Defining populism

It is very difficult to define populism because it:
- Is very different all over the world (in Europe it is RW but in Latin America it is LW)
- It usually has a normative value; politicians blame their opponents to be "populist".

Mudde & Kaltwasser (2017) argue in favour of a definition of populism. They argue that populism is a thin-cantered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogonous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people:
- 'Thin-centered' is helpful in understanding the malleability of the concept. It can attach itself to both left-wing and right-wing 'thick-centered' ideologies such as socialism, neoliberalism, or fascism.
- 'The people' is a simplification of reality, it is a construction of the 99% of people with lower political power or socioeconomic status than 'the elite'. The people are sovereign and normatively good, 'pure'.
- 'The elite' is the 1% left, the 'establishment' which has the political power or economic affluence. They are normatively bad, 'corrupt'.

Populism vs. elitism (technocracy) vs. pluralism:
- Populism vs. elitism: the people are 'pure' and good so their will should be reflected
- Populism vs. pluralism: populism sees the people as one homogenous group whereas pluralism sees that the people are divided into multiple different groups whose interest should be reconciled through a bargaining process.

Populism vs. liberal democracy:
- Liberal democracy means checks and balances on majority rule.
- Populism argues that majority rule should not be challenged.

So: populism is democratic, but not liberal democratic.

Inclusionary vs. exclusionary populism:
- Inclusionary, common in LW populism in Lartin America. Calls for material benefits and political rights to be extended to historically disadvantaged groups.
- Exclusionary, common in RW populism in Europe. Seeks to exclude certain groups from 'the people'.

Hawkins (2010) uses this ideational approach to analyse how populist certain actors are, by looking at patterns in their speech.

Weyland (2017) criticizes the ideational approach by arguing that it leads to too many false-positives (George W. Bush, nazi Germany, and fascist Italy) and argues that it overlooks the essence of populism, the top-down leadership. Instead, he argues that populism is a political strategy. A populists' principal power capability comes from the people, the numbers. It is an individual person. And his relationship to his voter base is direct and unorganized. "Populism is best defined as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized supporters." He does not count European populism as populism.

There is of course still a people vs elite thing. SO what is really the difference, what is the ideology in the Mudde approach – is not just a strategy either?

Ostiguy (2017) criticizes Mudde for being too moralistic and Eurocentric and Weyland for not taking into account why unmediated, personalistic connections succeed. He proposes a socio-cultural account of populism which focuses on the relationship between the populist and the people. He introduces a high and low axis, where high stands for formal, procedural, elite, polished, cosmopolitan and rational relations between the politician and the people. And where low stands for informal, personalistic, vulgar, nativist, emotional, and transgressive relations. It is not just rhetoric (as Hawkins analyses) but also gestures, clothing, tone, and vulgarity. Populism constructs a "people" by using socio-cultural identity politics: "he is one of us".

The economic approach (increase spending for short-term growth but long-term inflation) is no longer really used.
Can be disproved by the fact that some Latin American populists were neoliberal, and instated neoliberal policies with the help of the IMF.

Ideational is maybe too broad (Bush), but political-strategic too narrow (European populism).
All capture the chameleonic nature: thin-centered, lack of ideological context in others
Socio-cultural completes political-strategic because it explains how the maintenance of uninstitutionalized support is possible.

Defining RW populism

Mudde (2007) adds nativism and authoritarianism to the populist core to define RW populism. RW populism understands 'the people' in ethno-cultural terms. This leads to anti-immigration sentiment.

Rydgren (2018) – *Radical Right Handbook Intro*: Provides ideological and organizational overview

Populism's success/rise of populism

Golder (2016) focuses on demand-side and supply-side factors to explain the success of far-right parties.

Demand side:
- Modernization grievances. Some voters who are unable to cope with the rapid developments of modernization, these losers of modernity turn to the far-right.
    o Workers who are adversely affected by globalization and a postindustrial society (the China shock of the US).
    o The shift from materialism to postmaterialism (Inglehart) produced a reactionary backlash among those who still held traditional moral values.
- Economic grievances. Social groups with conflicting material resources compete over limited resources. Members of the ingroup blame the outgroup for economic problems, leading to, for instance, anti-immigration sentiment.
    o Economic grievances do not always lead to this, only if there is (perceived) conflict with others. Such as with immigrants in the hunt for a job. Therefore, unemployment increases only cause more people to vote for the far-right only when immigration is sufficiently high.
- Cultural grievances. This is about social identity, the ingroup believes that their identity is better than those of outgroups.

Supply side:
- Political opportunity structure.
    o Electoral rules. Disproportionate electoral systems hurt small parties. Although it is true that far-right parties receive fewer seats in disproportionate electoral systems, it has not been established that it also leads to fewer votes, partly because many far-right parties are no longer small and partake in the government formation process.
    o Party competition.
        ▪ When mainstream parties converge in policy space, populist parties benefit.
        ▪ Issue salience and issue ownership.
        ▪ Dismissive, accommodative, adversarial.
        ▪ The media. Three strategies, ignore or cover them either positively or negatively. The latter two increase the salience of the far-right

issues. **Problems here: doesn't escape the demand supply side, maybe its just people demanding more of it so the media is a symptom – maybe you could make a case here about that populism is more perceptive to going viral, and the establishment cannot necessarily use those strategies, though maybe latin American is an example of where it can be used .**

- Political cleavage structure. If cleavages are stable, there is little room for new parties. Dealignment helped far-right parties.
- Party organization. For electoral persistence, as strong party organization is necessary (LPF).

Interactions between supply and demand. You need both supply and demand for electoral success.

Demand side factors

Cultural backlash

Norris & Inglehart (2019) compare two theories about the rise of populism:
1. Globalization has produced economic losers in the WC and lower MC. Economic vulnerability creates ingroup solidarity, conformity, rejection of outsiders, and search for strong, protective leadership. Hence, these groups support RW populists.
2. Cultural backlash thesis: the shift from materialism to postmaterialism produced a reactionary backlash among traditionalists (the losers of modernity) whose once dominant values have been eroded, prompting them to vote for RW populists.

They find stronger evidence for links between traditionalist and demographic factors such as age, race, and education, and voting for populist parties. So they endorse the cultural backlash thesis.

However, this seems to only explains the rise of the radical right, not necessarily of populism (so Trump and European populism). And not really other types of populism such as those in Latin America.

What about young people

Economic grievances & corruption

Mudde & Kaltwasser (2017) – argue that a weak state (for instance, corruption) increases the demand for populism.

Identity politics & nativism

Sobolewska & Ford (2020) – *Brexitland*: Identity and demographic change fuel support.

Immigration
- **Economic component**
- **Cultural component**

Supply side factors

Party competition & accommodation/cordon sanitaire

Krause et al. (2022) argue that accommodation does not work. Instead, it increases the salience of RW issues. Though some argue that it can work, but only when it is done immediately and robustly (Golder, 2016).

Leadership & media (charisma)

Hawkins et al. (2017) – Media personalization and leader-centred campaigns.

Populism and democracy

Table 1. Positive and negative effects of populism on liberal democracy

Positive effects	Negative effects
Populism can give voice to groups that do not feel represented by the political elite.	Populism can use the notion and praxis of majority rule to circumvent minority rights.
Populism can mobilize excluded sectors of society, improving their integration into the political system.	Populism can use the notion and praxis of popular sovereignty to erode the institutions specialized in the protection of fundamental rights.
Populism can improve the responsiveness of the political system, by fostering the implementation of policies preferred by excluded sectors of society.	Populism can promote the establishment of a new political cleavage, which impedes the formation of stable political coalitions.
Populism can increase democratic accountability, by making issues and policies part of the political realm.	Populism can lead to a moralization of politics whereby reaching agreements becomes extremely difficult if not impossible.

(Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017)

Populism is a odds with liberal democracy, not with democracy as such.
It is also against the EU because the EU is also a limit on its power.

Furthermore, populism can be democratizing. For instance, Solidarity in Poland.
Although it was not that populist, it represented the people against the elite.
But it can also decrease democracy, because the emphasis is so much on an individual person and removes all the checks on power (Hungary with Orban).

Therefore, populism can have different effects on the democratization effect.

Corrective to democracy

Mouffe (2019) argues in favour of a left-wing populism, constructing a new 'people' against the neoliberal elite.
Laclau believes that populism fosters a 'democratization of democracy' by admitting the demands of excluded sectors and make the political system more responsive. This can also be seen in Latin American populism where formerly excluded sectors were

suddenly included: Chávez in Venezuela. Or even in European populism where anti-immigration sentiment can be seen as a 'silent majority'.

Threat to democracy

Rummens (2017) argues that populism is a threat to democracy by undermining checks and balances on majority power, undermining pluralism. He argues that while populism is a symptom of the malfunctioning of liberal democracy, it is not the solution for it, instead it should be considered as a threat to democracy. He argues that democracy and liberalism are not two distinct concepts, instead they are one concept: co-originality. 'pure democracy' or 'pure liberalism' would be deeply at odds with liberal democracy.

However, the simple fact that we can perceive different liberal democratic regimes with different levels of checks and balances makes the idea that they are separate concepts at least to an extent true.

Case studies

Populist radical right in Europe

Taggart (2017) argues that populism in Western Europe is best understood through its issues:
- Immigration
- Regionalism (Northern League in Italy or Flemish Block in Belgium)
- Corruption
- Euroscepticism

Left-wing populism in Latin America

De la Torre (2017) discerns three waves in Latin American populism:
- Classical populism (1930s-1950s) aimed to include the masses through nationalist and redistributive policies. It was democratizing by expanding suffrage and political inclusion but undermined liberal institutions.
- Neoliberal populism (1990s) attacked the elite but implemented market reforms.
- Radical populism (2000s-present) criticized neoliberalism and liberal democracy.

Other examples:

- Turkey (Erdogan is not against immigration)?
- US, tea party probably the same as western European
- Israel - jewishness
- Modi (india)
- Japan
- South-korea

Euroscepticism
- **Anti establishmentness (populism)**
- **Nationalism/culture (more right wing factors)**
- **Maybe another small factor: EU is usually more proportional election so its simpler.**

Left vs right
- **They prefer to do take a right wing cultural position**
- **For economic position it can be either**
- **They say: beyond left and right, they just represent the people – antipolitical.**
- **Maybe a conceptual discussion about populism**

Populism provides voter frustrations but not provide government solutions
- **Demand**
- **Economic things, anti establishment**
- **Populism does not need to provide government solutions, maybe its mostly a strategy and does not provide any ideological ideas**
- **Maybe some policies are populist**

Questions

Is the concept of populism analytically useful? (2024)

What constraints does the rise of populism face? (2024)

Populists catalyse voter frustrations but do not provide governance solutions". Discuss. (2023)

Is populism too vague a concept to be analytically useful? (2022)

'The similarities between different strands of populism outweigh the differences.' Discuss. (2022)

What factor best accounts for the Euroscepticism of radical parties of the right? (2021)

Is populism as a concept useful? (2019)