to use populist themes in the party's discourse, she began to minimize the party's more extreme positions, and sought to focus solely on issues of anti-immigration and Euroscepticism. This strategy seemed to reverse the FN's electoral slide, and in 2011 Marine Le Pen became the new president of the FN (Stockemer, 24). Marine Le Pen proved to be a much more successful candidate than her father, gaining 18% of the vote in the 2012 French presidential elections, an 8% increase from her father's results in 2007. The FN's parliamentary success also increased by around 10%, gaining them two seats in parliament. This validated Marine Le Pen's attempts to rebrand the party, as new polls indicated that only 53% of the French electorate considered the FN a danger, down from 70% in 2002, and likewise a third of French voters saw the FN as a party "just like the others"

(Stockemer, 24). This resulted in more historic success for the FN, achieving 25% of the popular vote in the 2014 European elections, becoming the first French party to pass the two dominant moderate parties, making it the strongest party in France, and also the most successful populist right-wing party in Europe (Stockemer, 25). This success continued in the 2015 regional elections when the FN achieved 28% of the vote, showing the 2015 EU elections was not a fluke. Thus up to this point, a steady increase in success can be observed by the FN, despite minor hiccups and party infighting.

Coming off record success in 2015, Marine Le Pen further shocked the establishment when she, like her father before her, made it in to the second round for the presidential election. While at one point Marine Le Pen enjoyed around 40% of support from the French electorate, a televised debate that went poorly for her shifted support in favor of her opponent Macron, and over the next weeks the FN lost much of its support. Le Pen would end up soundly losing the election. Since Marine Le Pen's defeat, the FN has lost around half of its support, only being supported now by around 13% of the French electorate (BBC). With the FN achieving around 28% of the vote at one point, the presidential defeat, along with the huge loss in support, has made the party question its platform and leadership, despite their recent success. This led to another split in the party with Philippot leaving the FN and forming the rival Les Patriotes party, once again splitting the vote base within the party (European Progressive Studies, 99). This split seems to be more serious than past however, as it has led Marine Le Pen to determine that the FN brand has become too polarizing, and thus on June 1st 2018, the party voted to rebrand itself as the National Rally (Alduy). While the party has bounced back from defeats, backlash, and splits before, it has never

felt the need to change its name, or change leaders. However now Marine Le Pen seems to have lost most of her symbolic and political capital, so much so that she felt the need to re-brand the party. While things look grim for the FN for the present, the anti-immigrant stances it espoused are still wildly popular in France, and the FN still has strong electoral bases in small and mid-sized southern French cities.

Rhetoric

It can be said that the FN were the originators of populist attacks on the EU, as it was Le Pen who first began criticizing the EU in terms of disrupting democratic power, often referring to the EU elite as the “monster in Brussels” (Venho, 14). Marine Le Pen carried on this attack on the EU, calling forcefully for a French exit from the EU in the wake of Brexit. In this way, the FN set the tone that the FPO and LN would follow, claiming that their national government has sold out the country to the EU elites, who often take power away from the people and do not represent their interests. Thus the FN calls for the disillusion of the Union, and for the power held in the EU to be given back to the people. In this way the FN attempts to construct an identity of the ‘other’ centered around the EU, as the extra-national force constraining French democracy. Before Marine Le Pen took control of the party, Jean-Marie Le Pen would often attack the establishment parties as part of the ‘other’ as well, calling them the “gang of four” and the “system candidates,” names that imply corruption, and loyalty to the establishment rather than the people (Stockemer, 17). FN slogans such as “Le Pen, Le Peuple” make the narrative that the FN is the only party willing or capable of taking back power from the elites, as Le Pen is the only one who can accurately claim to represent the people, and can give them back their power. Furthermore, the FN claims to represent the “little

people” and the “forgotten members” against the political “caste” (Judis). In these messages, we can see the claim of sole representation that characterizes populist actors.

The FN also constructs the identity of the ‘other’ in terms of immigrants, with a particular emphasis on Muslim immigrants, who they say have values antithetical to French culture. Le Pen (both of them) has consistently characterized periods of increased immigration in France as “invasions,” painting them as the enemy of the French people, and as those who do not belong in France. Often the FN ties in its anti-immigrant messages to its attack on the establishment, saying the established parties, or more recently the EU, facilitate this attack on French culture and sovereignty. In these ways the FN constructs on identity of the people based on their nationality, and in opposition to outside influences such as immigrants and the EU.

Voter Composition

One of the biggest predictors for FN voting is anti-immigration sentiment. Although the French people generally hold anti-immigration sentiments, 99% of FN voters believe that there are too many foreigners in France, with 94% believing that French values are incompatible with Islam (De Lange, 49). This shows that the overwhelming majority of FN voters share in the party’s anti-immigrant stances, proving that to be one of the defining issues for the party, and the main way in which FN voters identify with each other. This is backed up by FN supporters consistently putting immigration and security as the issues they care the most about (Alduy). The FN has also taken great lengths to portray itself as the champions of the low-income workers and lower-educated people, particularly from the countryside. In the 1995 presidential election where Jean-Marie Le Pen garnered 15% of the votes, 30% of that came from the

working class and another 25% came from the unemployed (Venho, 16). Thus around half of FN supporters are on the lower income spectrum. This fits in with the FN's claim to represent those left behind by the establishment. The FN also appeals disproportionately to men, with men consisting of 60% of all FN voters (Venho, 16). Even under the new leadership of Marine Le Pen, men continue to make up the main part of the FN electorate.

It is also important to note that the French, among all countries in Europe, are more likely to respond that they have little confidence in government, or little hope that their life will be better in five years than it is today, with around 40% of the French electorate responding in affirmative to those statements (Friedman). Additionally, 70% of French voters feel disaffected with the government, 64% feel discouraged, and 43% respond that they feel both (Friedman). These statistics reflect the view that for many French people today the political system is widely perceived to be failing, with some saying that "we don't have a sense of equality—the rich get more than others, we don't have a sense of opportunity, we don't have good leaders, and we demand change" (Friedman). An electorate experiencing this level of disillusionment is especially susceptible to populist actors who claim to give power back to the people and claim that they alone can make democracy more personal and give people a greater degree of choice.

Immigration

As mentioned earlier, the French electorate responded more negatively to immigration than other European countries. Anti-Islamic sentiment was particularly high among the French populace, with around two-thirds of French respondents declaring themselves opposed to the construction of mosques, and 60% supporting a

ban on the construction of minarets (Malone, 48). With none of the mainstream countries sufficiently playing to these views, the FN saw the opportunity to adopt the issues for themselves, and wove the issue into their populist discourse. As shown before, with nearly 100% of all FN supporters holding anti-immigrant sentiments, it is clear that immigration was one of the central issues for the party. This can be seen in how the party achieved an uptick in success, going from around 1% in the 70s, to 10% of the vote in 1982, right around the time the party began politicizing the topic of immigration (Venho, 15).

The early 1980s in France signified the start of the Mitterrand government, who eased immigration regulations and enforcement measures as well as doing away with obstacles to reuniting immigrant families (Stockemer, 14). These measures gradually led to an increase in the number of French mosques (going from around a dozen in the 70s to almost 1,000 by the end of the 80s) leading to a level of religious pluralism that did not sit well with conservatives and traditional Catholics. Furthermore, by the 1980s North African immigrants had become a noticeable minority within French society, going from only 2.3% of the foreign population in 1946 to around 38.5% of all immigrants (Stockemer, 14). These developments created concerns over potential rising crime and housing costs in France, and many conservatives feared that these immigrants would be unable to adapt, or actively undermine French values. It was in this atmosphere of unease that the FN first began to politicize the immigration issue, and gained their first significant electoral results. This was achieved through linking the immigration issue with crime and unemployment, as well as conflating the issue with their anti-establishment rhetoric, specifically attacking Mitterrand's policies as to blame

for the situation. In this way, the FN first began to develop their discourse of an exclusionary community, emphasizing the differing identities of the French electorate, especially between natives and immigrants. It was this strategy that helped the FN achieve significant electoral victory in the town of Dreux, where there had been a steady string of immigrants pouring in since the 1960s, creating tensions with the local French population. From this base the FN was able to expand and become a real threat to the mainstream political parties, always outperforming them in areas where immigration and security were prime issues. Thus it was the politicization of the immigration issue that was one of the prime contributing factors that helped the FN achieve prominence and success, as it was the main issue that set the party apart from the “cosmopolitan” perspective that dominated French politics during the Mitterrand era.

With the FN tying itself to the issue of immigration, events that further polarize the issue of immigration often result in increased success for the FN. Many have attributed the renewed success of the FN from 2015 onwards from the January 2015 terrorist attack on the Charlie Hebdo newspaper agency, which resulted in the debate over immigration and the refugee crisis taking over French politics. The FN was able to tap into the anti-immigration sentiment of the country and turn it into unprecedented political success for them. Even as the party’s success began backsliding in 2018 its anti-immigrant ideas became widespread throughout France, with a January 2018 poll showing that 63% of French respondents felt that “there are too many immigrants in France,” with 56% against the tradition of *jus solis* granting French citizenship at 18 for children born to foreign nationals (Alduy). While these ideas are beginning to become

widespread nationally, in areas where anti-Arab sentiment has always been prevalent, such as in the southern French town of Frejus, the FN has always done well. Even in the late 1990s, when Jean-Marie Le Pen was beginning to lose popularity, the FN still obtained 25% of the vote in Frejus (Alduy). When Marine Le Pen began to surge in popularity in 2014, the party obtained 46% of the state's electorate. This shows that in areas with high anti-immigrant sentiment, the FN enjoys deep-seated support from those who feel their values and way of life are under attack. With the possibility of 'Frexit' seeming less and less likely, immigration remains on top of the party's agenda.

The Economy

Initially the FN held similar neoliberal economic views with the LN and FPO, advocating for the shrinking of the public sector and the minimization of state intervention (Stockemer, 11). This helped set the FN apart from the socialist government of Mitterrand, who they began to seriously contest in the 1980s and throughout the 1990s. Mitterrand entered the French government on the back of a lingering economic crisis that had persisted from the 1970s into the early 1980s. This crisis was caused by two oil shocks in the 1970s that left more than 1.5 million French citizens unemployed (Stockemer, 14). To combat this situation Mitterrand implemented a neo-Keynesian economic policy of nationalizing several industries and banks to create 150,000 public sector jobs, while offering loans and subsidies to companies and raising wages and welfare benefits (Stockemer, 14). While this helped get some of the French population back to work it also resulted in a large government budget deficit, as well as reduced profit of French companies, which stifled investment and job creation and reduced France's competitiveness in the international market. In the end, Mitterrand's

policies increased unemployment, rather than reduced it. Thus by offering a competing economic vision, the FN was able to set itself in opposition to the failed economic policies of the main government party while tapping into the resentment created by the economic crisis.

However, by the end of the 1990s, and the onset of globalization, the FN responded by shifting their economic stances to more anti-neoliberal positions. The FN decided to focus on policies that helped the needs of the poor, increasing wages for workers, and also advocating for “economic nationalism” or policies that focused on national preference and protectionism, ensuring that French companies and institutions would be favored by the French government and ensure that they were protected from globalizing influences (Stockemer, 19). With these policies, the FN claimed they could create a “third way” between liberalism and socialism, declaring their economic positions were neither “Left nor Right” but “French” (Stockemer, 19). This left commentators with a hard time defining the new position of the FN headed by Marine Le Pen, as socially they leaned right, but now with their new redistributive and protectionist economic policies, they were beginning to lean left on economic issues. This of course only helped the FN in their goal to do away with the distinction between Left and Right and redraw the political sphere in terms of the people vs. the elites, especially the globalizing elites who were threatening French industry. Like before with Mitterrand, this switch in positions helped set the FN apart from current president Hollande, who many blamed for the current economic crisis as well as record high unemployment. Thus the economic policies of the FN seem malleable, open to change whenever they feel it is necessary to set themselves more apart from the parties in power, and help

appeal more to the people they are trying to mobilize. This has helped the party to garner support in times of economic crises, where it is easier to present the current policies of the government as failing, and provide an alternative solution that they claim will be more beneficial to the people of France.

European Union

The National Front is often attributed with writing the book on Euroscepticism. They were the first party to popularize the method of lumping the European Union in the populist conception of the ‘other’ and accusing their national government of prioritizing the interests of the EU over their own people. While the LN and FPO were initially pro-EU, the FN, due to their fascist and isolationist roots, have always been against the EU. This anti-EU position became especially articulated beginning in the 1990s, when French fears about an impending monetary union led to declining support for the EU, prompting the FN to modify its “us/them” discourse to include the EU elites (Stockemer, 20). Continuing into the 20th century, Marine Le Pen especially has been critical of the EU, referring to the EU elites as the “Monsters in Brussels” and strongly advocating for ‘Frexit’ or the leaving of France from the EU, as well as a suspension of France’s involvement in the Schengen Agreement (Venho, 14). The FN posits that with France free of the influence of the EU, the country would be able to focus more efficiently on their internal issues, as well as have more control over who is allowed into the country. This last point has become an especially important point advocated for by the FN, as in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attacks the FN has insisted that the EU does not take enough action in determining who is allowed to enter Europe.

These incidents are what make the FN feel bold enough to call for the abolition of the Schengen zone, or at least France's exit from it.

However, this focus on EU opposition has at some points led to dissonance between the FN and its supporters. While the FN was able to capitalize on the widespread anti-immigration sentiment throughout the country, most French citizens actually showed a preference to staying in the Union and retaining the euro, thus putting a cap on how many people the FN could appeal to with this position (European Progressive Studies, 97). Additionally, the FN was unable to provide a plan for what would happen after France exits the EU, and with the French populace having time to see how Britain has struggled following its decision to exit the EU, this inability to provide an alternative hurt Marine Le Pen in her debates with Macron, and led to decreased support for the FN overall. Thus following the 2017 French presidential election, it is unsurprising the Marine Le Pen has backed away from her Frexit position, and has begun to reinforce anti-immigration policies as the central issue for the party.

Gatekeeping Issues

Similar with what happened to the FPÖ in Austria, establishment political actors have been quite effective in rallying together to prevent FN victories. Most notably in the 2017 French presidential election, defeated conservative candidate Francois Fillon called on his supporters to vote for Emmanuel Macron, despite his ideological stances being closer to that of Le Pen's (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 68). This was primarily due to Fillon's belief that, although he disagreed with several of Macron's positions, he saw him as less of a threat to France's democracy than Le Pen and the FN. While it is estimated that only half of Fillon's supporters followed him in supporting Macron, it

was enough to make a significant difference in the election. This strategy was a similar one employed by the socialists in the 2015 parliamentary elections where they withdrew poorly polling candidates so as to not split the anti-FN vote, allowing Republican candidates to beat out the FN in several key districts (Ray). These events are just some examples in a long history of establishment parties treating the FN as a political pariah, and refusing to work with them at all levels, national, as well as regional and local. In this way the exclusion of the FN from French politics has been more complete than the attempted exclusion of the FPÖ from Austrian politics. However, despite this, the FN has been able to slowly grow their electoral strength over the decades.

The biggest move by the political establishment that has kept the FN from achieving significant political power has undoubtedly been the move from PR electoral rules to a two-round runoff in 1988. On the presidential level, this has meant that the FN has been effectively shut out, only making it to the second round twice in the party's history, and both times being soundly defeated. On the parliamentary level, although the FN had traditionally received support from around 10% of the electorate, often netting them a few seats, with the first past the post system, no FN members had enough support in their districts to make it to the runoff, and in the course of one election the FN went from 35 seats in the National assembly, to just 1 (Malone, 45). This issue has persisted for the FN into the 2010s, as even though it is more popular now than it is in the 80s, it was only able to receive two seats in the 2012 Parliamentary elections, despite being supported by 13% of the electorate. For a look at how well the FN could be doing if the voting rules had stayed in PR, one only has to look at how well they perform in EU parliament elections. Although EU elections in France often have lower turnout than

main ones, and can often be more open to protest voting, the consistent 20% the FN achieves in these elections, more than any of the main parties, has made them the largest French party in the EU parliament (Malone, 59). Again, while EU elections cannot be expected to be indicative of national elections, one cannot help but imagine the FN would achieve similar results if the national French elections had stuck with PR rules.

In addition to the change in voting rules, the FN faces issues in financing campaigns, as French banks are often unwilling to loan them money (European Progressive Studies, 100). This leads the FN to obtain campaign finances from foreign banks, most often Russia, which often promotes backlash from the French populace who worry about Russian political meddling. From these actions then, it would seem that unlike in Italy and Austria, the French political establishment was actually successful in working together to keep the FN from power. However, these successes were not without their costs. Most notably, the Mitterrand government's move from PR to two-round runoff rules, while successful in limiting the success of the FN for the next several decades, did nothing to stem support for them, and only increased the disillusionment for some that the electoral games were fair and balanced, and that they had equal opportunity for their voices to be heard. It also added fuel to the fiery rhetoric of the FN in denouncing the political establishment as corrupt and rigging the governmental rules. Additionally, the French government was not immune to its share of scandals, such as a corruption scandal in the mid-90s that led to a revitalization of the FN following their defeat in 1988. This shows that efforts at gatekeeping against populist parties, even when successful, can have unintended consequences. While the

FN seems defeated now, their rhetoric of anti-immigration and establishment corruption still resonates with the French populace.

Conclusions

Of the issues analyzed, immigration seems to be the most salient in understanding the FN's political success. Although the FN has never achieved prominent positions in government, it has been able to put issues of immigration and multiculturalism at the center of French public debate, and in some instances has forced mainstream parties to adopt more restrictive immigration practices. Thus it can be said that the FN is particularly adept at waging a war of ideas. This can be seen as far back as 1981, where the mainstream UDF and RPR parties revised their platforms to adopt more aggressive and radical stances on immigration in order to appeal to FN voters (Stockemer, 15). While this did allow for the UDF and RPR to siphon off some of the FN's electoral support, it also legitimized the FN as its ideas were now becoming accepted by more people. This can be seen again in 2012 when French Prime Minister Nicolas Sarkozy abandoned his proposal to create a law that would have given foreign residents the right to vote in local elections, in order to appeal to FN voters (Malone, 50). The fact that Sarkozy and his party shifted positions just before the election shows that although it was effectively barred from power, the FN was still able to exert influence on the political agenda. Indeed, one can see that today in France, several key items from the National Front's political platform are now accepted and embraced by a majority of the French population, as well as copied by some mainstream political parties. This can be seen in polls from January 2018 that indicate that over half of French citizens believe there are too many immigrants in France (Alduy). In June of that year, the center-right

Republican party released pamphlets with the slogan “For a France that remains France,” a saying lifted directly from Marine Le Pen’s speeches (Alduy). Thus while the FN may currently be facing electoral setbacks, its anti-immigrant appeals are stronger than ever. This, along with the FN seeing most electoral gains in times of increased fears about immigration, such as in the early 1980s and in 2015, shows that immigration issues are the single most important issues to the success of the FN.

In terms of economic issues, the FN would often change their economic policies to set them in opposition to the policies of the ruling parties. Thus, in times of economic downturn and high unemployment the party was able to offer an alternative to the failing economic policies of the government. The recent change to more redistributive, some might say leftist economic policies has helped the FN further blur the distinction between left and right, which makes it easier for them to push their articulation of the political field as being an antagonistic relationship between the people and the ‘others.’ Thus the FN has used economic conditions to increase their support and strengthen their populist rhetoric. In this way economics is an important issue for understanding the strength and success of the FN, but not quite as much as the immigration issue is. In terms of Euroscepticism, out of all of the political actors analyzed in this paper, the FN is the most active in using anti-EU rhetoric, with Frexit taking a central position on the party’s platform in the lead-up to the 2017 elections. However, at times this focus on the issue has hurt the party, as it has not been able to offer a credible alternative to EU participation, and it has alienated some of the French populace who prefer to stay in the EU and keep the euro. Thus while at times it has been beneficial for the FN to politicize

the EU issue, and include EU elites in their construction of the 'other' identity, overall it seems to have done more harm than good for the party.

Finally, unlike the LN, M5S, and FPO, the FN has never achieved electoral success to the extent that it has become a governing member of the country. While one could point to the frequent splits within the party as a cause of this, the FPO experienced a similar split, losing its influential leader Jorg Haider, and was still able to re-stabilize in a manner of 5 years and is now in another governing coalition. Thus splits within the party do not necessarily condemn the party to decreased success. Instead, unlike in Italy and Austria, the French establishment has used their gatekeeping powers to great effect in keeping the FN from power, most notably with the move from PR voting rules to a two-round runoff. This has ensured the FN remains shut out of the National Assembly, despite their increasing support. The two round system has also allowed opportunity for the French political establishment to rally against the FN the couple of times it has made it to the second round. Thus, unlike in Austria where the OVP has often broken rank to align itself with the FPO, the French political establishment has remained strong in its commitment to not work with the FN at any level of government. While these tactics can often be double edged swords, as it fuels the populist argument that the political establishment is corrupt and rigging the rules of the system, thus far the French political establishment has been successful in rallying enough anti-FN support that their articulation of the political sphere remains dominant over that of the FNs. With commitment to containment, and no widespread corruption scandals as seen in Italy, the French political establishment has used its gatekeeping powers to keep the FN out of power, thus diminishing its success.

4.4: The United States of America

Unlike the other countries analyzed, the USA, with its two-party system, has never had any successful or significant populist parties, outside of a couple in the late 19th century. While those parties will be discussed, the majority of this analysis will focus on populist figures and movements rather than political parties.

History

One of the earliest populist political parties in the US was the Know Nothings group, which formed in 1849 (Judis). The Know Nothings grew out of a Protestant secret society known as the Order of the Star Spangled Banner, and campaigned vigorously against immigrants, especially those of Roman Catholic beliefs. For the Know nothings, later renamed the American party, this influx of German and Irish immigrants posed a threat to the native-born Protestant Americans. Thus the Know Nothing's articulated a populist-nativist discourse that constructed the identity of the people around nationality and religion, claiming that all those who did not meet these criteria were not true Americans and undeserving of representation or citizenship. The American Party did well in the state of Massachusetts, gaining a majority in the legislature, before being split by the issue of slavery, and eventually dissolving (Judis).

The next prominent populist party formed in 1892, and was called the Populist Party, or People's Party. The Populist Party is often credited with developing the logic of populism, that is constructing the concept of a "people" arrayed against political and cultural elites that refused to grant necessary reforms that were in the interests of the people (Judis). Their conception of the people was relatively straightforward, as it was often the working people whose interests were not being represented by the political

elite. For the Populist party, the “people” were often understood as farmers, those that worked the land and produced all the goods of society, and the elite were bankers and politicians from the Northeast who produced nothing, yet sought to extort the farmers through high credit loans (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 23). While the American Party had often used anti-Semitic and racist rhetoric in their conceptions of the people, the populist party did not draw distinction on ethnic or religious natures, but rather based their identity of the people around geographical and occupational signifiers. Thus the Populist party’s conception of the people was much more open than that of the Know Nothings. Women often played large roles within the party, often organizing the meetings and writing out the party platforms, and the party also strove to represent the economic interests of the southern black population (Judis). With the party having such open social inclusion, the party mainly focused on economic issues, supporting a ban on foreign land ownership, state control of the railroads and shortened work days (Judis).

In this way, the populists were the first to call for government to regulate industries that were integral to the economy. The Populists insisted that the government reduce the economic inequality that capitalism, left unchecked, was creating, and wanted to give more power to the people, rather than the businesses, in determining the outcome of elections (Judis). Thus the Populist party articulated the idea that there were undemocratic institutions that were corrupting the political establishment and taking power away from the people in order to consolidate it in the hands of the few. This mode of articulating the political sphere can be seen in the many strains of populism seen today, especially on attacks against the EU and more left-leaning populist strains. This discourse was influential in its time as well, as progressive Democrats were often

forced to shift some of their stances to maintain competitiveness with the populists, and much of the populist agenda was eventually incorporated in the FDR's New Deal (Judis). Thus, much like populism today, the 19th century populist party sought to pushback against the dominant economic order of the time, as both dominant parties had accepted it, and were not representing those left behind by it. In this case it was often the agricultural and lower class workers who were especially open to exploitation by the power large businesses had over them.

The populist party, like the Know Nothings before them, often struggled over the issue of race equality, as although their economic policies focused on improving conditions for all races, this often led to accusations by their southern white supporters that they were advocating for racial equality, and thus the party tacitly endorsed Jim Crow laws, despite them being in conflict with the party's principals of empowering the common people. The Populist Party however had no issues calling for the expulsion of Chinese immigrants, who had been brought over by businesses to provide cheap labor on western farms and railroads (Judis). Thus while their populist rhetoric was often directed upwards, it was not free of racist rhetoric. In the 1892 elections, the party did surprisingly well. Despite being underfunded compared to other parties, the populists were able to field James Weaver for president, and were able to win 22 electoral votes, roughly 10% of the vote, and elect four congressmen, 21 state executives, and 464 legislators (Judis). Its success, however, was isolated to the deep south, and their inability to appeal to voters beyond their base led to a rapid decline, ending with the party folding in 1908.

While there would not be political parties that formed around populist rhetoric again until the 21st century with the Tea Party movement, the 20th century saw a host of individual political actors who used populist rhetoric to great effect. Senator Huey Long and Father Charles Coughlin are notable early 20th century examples of American populists, and some have claimed that Joseph McCarthy could be classified as populist as well. These populist actors were able to reform American populism away from its progressive roots, and towards a more conservative logic of the people being the common and patriotic “real” Americans from the heartland who were being oppressed by the “liberal elite” of the coastal areas who supported “un-American” socialist ideas (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 24). They also formulated the idea of a racialized underclass who were being favored by the elite. Thus the real people were caught between the elite mooching off their hard work and redistributing their wealth to a non-white underclass who kept them in power.

This new conservative populist logic paved the way for who was without a doubt the most important populist actor for the United States in the 20th century, Alabama governor George Wallace. Wallace drew on populist rhetoric to construct an identity of the “true” white American populace and pitted them against the corrupt government establishment who were enfranchising Southern blacks at the expense of white, native citizens. In this way Wallace was able to tap into the resentment some white southerners felt towards Civil rights era integration policies. This tactic proved quite effective for Wallace who was able to garner 42 percent of the vote in the Democratic presidential primaries of 1964, and carried five states in the south (Lowndes, 164). When Wallace began running once again for the 1968, he enjoyed support from around 40% of

Americans. However, without being accepted by the Democratic party Wallace was forced to run as an independent, thus splitting the vote for him, resulting in him only gaining 13.5% of the vote (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 46). This was strong for a third party candidate, but not nearly enough to win the presidency. Despite never obtaining higher office, the anger and resentment Wallace was able to tap into drove more moderate politicians to use his language, most notably Richard Nixon, who coined the term “silent majority” to refer to his supporters as the majority of real Americans who were being silenced by the liberal elite (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 24). While not a true populist in that the antagonistic dimension of the people vs the elite never became the centerpiece of his campaign, Nixon was still able to borrow Wallace’s rhetoric to draw various ethnicities into a white political identity that was opposed to further racial equality (Lowndes, 163). After Wallace called for a referendum to prohibit bussing, two days later Nixon, who had so far been silent on the issue, called on federal courts to bar orders for new bussing (Lowndes, 164). But perhaps the biggest benefactor of Wallace’s rhetoric was Jimmy Carter, another Southern Democrat who painted himself as a stranger to DC, an enemy of bureaucracy, and a self-proclaimed populist.

In the 21st century, two main populist movements emerged out of the 2008 financial recession and the resulting government bailout. The more prominent and long lasting movement became known as the Tea Party movement. The origins of the tea party movement can be traced back to mid-February of 2009, when CNBC reporter Rick Santelli ranted against the Obama administration’s mortgage plan, declaring “the government is rewarding bad behavior” and inviting all real American capitalists to a “Chicago Tea Party” to protest the administrations’ policies (Williamson, 26). This call

resulted in online conservative activists to organize anti-establishment protests over the internet, adopting the name of “Tea Party” for their protests. While the Tea Party was initially a small grassroots movement mostly organized at the local region online by bloggers such as Keli Carender (known online as the “Liberty Bell”) and groups such as the Tea Party Patriots, the movement soon found rich backers in the form of right-wing think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, FreedomWorks, and of course the Koch Brothers’ John Birch Society (Williamson, 28). Thus, despite the movements anti-establishment, localized roots, the group also has close ties with pro-business conservative Astroturf groups.

However, most early Tea Party activists were unaware of the movement’s connections to FreedomWorks or other free-market organizations promoting them, and those that were tended to distance themselves from these organizations, as many considered them to be a part of the corrupt elite. This split within the group began to widen as the Tea Party became more closely associated with the Republican Party due to the common connections between the two created by the Astroturf groups (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 49). This caused the more populist parts of the movement to turn away from national campaigns and focus more on regional battles in the Midwest and South. Thus, while these organizations are bankrolling the movement, they do not appear to be central to identity-building and mobilization of Tea Partiers at the local level (Williamson, 29). Due to these diverging groups, the term Tea Party candidate can be somewhat amorphous, as the group entails a diversity of causes ranging from libertarian to social conservative to religious fundamentalist to at times even white supremacist (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 49). This is what has allowed for a wide arrange of individuals

from Rand Paul to Michelle Bachman to Glenn Beck to claim Tea Party leadership, as all enjoy wide ranging support as well as opposition from within the movement. Despite these fractures the Tea Party has been successful in playing a major role during Republican primaries, either electing their own candidates or pushing more establishment Republican figures further to the right. In this way the Tea Party has been able to increase the populist representation within the Republican party.

The other main 21st century American populist movement was the Occupy movement, a series of protests against Wall-street and the “1%.” The Occupy movement could be seen as a return to the American populist roots of the populist party, as the movement constructed a broad definition of “the people” to basically include all those who could not be called the economic or political elite, with the mainstream media elite also being included in the group’s conception of “the elite.” This movement was primarily a reaction against the 2008 financial recession, with the main claim of the movement being that the economic elites, the 1%, had caused the crisis and was now using its government influence to bail themselves out at the expense of the ordinary working people who had been negatively affected by the incident. While the movements’ populist message was a bit weaker than other groups, as since it did not form a party it never had the claim to sole representation that George Wallace or the Tea Party developed, it still articulated a clear message of a corrupt elite taking advantage of the common people. In the view of the Occupy movement, as long as the government gave into the demands of the 1%, they could not claim to be true representatives of the people.

Finally, US populism saw its first great success in the election of Donald Trump to the presidency in 2016. Capitalizing on his high-profile celebrity status, and the groundwork laid by the Tea Party in polarizing the Republican electorate around issues of immigration and other social issues, Trump was able to use his outsider status to offer an alternative to the usual political establishment that he claimed no longer represented the interests of the real American people. Throughout his campaigns Trump often used rhetoric and tactics that were very reminiscent of George Wallace. However much had changed in American politics between the time of Wallace and Trump. Essentially the two-party system had become much more polarized, with Democrats and Republicans increasingly seeing each other less as political adversaries, and more as embittered rivals, with both seeing the ideas of the other as destructive for the country. Several events contributed to this increased polarization, most significantly, the political shift that began around the end of the 1960s. This political shift can be said to have come about with the passage of the civil rights and voting rights act and the full democratization of the south. Up until this point, from the beginning of reconstruction, political bipartisanship had to some extent been sustained by racial exclusion, with the Compromise of 1877 allowing for the passage of Jim Crow laws which allowed Southern Democrats to hold on to their political power. The ideological proximity of Southern Democrats and conservative Republicans often served to reduce polarization and reduce bipartisanship, as the two parties were often big tents, ideologically speaking, hosting several viewpoints under their platform (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 143). However, this was kept at the cost of civil rights being kept off of the political agenda. Thus when John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson after him began passing the civil

rights acts, and thus finally democratizing the south, many southern democrats, swayed by the arguments of Nixon and Raegan, went over to the Republican camp, while many of the newly enfranchised black voters went Democrat. This began a gradual process of polarization where Democrats and Republicans began to be completely split ideologically between the left and right and not just economic issues, but now social issues as well.

It wasn't long before some political actors began to take advantage of the newly polarized climate. Newt Gingrich famously ascended to the status of speaker of the house by employing tactics of non-cooperation and over the top rhetoric in attacking the Democratic majority. By polarizing certain issues to mobilize the Republican base, Gingrich and his followers were able to capture an unprecedented landslide victory for the GOP, giving them their first House majority in over forty years (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 148). This success resulted in the party pulling into Gingrich's tactics, rather than being repelled by them. Soon the Senate as well began to be transformed by so called "Gingrich Senators" whose aversion to compromise and willingness to obstruct legislation began to polarize that chamber as well. House Republicans' unwillingness to compromise on such things as budget negotiations soon led to several government shutdowns in the mid-1990s. Perhaps the most brazen political move committed by the Gingrich house was the impeachment proceedings of President Clinton. Without bipartisan support House Republicans knew that Clinton would not be convicted, and thus the act can be seen as more a symbolic act of defiance. Thus the impeachment process was used as just another weapon in partisan warfare. In this way Gingrich began the gradual transformation of American politics into one in which people often

presumed the good will of their opponents, to one where the other side is treated as bad and immoral.

This process continued under the Presidency of Georg W. Bush, who, at the counsel of his political advisors such as Karl Rove, began to govern hard to the right, abandoning all pretenses of bipartisanship (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 152). This represented a fundamental shift in political strategy, as Republican officials now believed that the electorate had become so polarized that they could win elections by mobilizing their own base rather than seeking support from more moderate voters. This resulted in polarization among the Democratic side as well, as Senate Democrats began their own obstructionist policies by rejecting an unprecedented amount of Bush's judicial nominees. This cycle of increased polarization led to Texas Republican house majority leader Tom DeLay to carry out radical out-of-cycle redistricting plans that were solely aimed at partisan advantage by gerrymandering African American and Latino voters into small numbers of Democratic districts while adding Republican voters to the districts of white incumbent Democrats, ensuring their defeat (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 154). While gerrymandering had been practiced before, often to split the vote of African Americans, it now increasingly began to be used by both sides around this time.

Partisan infighting reached its peak following the 2008 election of President Barack Obama, who many on the far-right denounced as Marxist, anti-American, and secretly Muslim. While populism before had been constrained to the margin of American politics, following 2008, populist attacks on President Obama, claiming he was an illegitimate leader who did not accurately represent the true American people, began to be embraced by establishment politicians. Particularly Sarah Palin, who had been given

a platform through being John McCain's vice presidential pick in 2008, embraced the narrative that Obama was "palling around with the terrorists" and called on the Republican Party to embrace the Tea Party Movement (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 157). Thus, by the end of the Obama presidency, many Republicans had embraced the view that their Democratic rivals were a threat to the American way of life. President Obama himself began to give into polarizing tendencies in the form of increased executive mandates, which allowed him to implement policy through bypassing congress (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 163). This resulted in further polarizing acts by Republicans such as the unprecedented events of 47 Republican senators writing an open letter to Iran's government saying President Obama had no authority to negotiate with them, and the blocking of Obama's 2016 Supreme Court nominee Merrick Garland, the first time since Reconstruction that a president had been barred from fulfilling a supreme court vacancy (Livetsky Ziblatt, 166).

What all of these actions show is that since the 1960s and the heyday of George Wallace, populist rhetoric has moved from the fringe of American politics and has entered into the heart of the major political parties. Over the last 50 years, Republicans and Democrats have ceased to view themselves as competing parties sorted into liberal and conservative camps. Now divided by race, religious belief, and even geography, the two dominant political parties now seem to represent two different ways of life. While polarization has affected both parties, it seems to have especially changed the face of the Republican party, whose organizational core and party leadership has seemed to hollow out over the past 25 years (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 223). Aside from outside pressure caused by the Tea Party and Fox News Media, changes in campaign finance laws has

allowed the rise of well-funded outside groups such as the Koch brothers to dictate policy agenda for many elected GOP officials, thus giving them more power over Republican officials than the party's own leadership.

This is what has allowed for an outside force such as Donald Trump to take control of the party. Trump has been able to take advantage of the fatigue and anger voters feel towards the political system and the constant partisan bickering that has begun to define it, and offer himself as a true alternative to the system. Trump has also profited from the increased polarization by doubling down on hardline conservative stances such as anti-immigration and promises to implement more tax cuts and economic protectionism to save jobs from going overseas. Thus Trump has positioned himself to make the claim that the current political establishment no longer works, that its leaders are ineffective and illegitimate, and that he alone can make America great again. In this way Trump articulates the populist assertion to complete representation, as in his view, only he can truly claim to represent the American people. Trump also has used his construction of the people to paint his supporters as the true Americans, with those against him being the undeserving, immigrants, and part of the corrupt Democratic establishment or mainstream media. In this way Trump engages in the populist articulation of claiming that only his supporters deserve representation as they are the true Americans. While other presidential nominees such as Nixon and Carter have borrowed the populist discourse of dividing the political sphere between the people and the other, Trump is the first modern candidate to win the presidency by focusing solely on these dividing tactics of pitting himself and his supporters against the rest of the political establishment. This can be seen in his denouncing of his opponent Hillary Clinton and critical media

coverage as illegitimate (or “fake”), in his promise to deport immigrants and other non-real Americans, and in his claim that he alone is the person that can fix the country. At a time when the populist rhetoric of denouncing the other side as illegitimate has taken hold of America politics, Trump seemed uniquely situated to take advantage of the polarized climate. Thus Trump’s ascendancy to the White House can be seen as the single biggest triumph of populism in America.

Rhetoric

The Populist party of the late 19th century is often credited with first articulating the discursive logic of dividing the political sphere between the people and the elites that would come to characterize populism throughout the next century. As the Populist party proclaimed when it nominated its candidate for president “We seek to restore the government of the Republic to the hands of ‘the plain people’ with whose class it originated...we believe that the powers of government—in other words, of the people—should be expanded...as rapidly and as far as the good sense of an intelligent people and the teachings of experience shall justify, to the end that oppression, injustice, and poverty shall eventually cease in the land” (Judis). From this statement we can see the Populist parties’ assertion that ultimate power belongs in the hands of ‘the plain people’ and that the failures of democracy are caused when the systems of power are unable to adequately express the will of the people, thus resulting in “oppression” and “injustice.” Thus here we can see the early beginnings of the populist mode of articulation that posits that the political sphere is divided between the people, and the elites who keep the people from power. Thus the early populist articulation puts the people, signified by those who worked the land, pitted against the elite, those who exploited the workers.

These identities were based around geographical and occupational identities, mainly of the good, rural farmers against the corrupt, urban bankers (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 23).

This line of populist rhetoric can be seen to be continued in the recent Occupy movement, which goes even broader in considering the economic and political elite as one homogenous group, that is in opposition to all working people (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 26).

Moving on to the 20th century, conservative populism mobilized to re-define the conception of the people and the elite. While the identities of the elite have changed from actor to actor, the other elements have stayed largely the same. In right-wing populism ranging from Joseph McCarthy all the way to Donald Trump, the discourse goes that “our way of life” is under attack by the “liberal elite” who use an oppressive federal state and expensive welfare state to stifle the values of the true people while providing “special privileges” to non-deserving minorities (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 25). We can see this the clearest in the rhetoric of George Wallace. Most accounts of George Wallace’s rhetoric focus on its racialized aspects, with his most famous quote being “segregation today, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever!” There is a reason for the use of this discourse, and it also ties in with populism. As Francisco Panizza explains “the populist leader who says what ‘we all secretly think but feel guilty about’ changes the rules of political discourse, and transforms what the hegemonic discourse regards as the irrational prejudice of uneducated people into part of the political agenda” (Panizza, 22). This idea of “saying what everyone is thinking” was used by Wallace to take the racial prejudice of white southerners and change it from appearing as backward bigotry into what being American is all about. By appearing as a public

figure who was willing to use such speech, Wallace was attempting to legitimize a vision of America that had no qualms about the marginalization of black people and the acceptance of the racial status quo. Instead of constructing his own identity of the people and the other, Wallace borrowed the dominant racial paradigm that was now being threatened by civil rights legislation, and articulated a discourse of true white Americans being under attack by corrupt elites who were favoring an undeserving racial underclass over them in order to take away the power of the people and keep themselves in charge. Thus, Wallace positioned himself as the symbolic figure of the white southerner under attack from the federal government.

From here, Wallace extended his rhetoric to encompass all of ‘middle America.’ This can be shown with Wallace’s assertions to be speaking for the ‘average citizen’ and the ‘common man’ which gave him the implicit authority to command a majoritarian bloc of the American electorate (Lowndes, 149). Central to these claims of representation for Wallace was the claim that these people, his supporters, were not being represented by current political leaders but instead had become marginalized and shut away from centers of power by recent civil rights policies. In this way, Wallace began to move away from embodying just the white southerner, and began to embody the broader symbol of the “white middle-class male from every region who is pushed around by an invasive federal government, threatened by crime and social disorder, discriminated against by affirmative action and surrounded by moral degradation” (Lowndes, 147). With this move from embodying the south to embodying the working man, Wallace strove to link the two together, making the white southerner stand in for the average American. In this way, Wallace argued his politics were southern because

the south was the most American region (Lowndes, 150). Thus when talking about issues such as school desegregation, and linking them to intrusive governmental authoritarianism, Wallace was able to link middle class Americans outside of the south with the image of the downtrodden white southerner. As Wallace argued, they were all oppressed by the same corrupt government.

In order to further appeal beyond his white southern base, Wallace also sought to bring in other ethnicities into his construction of the true white Americans, such as Albanians, Poles, Greeks, Italians and Germans. Before this, southern segregationists took pride in their southern heritage by noting the 'pure Anglo-Saxon pedigree' of the region (Lowndes, 156). But in order to gain more supporters, Wallace attempted to show the descendants of the most recent waves of immigration that they were included in the plight of the white southerner, and that he was defending their social and political statuses as well. In combining these disparate identities, Wallace attempted to create a single collective identity based on the shared interests of whites, who as Wallace claimed, were being betrayed by the federal government and made vulnerable to the newly empowered group of blacks (Lowndes, 156).

Another tactic Wallace used in his speeches was intentionally using a strong southern accent that at times cast him as a redneck and hillbilly in the eyes of the media. Wallace and his aides admitted that this use of vernacular was calculated, as this image of the uneducated hillbilly made him popular with white working class southern voters, and became symbolic of his distance from power and connection to the people (Lowndes, 162). In addition to this, Wallace campaign rallies would often feature calls for violence against protestors and other forms of disruption. This would take the form

of Wallace inviting protestors to shout at him, sometimes egging them on, as well as setting crowd members against each other (Lowndes, 157). These actions had the advantage of being shocking, and thus calling media attention to the events, and also giving a clear indication for the people attending the rallies who was part of the in-group, the people, and who belonged to the other. These actions performed the political division that Wallace spoke of, and helped give the appearance that he and his supporters are the real victims. With these calls to violence Wallace also reinforced the idea that the other side was not worthy of representation and did not need to be treated as respectful adversaries, but rather dangerous enemies who needed to be put in their place. This was necessary in further cementing the idea that Wallace's supporters were the average citizens. In order to be seen in this way their enemies had to be cast as the real outsiders, those who threatened the order and stability of America. By invoking violence against his protestors, Wallace empowered his supporters to see themselves as the real majority, and made them unafraid to stand up to what they saw as the 'outside forces' oppressing them.

Moving into the 21st century, the Tea Parties' main mode of discourse is used in backlash to what is seen as the elites' pushing of liberal values such as multiculturalism and same-sex marriage, that undermines traditional American, Christian values. There is concern expressed by the Tea Party that with the implementation of these values, especially the proliferation of immigration, that "the real people" mainly understood as white Protestants, will soon become a minority in their own country (Muller, 158). Thus for the Tea Party, there is a very real fear that "true Americans" that is those that still express what is thought to be the traditional Christian values of middle America, are

disappearing. Thus the populist mode of vocalizing an antagonistic discourse takes on a cultural element for the Tea Party, as it is not only their political power, but their very ways of life, that they view as coming under attack by the political elites. This leads many Tea Party members to conclude that current politicians “just don’t seem to care about the regular working person anymore” (Williamson, 34). Indeed, if the definition of “real Americans” are those who are native-born, English speaking, white, and Christian, then one can understand how “real Americans” can see themselves as declining, as immigration and increased secularization promises to change the look and belief of the majority of Americans in the near future. Ann Coulter succinctly vocalized the fears of Tea Partiers when she said, “The American electorate isn’t moving left—its shrinking” (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 174). The implication here is that only white Christians count as American, and these new arrivals count as something else. With views like this, it is understandable why slogans such as “Take Our Country Back” and “Make America Great Again” have such an appeal within certain demographics.

Tea Party rhetoric also aims at distinguishing between those who are worthy, and unworthy of government assistance. Tea Partiers often define themselves as workers, in opposition to “undeserving” groups seeking “handouts” from the federal government (Williamson, 26). The formation of these undeserving groups is often strongly influenced by racial and ethnic stereotypes, such as lazy immigrants, or welfare queens. This opposition to freeloading further reinforces the populist distinction of the Tea Party as being between true working class Americans, and the undeserving immigrant underclass that is being propped up by the government establishment at the expense of the true people. This is seen more clearly as a cultural designation rather than an

occupational one when it is considered that a third of tea party members in Massachusetts identify as students, unemployed, or retired, that is, non-workers (Williamson, 33). Even more nebulous is the idea of the nonworking or “freeloading” population. Tea Party members that are interviewed about who they define as the freeloading population often respond with anecdotes, such as nephews that have been on welfare their whole lives, or kids who claim they don’t need a job and can just live off welfare. Indeed, the non-working population in the minds of Tea Partiers are divided into two groups; young people and unauthorized immigrants (Williamson, 33). This shows that the idea of someone who is “working” is an implicit cultural category rather than a straightforward definition.

In the case of Donald Trump, his rhetoric can be seen as a successor to that of George Wallace’s, as he derides the corruption of the establishment while also linking it to the proliferation of immigration and the success of an undeserving racial underclass. Trump has been described as an “emotions candidate” often focusing on speeches that will elicit praising and strong emotions responses from his fans, rather than focusing on any detailed policy descriptions (Hokschild, 225). In this way Trump’s rhetoric is aimed at giving listeners an emotional, ecstatic high. One way of achieving this “high” is straight out of Wallace’s playbook of provoking protestors and setting his supporters against them. On more than one occasion, protestors at Trump rallies have been booed and heckled by his supporters, and in some extreme cases, struck and escorted from the premises. Trump would even speak of how he would pay the legal fees of supporters who sucker-punched protestors, saying “If you see somebody getting ready to throw a tomato, knock the crap out of them, would ya? Seriously. Just Knock the hell out of

them. I promise you I will pay the legal fees. I promise” (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 63). Like Wallace, this tactic is a measured one by the Trump campaign, as the group act of casting out “the bad ones” helps fans unite under a shared sense of being the “good ones” a united majority (Hokschild, 226). Also like Wallace, Trump’s speech bucks the trend of what conventional wisdom says a politician should sound like, and Trump has often been accused of using crude and vulgar language. However, this way of speaking is loved by his base, as it shows a willingness to throw off the “politically correct” attitudes set by the establishment, often meant as a set of ideas about how one should feel and speak regarding blacks, women, immigrants, and gays. Like Wallace before him, Trump’s use of “saying what everyone is thinking but is too guilty to say” allows him to legitimize the views of his constituency, setting them free in a sense to speak their minds. Through all these methods, Trump constructs an identity of the people based around those who feel that their outlooks and ways of life are no longer represented, or even respected, by mainstream society. Trump then provides a release for those views by articulating them, and directing them at the establishment.

Perhaps even more so than Wallace and other populist actors, Trump has been relentless in his denouncement of his political opponents as illegitimate, and how he alone deserves to represent the American people. This could be seen before the 2016 presidential campaign was even over, with Trump suggesting that he may not accept the results of the 2016 election, insinuating the outcome had already been determined by the political elites, and that millions of illegal immigrants and dead people would be mobilized to vote for Clinton (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 61). Trump also attacked Clinton’s legitimacy directly, declaring her a criminal and saying he would have a special

prosecutor investigate her after the election was over in an effort to send her to jail. These accusations were embraced by his supporters, who would sometimes chant “Lock her up” when Clinton was mentioned (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 62). These attacks served to paint the picture of the political establishment and Clinton as inherently corrupt and undeserving of representing the American people, and that any defeat of Trump would be illegitimate, and the result of corruption. In addition to this Trump would often threaten unfriendly media. This can be seen in an excerpt of a speech from him in Fort Worth Texas when he said of the Washington Post ““If I become president, oh, do they have problems. They are going to have such problems...I’m going to open up our libel laws so when they write purposely negative and horrible and false articles, we can sue them and win lots of money” (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 64). With these attacks and his frequent use of the term “fake news” Trump paints the picture of the media being complicit in government corruption and the campaign against him, giving the idea that all negative coverage of him is politically motivated. While many hope this rhetoric was just campaign talk, President Trump has kept up the attacks while in office, often referring to the media as “the enemy of the American people” (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 176). While in office, Trump has also sought to de-legitimize the judicial system, often attacking rulings against his legislation as an attack on the rule of law by “unelected judges” and threatening to break up Judicial circuits that repeatedly ruled against him (Livetsky, Ziblatt). These attacks, specifically the ones that point out the undemocratic nature of the judiciary, carry a strong populist logic of the democratic will of the people coming under attack from undemocratic sources.

Once again this populist tactic of discrediting the opposition can be seen to gain widespread political use with the emergence of Gingrich and his followers into Congress in the mid-1990s. Gingrich, like Trump later, often used over-the-top rhetoric, describing congress as “corrupt” and “sick” and questioning the patriotism of democrats, comparing them to fascists and accusing them of trying to “destroy our country” (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 148). Gingrich encouraged other Republicans to take up his rhetoric, distributing memos with lists of names to use in describing democrats, ranging from pathetic, sick, and bizarre to antflag, and traitors. Thus the tactic of defaming and de-legitimizing the opposition did not begin with Trump, he was just the most successful in bringing that rhetoric onto the campaign trail and using it to mobilize a loyal base. In this way, the particular strain of American populism defined by Gingrich and Trump focuses on de-legitimizing the opposition at any cost in the attempt to convince the populace that they are illegitimate actors unfit to represent the people. Along with this, Trump has piggybacked off of the usual conservative populist discourse that was used by Wallace and others, which not only attacks the establishment but emphasizes the presence of an undeserving racial underclass who do not share the same values but are favored by the political elites in order to keep them in power. For Wallace, this was primarily southern blacks, while Trump has most often directed this attack on Mexican immigrants. Another recurring populist mode of articulation in American politics is the kind taken up by the 19th century Populist party and the Occupy movement, which focus on the distinction between the working people and the economic elites who exploit them. However, with the ascendancy of Trump to the presidency, and the quick fizzling out of the Occupy movement, it seems that as of now,

the conservative mode of populism seems to hold more sway with the American electorate.

Voter Composition

Reports show that the typical profile of the Tea Party supporters are those that are older, white, and middle class. Indeed, an estimated 80-90 percent of Tea Partiers are white, with around 70-75 percent being over 45 years old (Williamson, 27). These findings are hardly surprising, as they fit in with the rhetoric of the Tea Party that seeks to fight for the rights of traditional Americans. This also fits in with the Tea Parties' tendency to racialize their classifications of who the "undeservings" are, as reports conducted have shown that "support for the Tea Party remains a valid predictor of racial resentment" (Williamson, 34). This is true even after considering ideology and partisanship, meaning that although many opponents of welfare spending tend to hold negative views of racial minorities, Tea Party supporters are still more likely to espouse more extreme views than the average conservative Republican. For example, Tea Partiers are more likely to agree with statements such as "If blacks would only try harder, they could be just as well off as whites" and disagree with statements like "generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class" (Williamson, 34).

While Trump often engages in populist rhetoric, he has also shown authoritarian tendencies in his willingness to bypass or discredit institutions that seek to constrain his power, such as the judiciary. Thus some of his support comes from voters who would prefer a stronger leader who does not feel constrained by the checks and balances of the system. These voters who respond positively to authoritarian tendencies often tend to be

among the lower educated, as shown by a 2011 poll which shows that 44 percent of US non-college graduates approved of “having a strong leader who doesn’t have to bother with congress or elections” (Norris). These sentiments show that there is a demand for more personal forms of democratic representation where the public feels more connected to their leader. This is a demand that populists such as Trump are happy to provide. This can also explain Trump’s appeal to emotions during his campaigning. He is attempting to give voters that more personal connection they desire.

However, it is more than race resentment and desires for a more direct democracy that has led voters to support Trump and the Tea Party. White, southern, middle class workers, who disproportionately represent the support for Trump and the Tea Party, are driven by what Arlie Hoxschild calls a “deep story.” Hoxschild defines a deep story as a “feels-as-if-story” that is a story told by feelings in language and symbols, removed from fact and judgement (Hoxschild, 135). Hoxschild explains that this story for Tea Party and Trump supporters can be summed up with the image of workers standing in a line that leads to the American Dream. The line used to be moving quickly but in recent times has stalled, while “line cutters,” mostly unemployed immigrants and other minorities are being jumped ahead of the line by the government, who say that these line cutters need extra assistance. However, from the perspective of these supporters, these line cutters are stealing their spots, unfairly being given advantage by the government even though the supporters have worked much harder. What’s more, these line cutters do not seem to hold the same values that they do, and now they have a president who seems to align more with the line cutters than the true Americans (Hoxschild, 140). The breaking point for most of these supporters is that they are being

told to feel sorry for these immigrants and minorities when they feel that their lives have been just as hard, and yet they don't feel the need to ask for handouts. Again, while this deep story is rooted in emotion rather than facts, there is still some basis for these feelings. For the bottom 90 percent of Americans, automation, off-shoring, and the growing power of multinational corporations has decreased the odds of them improving their conditions in the future, thus stalling the 'Dream Machine'. (Hokschild, 141). This has increased competition for jobs, and government funds. This shaky economic ground, along with immigration and the seeming ridicule of their stances on social issues such as abortion, gay marriage, gender roles, race, guns, and the confederate flag, have led these supporters to conclude that "there are fewer and fewer white Christians like us" (Hokschild, 221). Essentially these supporters have begun to feel that they are a besieged minority. In light of this it is unsurprising that many would feel empowered by a candidate such as Donald Trump who promises to bring them back their jobs, remove those who don't share their values, and rails against the mainstream media that seems to ridicule their views.

This goes back to the observation that the two main political parties in America seem now to represent two different ways of life rather than two different political views. Reports from 2012 show that black enfranchisement and immigration have changed the faces of the two political parties, with most of these new voters supporting the Democratic Party. From the 1950s to 2012 the non-white share of the Democratic vote has risen from 7% to 44% (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 171). The Republican party by contrast was still nearly 90 percent white in the 2010s. Thus while Democrats have increasingly become a party of ethnic minorities the Republican party has remained

mostly a party of whites. The Republican party has also increasingly become the party of evangelical Christians, who entered politics in force in opposition to the 1973 Roe v. Wade Supreme court ruling that legalized abortion (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 171). The GOP embraced these new voters by adopting increasingly pro-evangelical positions which included opposition to abortion, and later opposition to gay marriage. Democratic voters on the other hand grew increasingly secular, with the percentage of church going democrats dropping from 50% in the 1960s to below 30% in the 2000s (Livesky, Ziblatt, 171). These profound differences developing between the parties can make it easier for supporters of one party to view the other side as the enemy, and having values that are not in accord with what they feel is best for the country. This helps feed into the narrative given by Trump and other that his campaign is a movement to take back the country, and restore a certain way of life that some feel has been lost.

Identity Issues

While Immigration has played a part for most American populist parties, discriminating against African Americans has also played a significant part in populist success, most notably for Charles Wallace. Due to the prior analyzed countries such as Austria and France being mostly homogenous, this section has been renamed 'Identity Issues' for the American analysis to better reflect the scope it encompasses. Whether talking about immigrants or African Americans, the populist logic of a racialized underclass, separate from the true people and empowered by the elites at the expense of the people, remains mostly the same.

As shown earlier, issues of identity can be displayed in the earliest American populist parties such as the Know Nothings and the Populist party. The Know Nothing

party initially mobilized to protest the rise of non-protestant immigrants entering the country, making immigration a central issue for the Know Nothing party. However, it was also issues of identity that would lead to the collapse of the party, as it was unable to adopt a firm position on slavery and ended up splintering, with pro-slavery Know Nothings joining the Democrats and anti-slavery Know Nothings joining the Republicans (Judis). Even the Populist party, which mainly aimed at tackling economic issues, still favored the expulsion of immigrants, specifically Chinese immigrants that had been brought in by businesses to provide cheap labor (Judis). Thus even their anti-immigration position still had ties to their anti-big business stances. Like the Know Nothings, the Populist party also became split among matters of race, with the party becoming fractured over the issue of whether to support Jim Crow laws or not. Despite this being against the parties' platform, they tacitly endorsed Jim Crow laws in order to appeal to their southern base. Thus, oppositional stances towards equality for minorities has been a part of US populism since the very beginning.

This opposition to racial inequality became more pronounced with the campaign of Charles Wallace, whose policies and rhetoric focused so much around segregation that many claimed he was a single issue candidate. Indeed, Wallace gained political fame through his staunch opposition to school integration and federal bussing programs. While other populist actors such as Charles Coughlin had used racist rhetoric as a part of their populist message, Wallace was able to capitalize on the polarization caused by the civil rights era in order to champion those who endorsed the continuation of the racial status quo. Thus, while identity issues play a part in other American populist actor's platforms, Wallace is significant in that all of his success can be attributed to his

ability to further polarize the identity issues at play in the 1960s. Because of this, it is hard to separate Charles Wallace from this time period, and it is hard to imagine him gaining political success without the racial status quo coming under question, and without his ability to champion the cause of the “common southern man.” In light of this, identity issues constituted almost the totality of Wallace’s success and support.

As mentioned earlier, a driving issue for people who support Trump or the Tea Party is the sense that the United States is becoming a “majority-minority country” where the traditional image of real Americans, that is white protestants, will have less influence and status in society (Muller, 158). This was expressed the strongest under the Obama administration, where many Tea Party blogs talked about the fear that President Obama would grant amnesty to all illegal immigrants in order to develop a new bloc of potential voters, ensuring he could ignore the interests of “true” American citizens (Williamson, 33). Indeed, Tea Party opposition to President Obama often took racial undertones, with a 2011 poll showing that 37% of Republicans believed President Obama was not born in the US (therefore not a true American) with 63% claiming to be unsure about his origins (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 161). Immigration concerns and identity issues then seem central to Tea Party ideology. Indeed, among Tea Party supporters, 78% responded that immigration and border security was among the most important issues, second only to the deficit and spending (Williamson, 33). Thus, societal insecurity, and the fear among certain segments of the white population that their status is being threatened, contributes to support for the Tea Party and candidates such as Trump, who promise to restore the country to what it once was. Aside from societal insecurity, welfare chauvinism, the fear that immigrants are using up the government

welfare that middle class white Americans feel entitled to, is also a main concern among Tea Party supporters (Williamson, 26). Thus Tea Party anger at welfare is not a function of government programs being inherently objectionable to Tea Partiers, but that the government spending for welfare is not going to those who contribute to society. As mentioned before, the conception of who is not deserving of government welfare is often racialized and based on ethnic stereotypes. This is why Tea Party support is a high indicator of racial resentment, even after factoring in ideology and partisanship. In light of all this, it is safe to say that identity issues play a central role in Tea Party support and success.

Finally, Donald Trump has made immigration a central issue of his campaign and presidency. In his very first speech announcing his intentions to run, Trump proposed his plan to build a wall along the border of Mexico to stop what he described as the rampant invasion of Mexican immigrants into the US, most of which he claimed were criminals and rapists. Despite immigration numbers being lower than in recent years, the border wall has remained a central issue for Trump, with him going as far to declare a national emergency to fund the wall when he could not get the project financed through congress. Other policies such as the separation of parents and children at the border, attempts to pass a Muslim travel ban, and threats to end the practice of granting citizenship to children of illegal immigrants all show that anti-immigration policy is a central component of the Trump administration. A less talked about anti-immigrant policy proposed by the Trump administration can be seen in the creation of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity, headed by Vice President Mike Pence. Fueled by Trump's continuing allegations that millions of illegal voters

gave Clinton the popular vote in the 2016 election, this commission aims at the passage of strict voter ID laws. (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 183). These laws would require voters present at voting stations to produce a valid driver's license or other government-issued photo ID. While this seems innocuous at first, studies have shown that around 37% of African Americans and around 27% of Latinos do not possess a valid driver license (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 184). When these numbers are compared to the estimated 16% of whites who do not have a driver license, it is clear that these policies would affect minority voters at a disproportionate rate. Since minority voters are more likely to vote Democratic, this would give Republicans a considerable edge in upcoming elections. All these policies show a concerted effort by the Trump administration to fulfill their promises of giving back the country to their voter base by limiting the opportunity for immigrants to enter the country and participate in the electoral process. This shows that issues of immigration and other identity issues is a core part of the Trump administration, and a big reason that many lower income white voters support him.

Economic Issues

Economic issues were of most importance to early American populist actors. The Populist party formed out of a reaction to what they perceived as the economic exploitation of farmers at the hands of big businesses. This resulted in an economic policy that advocated for the banning of foreign land ownership as well as state control of railroads, as well as advocating for shortened work days (Judis). As stated before, the main goal for the populist party was to reduce the economic inequality created by the policies of the time, which led them to call for the nationalization of railroads, among other industries that were integral to the economy (Judis). These policies helped place

the Populist party in opposition to the dominant economic paradigm of that time, which was endorsed by most major parties. The prevailing thought in American economics around the 1880s was that a self-regulating market was essential to economic success and individual opportunity, and thus the role of government should be minimal (Judis). President Cleveland often spoke out against what he dubbed government “paternalism” saying that public sector intervention “stifles the spirit of true Americanism.” While these policies did help to generate wealth for businesses and entrepreneurs, there were many workers, especially in the agriculture industry, who saw their competition increase while their income decreased. Indeed, farm prices fell two-thirds in the Midwest and south from 1870 to 1890, and yet unsympathetic railroad owners, who enjoyed a monopoly status on the railroads, continued to raise the cost of transporting farm produce (Judis). This led to widespread resentment towards the power of these businesses, which the Populist party was able to harness in its economic platform to complement its anti-establishment and ‘power-to-the-people’ rhetoric. In defining the populist mode of articulation that pits the people against the elites, the elites and the people for the Populist party were defined in primarily economic terms. This can be seen in their conception of people primarily encompassing farmers and blue-collar workers, with their conceptions of the other including “money power” and “plutocracy” (Judis). This is what led to the Populist party to call for the incorporation of labor unions, an end to land speculation, among other progressive economic reforms. In these ways, economic issues were central to the Populist parties’ conception of the people and the elites, and played an integral part in their success and support.

In 21st century America, the 2008 financial disaster has led to widespread feelings of economic dissatisfaction and insecurity throughout the populace. Issues such as the concentration of wealth and government redistribution policies have taken on increasing importance, as well as concerns over globalization and the disappearing of American industrial jobs overseas. While these insecurities can be seen reflected most concretely in the Occupy Wall-Street movement, which can be seen as a direct backlash against the government bailout of banks, Donald Trump and the Tea Party have also profited from the economic insecurities of the time. Part of the concern among Tea Party voters in their diminished role in society has to do with increased competitiveness in the job market, as well as the worry that their welfare is going to undeserving recipients. While this welfare chauvinism is primarily steeped in racial resentment and ethnic stereotypes, it is also fueled in part by economic insecurity and uncertainty. Trump has also played into this climate of economic insecurity by claiming the United States has been getting bad deals from other countries, particularly China, and that he will ensure companies stop leaving the US, as well as to bring back some jobs that have already been lost. However, the trade wars started by Trump have actually further hurt low-income workers, particularly in the agricultural section. Trump's implementation of further tax breaks for the wealthy and other such policies are also in-keeping with the current neoliberal economic order that has resulted in higher levels of inequality. It is perhaps unsurprising then that most of Trump's rhetoric and policy actions revolve around social issues such as the border wall and the Muslim travel ban. In this way, one could say Trump is appealing to his supporters through their values on issues such as abortion and gun rights in order to persuade them to embrace economic policies that hurt them

(Hockschild, 8). Thus, while economic insecurities certainly play a role in making voters more open to support Trump and other actors who promise more economic security, it seems identity issues play a greater role in ensuring their continued support.

Gatekeeping Issues

The two-party majoritarian voting system of the United States has ensured throughout American history that third parties struggle to find any significant electoral footholds. Thus although the populist party in the late 19th century was able to build a strong political platform that covered some of the blind-spots of the other major parties, specifically their pushing of different economic policies, they were ultimately unable to translate this platform into success. Those who supported the Populist party out of anger towards president Cleveland soon turned back to voting for more electable Republicans, while in the south, Democrats began to co-opt the Populist parties' message, eventually incorporating some of their economic policies into FDR's New Deal (Judis). While this ensured the continuation of the populist parties' beliefs, it also ensured their end, as the party folded only a decade in to the 20th century. There was just simply no space in the American electorate for a viable third party.

In light of this, populist actors in the 20th century would attempt to gain nomination through one of the main parties. However, party politics had their own ways of gatekeeping, as the presidential nominees had to be endorsed by party leadership. Thus even when outside actors gained a following within one party, such as in the 1920s when Henry Ford polled better amongst Democrats than President Harding or future president Hoover, they could not gain the nomination without party endorsement, or risk splitting the vote and handing over the victory to the opposing party. This exact

thing happened when George Wallace, who polled very well amongst Democrats but was denied the nomination, ran as a third party candidate, splitting the democratic vote and resulting in the Republican victory of Richard Nixon (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 47).

Through this gatekeeping process, Republicans and Democrats were able to restrain the influence and success populist actors could receive.

At least this was the process up until 1968. In this year, a number of events would precipitate the changing of the party nomination system into the one we currently have today. First, the preferred presidential candidate for the Democrats, Bobby Kennedy, was assassinated. This led party leaders to step in and nominate Vice President Hubert Humphrey for the nomination. However, Humphrey was deeply unpopular with anti-war delegates due to his association with the Vietnam policies of Lyndon Johnson (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 48). Furthermore, Humphrey had not run in a single state primary. However, back then it did not matter how many primaries you ran, it only mattered whether you had the backing of the party leadership, which Humphrey did. While events like these had happened before, the tragedy of Kennedy's assassination, combined with the unpopularity of the escalating Vietnam War and the energy of antiwar protestors resulted in protestors marching on the convention, onto the very convention floor, to protest the result (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 49). These events, which became a national embarrassment for the Democratic party once it became televised, led to the Democrats creating the McGovern-Fraser commission, which was tasked with rethinking the nomination system (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 50). The commission came to the conclusion that the best course of action would be to open up the nomination process, and thus starting in 1972, the vast majority of delegates for both the Democrat and

Republican conventions would be elected in state-level primaries and caucuses. This resulted in the people having the power, for the first time, to choose the candidate of their party.

In theory, this meant that anyone could run for the nomination and win. However, in reality this was not the case. Over the next few decades, outside political actors such as Southern Baptist leader Pat Robertson, television commentator Pat Buchanan and Forbes magazine publisher Steve Forbes would all seek the Republican presidential nomination, and would all lose (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 52). As it turned out, capturing a majority of delegates required winning several primaries all over the country, which required considerable amounts of money, local support, and resources. Any candidate attempting the run would need many allies among all types of people with influence such as state-level politicians, newspaper editors, and of course, wealthy donors. This grueling process became coined by Arthur Hadley as the “invisible primary” and for a while at least, it ensured that party leadership still had some control over who could win the nomination (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 52).

However, even more recent changes have resulted in it being easier for outside candidates to circumvent the invisible primary. First, was the Supreme Court’s 2010 ruling on Citizens United, which allowed candidates to receive unlimited amounts of campaign finance from donors. This meant that now even marginal candidates could raise large sums of money, either through having a billionaire financier or through hundreds of smaller donations through the internet (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 56). The influence of billionaire donors has grown especially on the Republican side, where the Koch billionaire family network alone was responsible for \$400 million in election spending

(Livetsky, Ziblatt, 173). Along with the influence of the Tea Party, the Koch network has helped in electing a new generation of Republicans, who are against compromise and are overall more extreme in their views. Another contributing factor was the rise to prominence of alternative media, particularly cable news and social media. Where before candidates had to rely on the few mainstream news channels, who often favored establishment politicians over extremists, newer media, especially social media, has made it possible for certain political actors, especially celebrities, to gain wide levels of name recognition and support practically overnight (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 56). This has been particularly true of the Republican side, where the emergence of Fox News and influential radio talk-show personalities such as Rush Limbaugh and Alex Jones has led to the increased radicalization of conservative voters, which benefits ideologically extreme candidates. Thus, more than at any time in American history, the presidential nomination process is especially open for polarizing celebrity actors such as Donald Trump to gain not only success, but victory in presidential elections.

The narrative then that Donald Trump was able to win the presidency due to the gradual opening up of the presidential nomination process is a compelling one. That is however, until one remembers that Donald Trump was only able to win thanks to the supposed last remaining barrier to demagogues in American democracy, the electoral college. In an ironic twist of fate, the populist actor achieved victory not through the winning of the popular vote, but through one of the oldest institutions of gatekeeping in American democracy. While the counterfactual claim that had the popular vote been the deciding factor in determining the presidency then Hilary Clinton would have won cannot be one hundred percent certain, as such a change in rules would have led to

different campaign strategies and areas of focus, the fact remains that gatekeeping, rather than the popular will ultimately led to Trump's victory. However, whether one contests that Trump's victory was due to too much gatekeeping, or too little, it cannot be argued that gatekeeping factors were highly important to the victory of the Trump campaign, as well as the stifling of populist actors before him.

Additionally, polarization has greatly increased the populist appeal in America, in two distinct ways. With the public perceiving that both parties are just in it for themselves, refusing to cooperate in order to further their own goals, the public develops the conclusion that the parties are just the same, as both only seek to further their own self-interest. This leads figures who can claim outsider status, and who promise to do away with party politics, to gain more appeal. Both of these things were done by Donald Trump, who was plausibly able to claim distance from any form of the political establishment, and who's claims to "drain the swamp" were very popular with his base. In addition to this, polarization can also mobilize a parties' base, who respond to more-hardline stances on issues that before would have been sacrificed to compromise. Trump enabled this as well by taking hardline stances on issues such as immigration, which can be seen in his call for a border wall, and his proposed Muslim travel ban. While many have called these measures extreme, and even racist, for some portion of the Republican electorate, it was exactly what they'd wanted to hear from more established politicians. Thus Trump has benefitted from the polarized climate in being able to garner votes from those who feel disillusioned with the current system and feel more open to supporting an outsider, and by doubling down on polarizing topics in order to cultivate a loyal base. In this way, the inability of the established parties to try

and stifle polarization, and re-institute forbearance and mutual respect, has paved the way for the rise of a populist actor such as Donald Trump.

Media

New forms of media have been an influential aspect in garnering support for recent US populist actors such as Donald Trump and the Tea Party. For the Tea Party especially, the media institutions of Fox News and conservative radio are shown to be the primary source of information for Tea Party activists, with around 63% of all Tea Party supporters responding that they watch Fox News regularly, as opposed to only 11% of other responders (Williamson, 29). This relationship goes both ways, as Fox News has been shown to cover Tea Party events much more extensively than other news stations. When compared to CNN, which only covers Tea Party activities during significant rallies, Fox News extensively covers the Tea Party in the lead up to rallies, as well as afterwards (Williamson, 29). This shows that Fox News continues to cover the Tea Party even when no significant political events related to them are occurring. This creates a feedback loop where Fox News viewers are more aware of the Tea Party, and thus more likely to join, while also making Tea Partiers more likely to watch Fox News. This leads to a proliferation of ideas and success for both sides. This has led some to argue that Fox News acts as a “national social movement organization” which fosters feelings of solidarity and integration in its viewers through “the diffusion of collective identities” (Williamson, 30). Essentially this creates a kind of “echo chamber” where the ideas supported by viewers are reflected by the news media which gives them greater confidence that their views are correct. While this happens extensively around the internet, and on both sides of the political spectrum, the

relationship between Fox News and the Tea Party is perhaps the clearest example of this phenomenon in action. This effect can be reinforced by the amount of Tea Partiers who claim to seek information from neutral or left-leaning sources, with only 11% of Tea Partiers saying they read papers such as the Boston Globe and only around 7% saying they also get their news from ABC, NBC or CBS (Williamson, 31). All of this has the effect of Fox News viewers having a higher likelihood of getting caught up, or at least familiarized with the Tea Party phenomenon, making them more likely to join, or at least show interest.

As explained in the earlier section, new forms of media such as social media and the proliferation of cable news networks has led to the further radicalization of voters, making them more open to ideologically extreme candidates. The changed media landscape is perhaps the greatest contributing factor to how Donald Trump was able to circumvent the invisible primaries, as he enjoyed the sympathy and support of various right-wing media personalities such as Sean Hannity and Ann Coulter, as well as the increasingly influential Breitbart news (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 58). The support of these personalities and media allowed Trump to reach a larger audience than what would have been possible if he had been on his own. Trump also benefitted from the polarized media landscape that had been cultivated by Fox News, which had been ramping up in the wake of Obama's presidency, whom Fox News had gone to great lengths to cast as a Marxist, anti-American, and secret Muslim (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 156). This had poised listeners to respond to this kind of rhetoric, so when Trump entered the scene calling for the public viewing of Obama's birth certificate, the rhetoric did not seem as extreme to Fox News viewers as they might have to others. This audience is quite extensive as

well, with almost 70% of Republican voters claiming to regularly watch Fox News (Livetsky, Ziblatt, 172). In addition to this, Trump has made adept use of social medias such as Twitter in getting out his thoughts directly to his constituency. While the president's tweets are often sources of controversy and ridicule, it fulfills the populist promise to have a more personable democracy, as it showcases a leader being more easily reached by his supporters. In all these ways, new forms of Media have helped increase popularity and acceptance of populist rhetoric and actors in American society.

Conclusions

As has been shown, there are two distinct branches of American populism. The first, represented by the Populist party and the Occupy Wall-Street movement, was primarily influenced by economic issues, while the second, represented by George Wallace, Donald Trump, and the Tea Party, was primarily influenced by identity issues. Both were influenced by gatekeeping issues in determining their success or failure.

Overall in terms of identity issues, populist actors such as George Wallace were able to capitalize off of the racial insecurity felt by white southerners during the 1960s by championing the side in favor of maintaining the racial status quo. By creating the image of the quintessential trodden upon southern man for himself, and later extending that image to encompass all of middle America, Wallace was able to capture around 40% of the American electoral support, and performed very well for a third-party candidate in the 1968 presidential elections. While Wallace never achieved higher office, he did influence some politicians such as Nixon and Carter to adopt his rhetoric, with Nixon particularly adopting some of Wallace's positions on issues such as bussing (Lowndes, 164). In the 21st century, Trump and the Tea Party movement would also

come to prominence by addressing the racial insecurities caused by immigration and redistributive welfare. The Tea Party has conveyed the image of an inefficient government that gives handouts to undeserving segments of the population by taking away money from hard-working Americans. The Tea Party conception of who is considered working and non-working is often racialized instead of occupational, and the Tea Party has frequently attacked former president Obama on the grounds that he may have been born outside of America, and even if not, clearly harbors anti-American values and pro-Muslim sympathies. Donald Trump has also championed the ‘birther’ issue in addition to making immigration and the construction of a border wall one of his core policy goals. Even early populist parties, such as the Populist party, which were primarily concerned with economic issues, still called for the expulsion of immigrants. In fact, the Populist party, like the Know-Nothings before them, eventually folded due to their inability to take firm positions on identity issues such as slavery and Jim Crow laws. Thus, identity issues such as racial equality and immigration have always played a strong determining factor in American populism.

In terms of economic issues, the Populist party was the American populist political actor whose fortunes were most affected by their economic positions, as they placed themselves in opposition to the laissez faire, big business and low government intervention policies of the late 19th century that was championed by both of the main political parties. By adopting a different economic platform, the populist party was able to champion the cause of those who felt alienated and left-behind by the dominant economic ideology of the time, mainly farmers and lower-class workers. This led to the populist party doing remarkably well for a third party, obtaining 10% of the vote for

their candidate for the House, and around 8% of the vote for their candidate for president in the 1894 elections (Judis). At their height, the party had 4 elected congressmen, four senators, 21 state executives and 465 legislators (Judis). Even after the party folded, their ideas would resurface in FDR's New Deal, and their populist articulation of the people vs. the elites would become the default mode for most populist actors in Latin America and Europe. Over a century later the Occupy Wall-Street movement would use a similar rhetoric to mobilize thousands to protest against the '1%.' While the Tea Party and Trump's rise cannot be explained without fears relating to the 2008 financial recession, these economic fears have been mainly expressed in terms of racial resentment and fears of immigration, making economic concerns a more secondary feature of their success.

Perhaps the issues that have had the most effect on populist success are gatekeeping issues. For centuries, the American two-party majoritarian electoral system has kept third party actors, such as the Populist party, from making significant inroads in the house or the senate. Meanwhile, internal party nomination systems ensured leadership was able to keep fringe actors, even popular ones such as Henry Ford and George Wallace, on the outside looking in. Even when the nomination process opened up in the 1970s, the amount of resources and exposure required to create a successful campaign were so great that party leadership was still able to amount some forms of control over who could win the nomination, blocking other potential populist actors such as Ross Perot from obtaining the presidency. It has only been with the change in campaign finance laws with the 2010 Citizens United supreme court ruling, and the gradual proliferation of cable news media and social media to provide easier avenues to

exposure, that populist candidates such as Donald Trump have been able to successfully obtain the presidential nomination for one of the two main parties. However, the fact that Trump only gained the presidency through winning the electoral college, and not the popular vote, raises the question of whether the issue with American gatekeeping is that there is too much or too little. Additionally, increased party polarization starting in the 1990s has resulted in a more polarized electorate, which benefits populist candidates who can capitalize on polarizing issues, and also use their outsider appeal to make the case that they are a different form of politics from what the other main parties have to offer. In this way, the inability for both parties to take steps to reduce polarization has paved the way for populist actors such as Donald Trump to achieve success. In both cases, the ability for establishment political actors to shape the rules and processes for which candidates and parties can win elections has profoundly shaped the chances of populist success throughout American history.

Finally, new forms of media have been influential in spreading the message and appeal of populist actors. This is particularly true for recent populist actors such as the Tea Party and Donald Trump, who have benefitted from the polarized media scape that was help created by conservative media such as Fox News and radio talk show hosts such as Rush Limbaugh. The Tea Party and Fox News in particular work off each other in that Fox News covers the Tea Party more extensively than other networks, resulting in increased exposure and possible support for the party. On the other side, most Tea Party supporters view Fox News and other conservative media exclusively, which helps reinforce their views. Donald Trump has also used social medias such as Twitter to appeal more directly to his constituency, which helps reinforce the populist promise to

bring a more direct form of democracy to the people. In these ways, use of new media has helped increase support for some American populist actors.

5: Results and Conclusions

Populism as we understand it today first arose out of late 19th century America. During this time in the US, laissez faire, free-market capitalism was the dominant ideology of both political parties, with the general understanding being that the market was most efficient when left to its own devices, and that government intervention only served to stifle ingenuity. While this did generate wealth and success for some businesses and entrepreneurs, the monopoly conditions created by this approach left some agrarian and other lower-class workers with more work, reduced wages, and increased competition. The resentment and isolation felt by these workers led some to conclude that their voices were no longer being heard, and that their political power was now diminished. Out of these conditions, the first successful populist party, aptly named the Populist party, arose. The Populist party took up stances in direct contrast to the ideology of the main two parties, calling on the nationalization of several industries, reduced work hours for farmers, and the expulsion of immigrants who threatened American jobs with their cheap labor. The Populist party first drew the discourse that would go on to define the populist logic, construing the identity of a people, based on shared conditions, in this case occupational and economic status, and pitting them against a corrupt elite who stifled the voice of the people in order to keep themselves in power. This logic did not define between left-wing and right-wing, but cast both as part of the same political establishment. In this way, it can be said that populism first arose out of a desire by those who felt left behind by the current political and economic ideology to reassert their rights and try and regain their power in the name of the common people. Since neither dominant political party was responding to this political

niche, a new one arose that was able to cast both establishment actors in the same light, and claim to represent a new way of looking at the world order that emphasized the power of the people.

While much has changed in the world since the late 19th century, the presence of populism can still be attributed to a similar situation. Now the dominant ideology in the west is liberal democracy, with a strong emphasis on neoliberal economic policies and globalization. Just like the conditions in 19th century America, this world order has increased wealth for some, and left others feeling isolated and disempowered. The unwillingness, or inability, for mainstream government actors to adequately address these feelings has resulted in a political niche waiting to be filled by another actor, namely the populists. With populism being a mode of discourse rather than an ideology unto itself, it can take different forms across different countries and cultures. However, the unifying theme of all modern populist actors is their opposition to aspects of the liberal democracy order that other mainstream parties are unwilling to address. The purpose of the analysis in the preceding section then was to identify which aspects of liberal democracy populist actors were most successful in opposing. To that end, three key issues of immigration, economic policies, and in the European context, the European Union, were examined to see which issues populists were most successful in exploiting. Success was measured in terms of electoral victory and the ability of populists to influence other actors in adopting their rhetoric. The influence of mainstream actor influence was also measured in terms of gatekeeping issues, with the intention of analyzing to what extent the actions of mainstream politicians had on populist success or failure. Additionally, in some cases the use of new forms of media

was analyzed to see to what extent populists were able to use new forms of media to achieve success.

In terms of immigration issues, every single country analyzed in this paper had immigration issues as an important determining factor for populist success, indicating that immigration is one of the most important issues for populists to mobilize around. In Italy, The League has become one of the biggest Italian parties by centering most of their campaign around anti-immigration rhetoric. Polls and reports have shown that League supporters are often driven to vote for the party primarily due to fears centered around immigration, with voters worried about immigrants draining the countries' economic resources, competing with young people for jobs, or just being incompatible with the countries' Christian values. The most compelling evidence for immigration being a determining factor for The League's success can be the uptick in support the party received after shifting from being primarily centered around the issue of Northern independence, to being primarily concerned with immigration. It was around this time that the party began to emphasize Christian values in their party documents, when before they had been strictly secular. Soon the LN became the most clearly anti-immigrant party in Italy, with their supporters showing greater anti-immigrant leanings even when compared to over right-wing parties such as Forza Italia. By cornering this issue as their domain, the LN has been able to capitalize off of recent rises in Italian immigration caused by the Syrian refugee crisis, and the fear and uneasiness that has resulted from it. The League's coalition partner, the Five-Star Movement, has also recently increased their anti-immigrant rhetoric, and both parties have made stricter immigration laws part of their policy agenda.

Similarly, in Austria, Jorg Haider took the FPO in an anti-immigrant direction once immigration became a major topic in Austria during the 1990s. The hardline lobbying against immigration that the FPO employed led to the OVP-SPO coalition to pass more restrictive immigration measures in order to try and siphon off immigration resentment from the FPO. However, this only served to legitimize the FPO's views, leading them to adopt more hardline stances that the main parties were unwilling to imitate. When the party first entered a coalition with the OVP in 1999, most FPO supporters said they supported the party due to their anti-immigrant views. Like the LN, this newfound success in the immigration issue led to the FPO to change their views, walking away from their neoliberal economic policies to redefine itself as a party focused on social issues and Heimat. While Heimat for most Austrians simply means pride in Austrian culture, the FPO has used the term in reference to exclusive rights to the homeland, putting it in firm opposition to multiculturalism, and the admittance of Islamic immigrants. Again, like the LN, by being the most clear-cut anti-immigration party, the FPO has seen an increase in support following the recent Syrian refugee crisis. The FPO is currently in another governing coalition with the OVP, which has also taken more hardline stances on immigration, so much so that the FPO has complained that the OVP is stealing its rhetoric. All in all, this shows a clear sign of the FPO being successful in politicizing the issue of immigration in order to increase electoral gains, and dragging Austria into a more conservative position towards immigrants as a result.

In France, with the electorate being more responsive to negative views on immigration and Muslims, but with most mainstream parties not tapping into these

sentiments, the FN was able to adopt the issue for itself, making it one of the cornerstones of the party. With almost 100% of FN supporters claiming to hold anti-immigration views, it is clear that anti-immigrant sentiment plays a big role in voters choosing to support the FN. This can also be seen in how FN support began to rise with the increase in North African immigrants, jumping up 10% in just around two years. Even in times of political setback, the FN has continued to maintain a strong showing in small villages that have seen dramatic increases in immigration, such as the town of Dreux and Frejus. Like the FPO and LN, incidents that further inflame anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment, such as the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack, are accompanied by increases in FN support. The FN's anti-immigrant views have now become widespread throughout French political parties. Thus although the party now is in a state of crisis and regression, their ideas continue to find popularity.

Finally, in the US context, every significant populist actor has used immigration or other identity issues as a part of their platform. Most notably, Alabama governor George Wallace ran on a platform almost exclusively about pro-segregation policies, appealing to southern insecurities about racial equality. In more recent times, the Tea Party has mobilized around opposition to government handouts for what they see as undeserving segments of the population, mainly blacks and immigrants. Donald Trump meanwhile has been able to secure a loyal voter base by advocating for hardline anti-immigrant stances such as the building of a wall along the Mexico border, and a travel ban for Muslims coming into the United States. Identity issues are key to Trump's appeal and support, and he often focuses on them over economic issues, which are usually against the interests of his base. Even American populist actors who were not

focused on identity issues such as the Populist party still called for the expulsion of immigrants. Thus identity issues have always played a central role in the support and success of American populist actors. Overall, the populist actors analyzed in this paper had immigration and other identity issues either as a main, or contributing factor in their platform and success. This indicates that perhaps one of the things voters most feel the need to reassert control over is the power to decide who is allowed into their countries.

Economic issues, while often providing the backdrop for establishment resentment, or being secondary contributors to success, were hardly ever primary factors for the success of populist parties. In Italy, the Northern League's economic positions of neoliberal measures is in order to maintain its wealthy, entrepreneurial base, rather than a method to draw new voters in or expand its support. The biggest impact economic conditions have had on The League have been the times where its anti-immigrant stance has proven tricky with affluent industrial sector base, who often rely on immigrant workers to meet supply demands. This has led to the LN endorsing small quotas of immigrant labors to be let in, demonstrating an instance where economic issues have taken precedent over immigration issues. However, the willingness for the LN to continue with these policies despite knowing it might alienate their affluent base indicates the level of importance the immigration has within the party, as they are willing to take the risk in order to appeal to wider demographic. This shows that in the party's mind, the immigration issue is more vital to the parties' success than economic issues. For the Five-Star Movement, the 2008 economic crisis has lent to the resentment and disillusionment the Italian electorate feels towards the political establishment, which has helped strengthen the Five-Star Movement's

message. Again, here economic issues help the party, but are not the defining issues that determine the party's success.

In the Austrian case, sometimes the FPO's economic policies were a liability for the party, resulting in it shifting policies and focusing more on social issues. Initially the FPO adopted a neoliberal economic platform, which helped set it in opposition to the establishment parties, as well as appeal to voters who felt stifled by government bureaucracy. Difficult economic conditions can also be said to have contributed to FPO success, with there being a correlation between rising unemployment and rising support for the FPO in the late 1990s. However, poor economic conditions in general often help to boost support for out-of-power parties, as they can claim no part in the economic policies that lead to recession. When the FPO first entered into a government coalition however, the implementation of their neoliberal policies negatively impacted their blue collar voting base, who turned against them and supported other parties. This is what led the FPO to renounce its neoliberal positions and instead redefine itself as a party focused on social issues. Thus while economic stances and conditions could sometimes help increase support for the FPO, the party was also hurt by economic positions, and only recovered when it increased its focus on immigration.

Like the FPO in the 90s, the FN has been adept at using its economic platform in order to set itself apart from the more mainstream parties, and capitalize on economic recessions. In the 1980s, in order to set itself apart from the socialist Mitterrand government, the FN adopted neoliberal policies. This helped the FN set itself as an alternative to the government, which helped increase its support when Mitterrand's policies did not help improve the economic recession France faced in the 1980s.

However, in the 1990s, with the onset of globalization, the FN reversed course and adopted anti-neoliberal economic policies that called for more redistribution to help the poor, and an increase to worker wages. Once again, this helped set the FN apart from president Hollande, who became increasingly unpopular in the wake of the 2008 financial recession. Thus the FN has benefitted from times of poor economic conditions by changing its economic policies to set it in opposition to the mainstream parties' policies. Thus economic issues have contributed to the success of the FN, but is not the defining feature in the way immigration is.

Finally, for the US, only the 19th century Populist party primarily benefitted from its economic positions. While the FPO and FN were able change its economic positions in order to take advantage of changing times, the Populist parties' initial formation was precipitated by feelings of resentment and disillusionment towards the dominant economic ideology of the time. The Populist parties' main platform was centered on economic policies that would help out workers, such as nationalizing the railroad industry and implementing more workers' unions. Thus the entire basis of support for the Populist party was centered around workers who felt the Populist party could help them reassert their voice and power against the interests of big businesses. For other American populist actors, increased globalization and off-shoring has made some industrial and agricultural workers feel insecure about their economic future. This has led to feelings of welfare chauvinism, which has helped increase support for the Tea Party and their campaign against welfare going to undeserving segments of the population. Additionally, increased job competition in the marketplace due to immigration has helped lend support for Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric, as well as his

promises to prevent more jobs from going overseas, and even to bring some back. However, these issues are still secondary to the identity issues that are the primary reasons of support for Trump and the Tea Party. Thus, across all countries analyzed, economic issues were only of prime importance for the populist party, with it being unimportant, harmful, or only of secondary importance to other populist actors.

In terms of the three European countries analyzed, issues of Euroscepticism sentiment were either unimportant or harmful for the conditions of success for the populist actors. For Italy, the LN was initially pro-EU, and used it as an example of good governance in contrast with the poor governance of the Italian mainstream parties. However, once the LN first entered a governing position, attacking its own government became a liability. Thus the League shifted its anti-establishment rhetoric to attack the EU. This also helped set the LN apart from its pro-EU coalition partners, thus still giving it oppositional status even though it was in power. In this way, Euroscepticism was more of a way to keep its anti-establishment rhetoric while being in government rather than a tactic to increase its success. A similar situation occurred in Austria with the FPO. Like the LN, the FPO was initially pro-EU, but soon changed course once Jorg Haider took over leadership of the party. However, unlike the LN, this anti-EU rhetoric caused issues with the FPO once in power, as its coalition partners often forced it to sign off on pro-EU legislation. This hurt the FPO's anti-establishment image, and led to rapid decline in support once it came into power. A similar process is happening now, where despite ramping up its anti-EU rhetoric in recent years, the FPO in its current coalition government with the OVP has once again reaffirmed its commitment to the

union. Thus for the FPO, Euroscepticism is a tool used by the party in opposition that is quickly abandoned once in power.

The populist party analyzed in this paper that is most closely associated with Euroscepticism is the FN, which is attributed as being one of the first European populist parties to start using anti-EU rhetoric. Unlike the LN and FPO, the FN has always been anti-EU, with Marine Le Pen especially advocating strong anti-EU positions, labeling EU elites as “monsters” and calling for Frexit, a French exit from the EU. After the success of Brexit, Marine Le Pen hoped she could capitalize off the movement by pushing for the French government to have its own referendum. However, the French electorate has never responded too positively to the FN’s anti-EU rhetoric, with most of the French electorate still in favor of keeping the Euro and staying in the Union. Thus the anti-EU rhetoric of the FN limited their appeal. Additionally, Le Pen’s inability to come up with a credible alternative to staying in the EU hurt her credibility in presidential debates, and led to further decrease of support for the FN. Overall, the Eurosceptic positions of the FN have proven to do more harm than good for the party. In light of this, as well as the experiences of the LN and FPO, Euroscepticism was not a salient issue for understanding the success of any of the populist actors examined in this paper. This could indicate that despite the decreasing popularity of the EU around Europe, most European citizens are not comfortable with the thought of leaving the Union.

For every country analyzed, gatekeeping issues had an important effect on the success or failure of the countries’ populist actors. In Italy, the frequent corruption scandals lobbied at the mainstream political actors has served to strengthen the narrative

of populist parties, as it validates their claims that the political establishment is corrupt and self-serving. Indeed, the LN achieved a governing coalition for the first time in the election immediately following the Tangentopoli affairs, which had led to the arrest of several leading governmental officials. This event also led to a change in electoral rules that favored outside actors such as the LN, as they could now be useful to other parties in coalition formation. The LN also had the foresight to distance itself from Silvio Berlusconi, and thus was poised to further increase their support once his government came under corruption allegations as well. This repeated cycle of scandals has created widespread disillusionment among the Italian electorate, thus increasing the appeal of populist actors. The Five-Star Movement sought to tap into this disillusionment by aiming their rhetoric directly at the elites, through Vaffanculo days and frequent promises to clean up parliament, and jail offending government actors. This has led younger Italians in particular to support the M5S, often for no reason other than it is a new party untainted by past corruption. In these ways, the mainstream Italian political establishment's dealings in corruption have contributed heavily to the increased support for its populist actors. Thus one could say Italian populism can be seen as the result of mainstream actor's failures to play by their established electoral rules.

Gatekeeping issues have likewise influenced the success for Austrian populism, albeit in different ways. When Jorg Haider took control of the FPÖ, his accusations of bribery and collusion towards the mainstream parties took hold with the electorate, as for the better part of half a century, the two largest parties, the SPÖ and ÖVP has been governing together and keeping each other in power. This resulted in much of Austria's governmental positions as well as civic positions being comprised of selected members

of the SPO and OVP. This grand coalition was put in place in order to reduce party opposition, but it had the side effect of stifling different political opinions. This allowed an opening for the FPO to question the democratic nature of Austrian politics, and gave them quite a convincing platform through which to demand more power be placed back in the hands of the people. When the OVP and SPO adopted policies of exclusion towards the FPO, this only gave legitimacy to their claims. Eventually the OVP broke with the mandate of exclusion, and formed a coalition with the FPO. While they hoped this would help diminish appeal for the FPO, which for a time it did, it also helped normalize the FPO and made them out as a legitimate governing actor. 15 years after the first FPO-OVP coalition, another one has formed, with little to no reaction from the public. Thus, the OVP's cooperation with the FPO has served to legitimize it as a real alternative to the SPO, giving it much more influence in Austrian politics. However, the SPO and OVP have still cooperated at times to keep the FPO out of influential positions, as can be seen in their cooperative effort to ensure Van Der Bellen defeated Hofer in the Austrian presidential election. In either case, it is clear that the FPO's success has been heavily determined by the actions of mainstream parties.

While Italian corruption and Austrian collusion worked to help strengthen the LN and FPO's claims of mainstream parties rigging the system, in the French case, the mainstream actors have successfully worked together to keep the FN mostly at the fringes of French politics. This is best exemplified by the changing of voting rules from PR representation to a two-round runoff system. This had the effect of almost completely reducing the number of officials the FN were able to elect to government, and has ensured that whenever the FN makes it to the second round of presidential

racism, the mainstream actors can quickly mobilize against them and ensure their defeat. Thus even though the FN has steadily built up their support since the 1980s, they have not been able to replicate the success they achieved under PR voting rules. In addition to this, French banks are often unwilling to loan money to the FN, causing them to obtain money from foreign banks, which alienates some French voters. In this way, unlike the Italian and Austrian governments, the French government has actually been successful in keeping populist actors out of the government. However, these gatekeeping moves have also served to increase disillusionment in the French electorate, and although the FN has been soundly defeated, other parties are already using their rhetoric to increase their success. Thus even when gatekeeping works in stopping the party, it seems to only add to belief in ideas given by populist actors.

Finally, for the US, the US two-party system and internal party mechanisms have ensured that all populist actors, even influential ones such as the Populist party and George Wallace, have been successfully prevented from achieving significant electoral victory. Even when the primaries opened up in the 1970s, the immense cost of running a successful campaign ensured that outside actors were still limited in the degree of success they could achieve. However, recent factors like the proliferation of cable news and social media giving candidates with large followings easier access to exposure, as well as new campaign laws allowing for candidates to receive funding more easily, has led to outside celebrity actors, such as Donald Trump, to circumvent the invisible primaries and achieve success. Additionally, the realignment of the two parties in the 1960s, ensuring they were sharply divided on social as well as economic issues, and the steady increase in polarization since the 1990s, have also opened the doorways for

populist success. With constant fighting and obstructionist behavior, both parties have lost public faith, and are often conflated together as just two sides of the same coin, both seeking to increase their success at the expense of all else.

Polarization has also mobilized the bases of both parties, to the extent that the two no longer seem like political rivals, but advocates for competing ways of life that are incompatible with each other. This allows populist outsiders to draw support from party bases by adopting polarizing stances, while also appealing to those fed up with the mainstream parties by using their outsider status. In this way, the inability for the two parties to cooperate has opened the door for populist success. Finally, Donald Trump's victory in the electoral college, but loss in the popular vote, raises the question of perhaps gatekeeping mechanisms potentially causing populist success, and whether the true issue for American politics is too much, or too little gatekeeping. Either way gatekeeping issues have profoundly affected the chances of populist success in the United States, just as they have in Italy, France and Austria. This may seem unsurprising as populist actors are often only able to succeed when they are able to exploit a political niche that has been overlooked or unaddressed by the mainstream parties. However, these actions are more than just not adequately responding to concerns over the economy or immigration. Instances of corruption, collusion, or blatant changing of the voting rules to stifle fringe parties are actions that affect the chances of populist parties beyond what issues are dominant in the political discourse. Thus, the success of populist parties is largely determined by the ability of mainstream actors to respond to them.

Finally, for some actors such as the Five-Star Movement and the Tea Party, use of new forms of media has led to increased success. For the M5S, the movement began life online, in Beppe Grillo's blog, where he talked about political issues to his myriad of followers. After gaining a significant following, the blog was used to help mobilize meetups for the politically disaffected, ultimately culminating in the 'V-day' protests. This new form of media helped Grillo bypass the traditional forms of political communication, while at the same time fulfilling the populist promise of a more direct and personal democracy. Even after the party transitioned to a more traditional political party structure, many supporters still cite the usefulness of M5S online sites, which efficiently and succinctly state the party's policies in terms that anyone can understand. In this way, the M5S has used new forms of media to increase its support, and enhance its message.

For American populism, recent actors such as the Tea Party and Donald Trump have also benefitted from new forms of media. As stated before, the proliferation of cable news and social media has allowed outside actors more opportunities to increase their exposure. Much like Grillo and the Five-Star Movement, Trump has used online media such as Twitter to more immediately voice his political views to his followers, creating the sense of a more personal and intimate presidency. The Tea Party on the other hand, has primarily benefitted from the extensive coverage given to them by Fox News and other conservative media. The relationship between the Tea Party often goes both ways, as the more coverage Fox News gives the Tea Party, the better able the movement is to proliferate their message, gaining more members, who in turn continue to watch Fox News. This dynamic creates a feedback loop where the messages on Fox

News become ingrained in Tea Party thought, which further polarizes the electorate. Trump has also benefitted from the polarization provided by this feedback loop and others, as it leaves the public open to more radical positions and more polarizing stances, as they often directly align with their beliefs. In these ways, new forms of media have helped increase the messages of new populist actors. While new media has been beneficial for Trump and Grillo, the success of the LN and the FPO without the use of new forms of media indicates that while media issues can help populist success, they are not a necessity.

Overall, immigration and gatekeeping issues are the most important in terms of understanding populist success. Economic issues took on a secondary importance in most countries, while the issue of Euroscepticism was unimportant, or in some cases harmful towards populist success. In a few cases, use of new media was helpful in increasing populist success, but was not important in every case of populist success, indicating it is not a necessary requirement. If Populist success can be mainly understood as a backlash to the dominant order of liberal democracy, it is interesting that immigration should take on such a critical role in almost all circumstances. If populism followed a similar pattern to its early beginnings with the American populist party, one might expect economic issues to take on a primary importance, just as it did in the 19th century. This could be perhaps due to the perception that immigration is an issue political parties can actually do something about. With the increased interconnectedness of countries' economy, some countries, especially smaller, less influential ones, are constrained in what economic policies they can implement if they want to remain competitive. When populist actors do try and fight austerity measures,

such as Syriza in Greece, it often backfires and makes the country worse off than if it had accepted the prevailing economic programs. And while some countries may have become increasingly disillusioned with the European Union, the messy way Brexit has unfolded sends the message that exiting from the EU may cause more problems than it solves. Thus, the mobilization of many populist parties around the immigration issue may be indicative of a perception that immigration may be the easier of the issues for them to directly resolve. Likewise, voters may feel that if anything, they should still be able to control who is allowed into the country.

The importance of gatekeeping issues in determining populist success is less surprising. After all, the existence of populist actors is predicated on their being political niches and other blind-spots that mainstream actors have passed over for populist actors to exploit. In this way, the very existence of populism is dependent on the inability of mainstream actors to adequately address certain issues. However, once populism arises, it is not predestined to success. This can be seen in the FN, which despite being one of the oldest populist parties in Europe, has still never managed to gain significant electoral victories or majorities in its national government. Thus, the way political actors respond to populist presence often determines how far the populist actors can get. If actors fall prey to political corruption, or continue to converge on policies and further limit the array of political ideas present on their agendas, the strength of populists is increased. Additionally, some parties may choose to align with the populists, hoping to coopt their message and siphon off support, or hoping that being in power will limit the appeal of their anti-establishment message. While this has shown to be effective in the short term, it has the overall effect of legitimizing the

populist party, making them seem like less of a fringe choice and helping them appeal to more centrist voters. The most effective way of stifling populist parties and actors then is having voting rules that favors a majority of support, as the French change to a two-round runoff system and the pre-1972 US presidential primaries ensured that no populist actor could achieve success. However, even in these circumstances, although the party may be defeated, the ideas live on. Overall, without attempting to address the issues populists mobilize around, whether they be immigration or political corruption, populist sentiment will continue to linger. Thus, the prime factor that contributes to populist success is the constraining of national governments in their decision making capabilities, whether that be constraining their ability to implement economic changes, or their ability to address social issues.

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