

Why Populism? How Parties Shape the Electoral Fortune of Populists

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Abstract

Much of the literature on populism is limited to a regionally specific context. Because of this approach, theories of populism have not been adapted to explain cross-regional similarities or differences of populists and populist parties. Using cross-regional data and exploratory case studies from Latin America and Western Europe, we provide evidence that the prevalence of populism in a given party system is a function of institutional hostility. In laying out our theory we identify three ways in which populist parties enter party systems and contest elections: populist entry, populist targeting and adaptation, and populist capture.

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Introduction

Recent events, such as the referendum for United Kingdom to leave the European Union, the near election of a FPÖ candidate in Austria for President, and the election of Donald Trump, have driven a wide spread discussion of populism and its (perceived) growing strength. Elected officials and pundits within this discussion often speak of the rise populism as a recent phenomenon, but this view is inaccurate. The presence of populism so prevalent in Europe and Latin America is nothing new. For decades now, populist parties such as the FPÖ in Austria or the FN in France have made steady electoral gains, while in Latin America populist parties and figures such as MAS with Evo Morales in Bolivia or Hugo Chávez in Venezuela surged to power in the 2000s. So, while the recent incidents of populism in electoral democracies is notable, it is not unprecedented.

The presence of populism in Latin America and Europe is reflected in a large literature on populism. However, most of the work to date has focused within a given region, with little work which draws comparisons directly between populism in the Latin American and European context. The study of populism in Europe primarily focuses on radical-right populist parties (Betz, 1994; Mudde, 2007). In this context, populists that have managed electoral gains or survived multiple electoral rounds boast organized and coherent parties. Research on populism in Latin America, on the other hand, focuses on individual populist leaders that are associated with parties that are far weaker and more ephemeral than their counterparts in Europe (Conniff, Roberts, Basurto, Drake, & Ellner, 2012). Comparative work on populism can make better use of cross-regional comparisons in order to highlight key mechanisms which explain the variance in the electoral fortunes of populist parties.

The variance in electoral performance of populist parties, whether between or within regions, has largely been ignored in the literature¹. Previous work on populism

¹Recent works by Cas Mudde, Cristóbal Kaltwasser, Kirk Hawkins, and Bruno Silva, have begun comparing populist rhetoric across regions (K. A. Hawkins & Silva, 2015; Mudde, 2011; Mudde & Kaltwasser,

in the European context has largely focused on the presence, survival, or professionalization of populist or radical right parties (Art, 2011; Mudde, 2007). For years, European populist parties had limited electoral success - usually functioning as exclusionary peripheral parties garnering only small shares of electoral support. However, in recent years populist parties such as Syriza (Greece), Podemos (Spain), and FPÖ (Austria), won control of the government, became major parties, and/or have nearly captured the presidency. While these examples remain exceptional cases, populist parties throughout Europe have gained ground over the past decade and appear to be expanding.

By contrast, populists and populist parties in the Americas have frequently won presidential elections and captured legislative majorities. Figure 1 graphs the distribution of the presence of populism in party systems in both Western Europe and the Americas. The figure makes use of recent work by K. A. Hawkins and Silva (2015) that weights electoral results for parties in Latin America and Western Europe by the strength of their populist rhetoric. A country's weighted populist score can run from 0² to 100³. Figure 1 illustrates that populism is more common in Latin American party systems than Western Europe. Most European party systems have populism scores under 20, while 20 is nearly the modal score for Latin American party systems. The variation of populism across Latin America is quite striking. The strongest populist parties, by these criteria, are found in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, and Peru. These results should come as no surprise and serve as a face validity check on Hawkins and Silva's method. Yet while some the most populist party systems are found in Latin America, so too are some of the least populist populism party systems. The latter include Mexico, Paraguay and Uruguay (K. A. Hawkins & Silva, 2015).

2013)

²Party systems may receive a score of 0 for two possible reasons. First, parties that won any share of votes were scored as using no populist rhetoric. Second, if any set of parties within the system employ populist rhetoric but those parties receive no share of the vote the system's score is 0

³All parties in the system use strong populist rhetoric

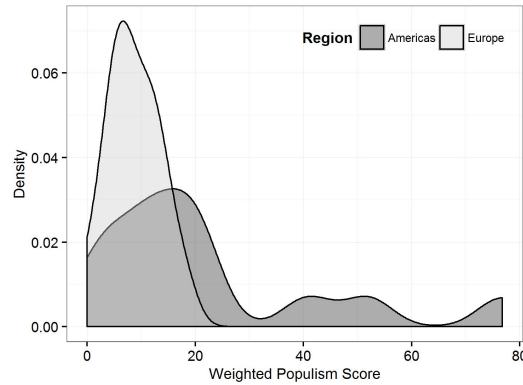


Figure 1. Distribution of Populism in Latin American and Western European Party Systems

What explains the variation of populism in party systems both within and between regions? As far as we are aware no work has attempted to answer this question. In this piece we identify one factor that helps explain this variation. In doing so we build on existing theoretical and empirical work to extend the comparative analysis of populism beyond a single region. We argue that the variation in the success of populist parties is a function of changes in institutional hostility. Institutional hostility refers to the extent to which there is opportunity or space in the party and electoral environments for new (populist) parties to emerge. Institutional hostility is a product of system level factors, inter-party factors, and intra-party factors. We expect that as individual political parties become more institutionalized and/or electoral institutions become more restrictive, the probability that populist parties will succeed diminishes, thereby reducing the expected payoff to adopting a populist strategy. By contrast, weak or underinstitutionalized parties and/or the presence of more permissive electoral institutions opens the political space for populist parties and appeals and increases the expected payoff of such strategies.

We argue that party institutionalization is key to understanding the electoral success and behavior of populist parties. By studying populism through the lens of political parties we hope to answer four related questions. First, why is populism much more pervasive in party systems outside of Western Europe? One key feature that distinguishes Western European party systems from their counterparts in other regions

is the degree of party institutionalization within these systems. We argue that systems with more institutionalized parties provide comparatively less fertile soil for the seeds of populism. Second, what explains why economic shocks give rise to populism in some contexts but not others? We argue that an implication of our theory is that party institutionalization may be an important intervening variable between shocks and populist support. Third, what explains why anti-elite distrust of institutions is represented by populism in many, but not all cases where this sentiment is present? We argue that the explanation lies in political parties — where parties are institutionalized there is less space for proto-populists to take advantage of popular disillusionment. Thus, while the disillusionment exists, high levels of institutional hostility prevents new parties from entering and capitalizing upon the distrust of institutions. Lastly, why do some populist parties adopt inclusive strategies while others pursue exclusive strategies? We contend that where party institutionalization is high, populists are forced to appeal to limited segments of the population because many voters are already firmly tied to a party — leading them to develop more narrow targeting strategies which result in more exclusive appeals.

While our main focus is on parties and party systems, the permissiveness of the electoral system also helps condition the opportunities for new populist parties to enter and effectively compete. Where electoral institutions are highly restrictive, new populist party entry is limited. Where the electoral system is permissive, populist parties can easily enter the electoral arena where their success depends on the level of institutionalization among the parties with which they compete.

We argue that populism manifests itself in three ways: populist entry, populist targeting and adaptation, and populist capture. *Populist entry* occurs when environmental hostility is low. That is, the electoral system is permissive and party institutionalization low enough that new parties can enter and immediately compete with, or even outmatch, other parties in the system. *Populist targeting and adaptation* occurs where permissive electoral systems are combined with institutionalized parties. In such environments populist parties can enter but must adapt and evolve in order to

compete with institutionalized parties. Lastly, *Populist capture* occurs in environments where restrictive electoral rules combine with weak parties. Where populists arise in such systems it will be by taking control of an existing, factionalized party, rather than by entering as a new party. We discuss these means of populist contestation in greater detail later.

Our paper proceeds as follows: First, we introduce the highly contested concept of populism and argue for an ideational, rather than material, conceptualization of populism. After conceptualizing populism, we introduce our theory of how the presence of populism within a party system is dependent upon institutional hostility – which we argue is a function of both party institutionalization and the restrictiveness of electoral institutions. Following our theory, we outline our research strategy and then present quantitative and qualitative data to support our hypotheses. The purpose of this paper is not to estimate any causal effect of party institutionalization or electoral system restrictiveness on populism. Instead, our focus is to establish the plausibility of this argument and suggest areas for further research. After presenting our data we then summarize our findings and conclude.

Populism: A Slippery Concept

Populism is one of the most contested concepts in the social sciences and is notoriously difficult to apply consistently (K. A. Hawkins & Silva, 2015; Roberts, 1995, 2003; Weyland, 2001). Populism has frequently been associated with robust redistributive policies that are set against global liberalism and is often employed by academics, pundits, and politicians as a euphemism for these leftist policies. However, the resurgence of populism in the 1980s and 1990s challenged the classical conceptualization of populism as populist leaders did not limit themselves to leftist policies (Roberts, 2016; Weyland, 2001). Fittingly, debate on the formulation of populism as a concept in political science now centers on two opposing notions of what populism is. On one side of the argument authors propose a concept rooted in the form of elite-mass linkages and mobilization (Roberts, 2014; Weyland, 2001) while on the other is an approach focused on the discursive rhetoric of populists (K. A. Hawkins &

Silva, 2015; Mudde, 2007).

The elite-mass linkages approach to populism posits that populism is not simply tied to policy programs but instead to the nature of political organization. Under this framework, populists gain electoral support by creating large, cross-cutting, hierarchical, yet unorganized bases (Weyland, 2001). Roberts (2015) argues that populism is a top-down, elite expropriation of mass mobilization that elites may exploit for electoral and political gain. Roberts' conceptualization of populism is deeply rooted in the Latin American experience where populists step over the ashes of political parties whose downfall was brought on by elite defection or economic crisis. In these instances populists need only to push open an unlocked door into a party system where opponents are no longer able to mobilize the masses through a party apparatus.

In light of the Latin American experience this conceptualization of populism has merit. Because political parties in Latin America are relatively weak (Levitsky, Loxton, Van Dyck, & Domínguez, 2016) individuals can compete in the electoral arena without building a party and instead rely on top-down populist mobilization. Why pay the costs of building a party when you can mobilize the masses for electoral gain without one? This conceptualization, however, encounters problems when applied to European cases where political parties remain crucial to electoral success and the elite subjugation of the masses is less pronounced.

Seeking to explain populism in Europe, Mudde (2007) writes from a tradition of populism that appears quite different than the experience of populism in Latin America. The European experience with populism has a number of key distinctions that require a different conceptualization of populism. First, and perhaps most importantly, European populists differ significantly from their Latin American counterparts in that they tend to develop more robust party organizations. Another crucial distinction is the tendency of these parties to be rightist parties with a strong exclusive nationalistic bent. Exclusive populist movements or parties seek to reinforce material, political, and symbolic dimensions within certain social groups while inclusive populist parties or movements seek to cross-cut material, political, and symbolic social groups.

To conceptualize populism in Europe, Mudde (2007) and Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013) frame populism as a discursive concept. In this framework, populism is a view of the world, expressed through discourse, with two opposing forces; the people - who embody the moral good - and the corrupt elite who conspire against the people. Building off of Mudde's ideational concept, K. Hawkins, Riding, and Mudde (2012) define populism as a "*Manichean approach to the political world that equates the side of Good with the putative "will of the people" and the side of Evil with a conspiring elite*" (2012, 2).

For Ostiguy (2009a, 2009b, 2013) populism is not necessarily a construct of how the world is viewed but a function of how the populist signals their closeness to the people. Ostiguy (2013) argues that populists relate to the people by flaunting the low - behaving or speaking in a way that sets them apart from the elite and allows them to be more closely related to the people. By way of example, consider two well-known Western politicians: David Cameron and Donald Trump. Cameron, an Oxford educated British politician speaks and behaves like a member of the cultural elite and adheres to conventional rules and procedures. Trump, by contrast, flaunts the low and appeals to "the people" by using coarser language and rhetoric filled with insults towards elites while dismissing and denigrating traditional rules and institutions.

For the purposes of this study we adopt an ideational conceptualization of populism. We do this because it provides greater flexibility in comparing populists across regions of the world than is otherwise possible with an elite-mass approach. By adopting an elite-mass conceptualization of populism, we would limit ourselves to elite-dominated mass movements which are rarer in areas of the world where politics are well organized via political parties. We also do not favor one ideational conceptualization over the other. A *prima facie* check of populists suggests that there is significant overlap between the Manichean (K. Hawkins et al., 2012) and flaunting-the-low (Ostiguy, 2009a) types of populists. Often, in their attempt to construct a Manichean framing of the world, populists seek to relate to "the people" to set themselves apart from the elite against whom they are engaged in political battle.

Populism's Party Problem

Many explanations for the rise of populism have been put forward – a number of which center on economic-focused explanations such as the growth of or backlash against globalization (Kriesi et al., 2006, 2008; Mughan, Bean, & McAllister, 2003; Swank & Betz, 2003) or neoliberalism (Roberts, 1995; Weyland, 1999). While populist discourse often refers to economic grievances, we agree with others that populism is a chiefly political phenomena (Roberts, 2014; Weyland, 2001). Because this is chiefly a political phenomena within electoral democracies we argue that populism is closely linked with the nature of political parties. While we are among the first to explicitly link populism to party institutionalization, other scholars have certainly noted the role that parties play in the rise of populism,⁴ particularly in Latin America. Ken Roberts, for example, notes that the use of bait-and-switch tactics by party elites led to a programmatic delinkage between society and parties and contributed to the rise of populist politicians (Roberts, 1995, 2012, 2013). While we use a different conceptualization of populism than Roberts, we likewise view populism as highly influenced by the party system, specifically, the degree of party institutionalization.

Like other scholars we view party institutionalization as having two main components. First, institutionalized parties are characterized by value-infusion (Levitsky, 1998), meaning individual elites are willing to invest in the party to achieve their long term goals and as a result parties tend to be robust, cohesive organizations with professionalized staff and an establish label. Second, institutionalized parties have deep societal roots, with strong and stable links to identifiable groups of voters (Mainwaring, Scully, et al., 1995). Together, high levels of value infusion and strong societal roots produce institutionalized parties in which the short term particularistic interests of individual politicians are at times subordinate to the broader, longer term interests of the party (Bizzaro, Hicken, & Self, 2016).

⁴Work on populism in Europe has also focused on how convergence to the center by mainstream parties opened the door to radical right populist parties (Abedi, 2002; Carter, 2011; Kitschelt & McGann, 1997; Mudde, 2007).

So, how does the degree of party institutionalization influence populism? We argue that party institutionalization combines with the nature of the electoral system to shape the incentives and capabilities of would-be populists to mobilize voters and compete in the electoral arena. We label the combined effect of the electoral system and institutionalization as the degree *institutional hostility*. The hostility of the institutional environment shapes both the likelihood that populists will compete and be successful, and the form that populist competition will take.

We distinguish between two factors that affect the hostility of institutional environment: the level of party institutionalization, and the level of electoral permissiveness/restrictiveness (See Table 1). Holding all else constant (the economic environment, the popularity of existing parties, popular disillusionment, etc.) the combination of these two factors shape the competitive environment and thus the strategy of would-be populists.⁵ To demonstrate how institutional hostility shapes the environment for we outline three ways through which populists contest elections vis-à-vis existing parties in a polity: Populist Entry, Populist Targeting and Adaptation, and Populist Capture (See Table 1).

Low Institutional Hostility: Populist Entry

When party institutionalization and barriers to entry are low the institutional environment for populist parties is ideal. Populists can easily enter the system and capitalize upon weak party-voter attachments and permissive electoral institutions to mobilize voters. In short, we argue that when institutional hostility is low this provides the best opportunity for populist parties, and hence, we should expect populist parties to be more prevalent and more electorally successful, *ceteris paribus*.

In cases where institutional hostility is low and political entrepreneurs enter the party system using a populist strategy we expect these parties to be inclusive populist parties. Because electoral volatility is high and voter linkages to pre-existing parties are

⁵Tavits (2013) explores how what she terms "environmental hostility" shapes the organization and party-building decision of new parties in post-communist democracies. Where environmental hostility is high (e.g. where public sentiment is hostile or where parties are at a disadvantage in terms of resources and reputation) parties have incentives to strengthen party organizations to compensate (p. 156).

		Degree of Institutionalization	
		Low	High
Degree of Electoral System Restrictiveness	Low	Low institutional hostility (Populist Entry) Bolivia, Spain, and Venezuela	Moderate institutional hostility (Populist Targeting & Adaptation) Austria and France
	High	Moderate institutional hostility (Populist Capture) United States	High institutional hostility (Populism is rare)

Table 1

weak, it is in the interest of the entering populist party to build a coalition that is cross-cutting and inclusive of many factions from the disaffected segments of society in order to maximize its electoral appeal.

Moderate Institutional Hostility Due to Low Party Institutionalization: Populist Capture

What are our expectations where institutions are only moderately hostile—either a combination of weak parties with a restrictive electoral system, or strong parties with a permissive electoral system? Let's start with a system where parties are weakly institutionalized but the electoral system makes new party entry difficult. Because of the restrictive nature of the electoral system we expect the presence of populism in the party system to be less common—nascent populist parties typically cannot enter and capture large number of votes.

While rare, when we do see populists emerging in this type of moderately hostile setting, the path to power is likely to be an intra-party one. Namely, populist leaders or factions wrest control of an existing party from other factions. Populist capture thus occurs when a populist (either a party outsider or leader of an internal party faction)

attempts to gain control of the party, and non-populist party elites are unable to prevent the populist's rise. Where parties are highly institutionalized it is likely that party elites will be able to coordinate to prevent such capture. However, where party institutionalization is low, a lack of party cohesion makes it more likely that populist wings will exist within the party, while party factionalism undermines the capacity of party elites to coordinate against populists.

Moderate Institutional Hostility Due to Permissive Electoral Institutions: Populist Targeting and Adaptation

What about situations where parties are institutionalized but electoral institutions are permissive? How do populist parties enter and survive in systems with institutionalized parties? If a populist party enters a party system with high levels of institutionalization, it is unlikely to sway large segments of the electorate. First, existing parties already have stable and strong links to society with high levels of voter-party attachment. Second, institutionalized parties typically have a professional and robust organization that is effective at mobilizing voters.

Because of this, these populist parties must typically focus on targeting limited segments of society that do not have strong links to existing parties. This leads populist parties to employ more exclusive rhetoric and policy proposals. If they wish to compete against existing parties they must broaden their appeal beyond niche segments of society and reduce the strength of their populist discourse—we call this strategy populist adaptation.

High Institutional Hostility: Few populist parties

Should proto-populists seek to enter a system where institutional hostility is very high because of non-permissive institutions *and* high levels of party institutionalization, they are unlikely to succeed. Winning a significant portion of the electorate will be difficult because it requires the new party to peel away a large number of voters that are strongly linked to existing parties. In addition, due to the highly restrictive nature of the electoral system they face the likely prospect of complete electoral failure with few to no seats. Given the hostile nature of the institutional environment populists

should be least likely to emerge under these conditions.

Alternative Approaches

Our argument points to parties and electoral restrictiveness as a cause of (the lack of) populism. We argue that institutional hostility shapes the strategies which political entrepreneurs may take to garner shares of the electorate. Stronger and more institutionalized parties reduce the ability of entrepreneurs who select a populist strategy to gain electoral traction. Thus, when parties are institutionalized or electoral systems are restrictive, populism is less prevalent in the system. We must also consider, however, that populism is actually a cause of party weakness or de-institutionalization.

If populism is a cause of party weakening or party de-institutionalization this suggests an endogeneity problem. In our model, we argue that parties are influential political institutions that are the best instruments for organizing and mobilizing voters. It is plausible that populism is actually a superior form of political mobilization, and that the rise of especially talented populists, such as Hugo Chávez, *causes* the collapse of existing parties within the system. Whether party weaknesses causes populism or populism undermines political parties is an empirical question that we seek to answer.

Our argument also implies a puzzle that we must grapple with: *if low institutional hostility allows populism to rise, why isn't populism ubiquitous in systems with low institutional hostility?* If populism is such a potentially powerful electoral tool, why then do we not observe more populism - especially where parties are weak? It is important to remember that populism is only one of many strategies politicians can use. Politicians may form parties, rely on personal wealth, use force, rely on clientelist networks, business ties, or use populism. None of these strategies are mutually exclusive and political entrepreneurs may use a mix of any set of strategies they believe to be the most advantageous. The use of populism as a strategy, then, is dependent upon alternative forms of political organization and mobilization strategies. Should alternative forms exist, political entrepreneurs may substitute to or away from populism depending on the instruments available to them.

Research strategy

We argue that the prevalence of populism in a party system is a function of the level of institutional hostility produced by the party and electoral system. As the level of institutional hostility increases the level of populist party electoral success should decrease, *ceteris paribus*. In circumstances where the average level of party institutionalization is high and institutions are non-permissive, populism should be rare. Where party institutionalization is low but electoral institutions are restrictive then populism should emerge within existing parties via populist capture. Where electoral institutions are permissive but parties are highly institutionalized then populist parties should be relatively small, and focused on the exclusive targeting of small portions of the electorate. Finally, the institutional environment which is most conducive to populist parties is one with weak parties and a permissive electoral system. Our goal in this paper is not to precisely estimate a causal effect. Rather we seek to establish the plausibility of our argument by presenting evidence of a link between average institutional hostility and the presence of populism in any given party system.

To establish this link we follow a two-step research design. First, we make use of quantitative data. The purpose of this quantitative data is to move beyond mere description and demonstrate a cross-regional correlation between party institutionalization and populism. Because of data limitations and the difficulty of identifying the exogenous relationship between party institutionalization and populism we stop short of estimating any causal relationship via this cross-national quantitative data.

The second step in our research design is to use exploratory cases studies. The use of case studies fills two purposes. First, using cases studies provides a more nuanced view of the potential causal mechanisms through which variance in party institutionalization and electoral institutions may lead to changes in the level of populism within a party system. Second, case studies allow us to address the issue of endogeneity/reverse causality. As previously mentioned, it is reasonable to believe that the rise of populism, or a particular populist, may lead to the de-institutionalization of

individual parties or the party system as a whole. By using exploratory case studies we pay particular attention to the timing of changes in the institutionalization of parties within a party system and the system as a whole vis-à-vis changes in the electoral fortunes of populists.

Data

Populism

We measure populism using data from K. A. Hawkins and Silva (2015) (Referred to as **HS** hereafter). **HS** treats populism as discursive and define it as discourse which treats politics as a dualistic struggle between the (morally good) people and the (morally evil or corrupt) elite. To measure populism, **HS** code party manifestos and selected speeches to produce a three point scale, ranging from 0 to 2. 0 indicates very little to no populism present, 1 indicates the presence of populist rhetoric but is tempered by non-populist elements, and 2 indicates that a text is extremely populist. After coding is completed, scores are then aggregated through a multi-step process a single indicator that indicates how prevalent populism is in a party system.⁶

Party Institutionalization

To measure the average institutionalization of the parties within the system, we use new data collected by the *Varieties of Democracy Project* (Hereafter V-Dem), Our primary measure of average party institutionalization, is V-Dem's index of Party Institutionalization, which we will refer to as *PI*. *PI* is an index created using Bayesian factor analysis of five party-related components: party organization, branches, linkages, distinct party platforms, and legislative party cohesion.⁷ *PI* is normalized on a 0 to 1 scale, with higher values associated with higher levels of institutionalization. The V-Dem data includes observations for 193 countries with fairly regular coverage from 1900 to 2014.

As an alternative way to operationalize institutionalization we employ a measure of party strength developed by Bizzaro et al. (2016). Party strength is an index that

⁶See the supplemental appendix for details about this indicator and its calculation

⁷For further discussion of the process please refer to the supplemental appendix and Bizzaro et al. (2016, pg. 10)

measures the extent to which political parties within a polity are characterized by: (1) permanent national party organizations, (2) permanent local party branches, (3) centralized mechanisms of candidate selection, (4) legislative cohesion, (5) minimal party switching (where elected members of a party change their party affiliation in between elections), and (6) programmatic (rather than clientelistic) linkages to their social base. The six indicators are aggregated through simple addition to form a Party Strength index, reflecting the expectation that each element of the index is partially substitutable. The index is also normalized on a 0 to 1 scale, with higher values associated with higher levels of institutionalization.

We use these two measure of institutionalization to explore the correlation between the average institutionalization or strength of parties within the party system and the level of populism within the party system. As previously stated, the data available on party system level populism is limited to the Americas and Western Europe in the years near 2010. Because of the limited quantitative data available on populism we average the past 10 years of *PI* for each of the 26 countries available in the K. A. Hawkins and Silva (2015) dataset.

Electoral System Restrictiveness

To proxy for electoral system restrictiveness we use a new measure of district magnitude provided by Selway, Self, and Jacobson (2016). Selway et al. (2016) collected data on the district magnitude which accounts for electoral systems with multiple tiers in selecting seats for the legislature. Selway et al. (2016) measure the average district magnitude using the following formula below.

$$AvgDistrictMag = \frac{(Seats_1/Districts_1)}{Seats_1/(Seats_1 + Seats_2)} + \frac{(Seats_2/Districts_2)}{Seats_2/(Seats_1 + Seats_2)}$$

We use the log of *AvgDistrictMag* as our measure of electoral system restrictiveness. We emphasize that this measure is a proxy for electoral system restrictiveness. One weakness of this proxy is that it does not account for the restrictiveness of the electoral system at the executive level. Some presidential or semi-presidential systems use rules that may make it easier for smaller parties to contest. Our measure does not capture this. Instead, we capture the restrictiveness of the electoral system at the legislative

level.

Case Selection

As previously mentioned, we also use exploratory case studies to probe the mechanisms through which institutional hostility potentially affects the presence of populism within a given party system as well as the direction and timing of this relationship. To explore the link between institutional hostility and populism we have selected six cases in two regions: the Americas and Western Europe. We have selected these regions to be consistent with our cross-national analysis and because countries within these regions provide variation in terms of the robustness of parties and party systems as well as the prevalence of populism.

From the Americas we have selected Bolivia, the United States, and Venezuela. In Evo Morales captured the MAS party, melded it with his significant grass-roots movements, and entered and came to dominate a relatively weak party system. The United States has a restrictive electoral system with moderately institutionalized parties. We focus on the 2016 U.S. election to demonstrate how populism can enter a seemingly stable party system through a under-institutionalized party - namely the Republican Party. Finally, Venezuela is the quintessential story of populism in Latin America. Following significant political upheaval during the 1990s, Hugo Chávez entered a weakened party system with a new and weakly-institutionalized political party using his own brand of strong populism – Chavismo.

In addition to the Americas we select three cases from Western Europe. Western Europe is commonly associated with relatively strong and institutionalized party systems. In Western Europe we have selected Austria, France, and Spain. Austria and France each demonstrate how populist parties are largely disadvantaged in well-institutionalized party systems. In both cases populist parties entered as fringe parties and struggled to garner electoral support. Austria's FPÖ and Frances FN parties have found greater electoral success as only as they have evolved and contested elections with a diluted populist brand. In Spain despite massive economic upheaval, long established political parties have been able to maintain a significant hold on the

electorate despite the rise of the new populist party, Podemos.

Cross-regional evidence

We begin establishing evidence for a cross-national association that supports our hypothesis that party and party system institutionalization is critical to understanding variation in populism. As previously mentioned, we have merged data from **V-dem** with cross-national data on populism from **HS**. We present the summary statistics in Table 2. In this table we also include the average vote share of all political parties in the party system that received at least one percent of the vote in either an executive or legislative election.

Table 2

<i>Sample Summary Statistics</i>					
Variable	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Vote Share	25	21.429	9.624	11.875	49.850
Populism	25	15.433	17.028	0.000	76.785
PI	25	0.840	0.153	0.485	0.985
Party Strength	25	0.686	0.138	0.387	0.901

Table 3 summarizes the party and populism information for our two regions. On average, European democracies have stronger, more institutionalized parties compared to democracies in Latin America, and, as expected, this corresponds with less populism, whether measured by the average **HS** populism score, or the average vote share obtained by populist parties. We can get a better view of the relationship between party institutionalization and populism by plotting *Populism* against our two measures of party institutionalization, *PI* and *Party Strength* (see Figure 1). Both panels in figure 1 shows a downward slope suggesting that as institutionalization increases, *Populism* decreases.

It is also clear from Figure 1 that populism varies more in the Americas compared to Europe, with Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela each having high levels of populism while Mexico, the United States, and Uruguay each have low levels of populism. By

Table 3

Breakdown of Populism and Party System Attributes by Region

Variable	Americas	Europe
PI	0.725	0.947
Party Strength	0.600	0.778
Populism	16.441	7.495
Vote Share	22.575	15.085

contrast, each European party system is relatively institutionalized and has low levels of populism.⁸

Next, we add the electoral system to the picture by combining *Party Strength* and the log of *AvgDistrictMag* to create an estimate of institutional hostility and plot the countries from our sample in Figure 3. The horizontal line separates countries with single and multi-seat constituencies. The vertical line represents the center of *Party Strength* which has been normalized and centers on 0.73 - the median value of *Party Strength* in the sample.⁹ Based on our theory, we expect the figure to resemble the 2x2 depicted in Table 1. The most populist cases should appear in the upper-left quadrant, where institutional hostility is low. Countries in the areas with moderate levels of institutional hostility should (upper right and lower left quadrants) should correspondingly lower levels of populism, with populists entering as exclusive outsiders in the upper left quadrant, and as intra-party populist insurgents in the lower left quadrant. Finally, populism should be relatively uncommon where institutional hostility is high (lower right).

The pattern of data in Figure 3 largely corresponds to our expectations. The countries with the highest populism scores are nearly all located in the top left quadrant. The average populism score of for the upper left quadrant is 25.72—two to

⁸Because of data availability Greece and Spain were omitted from this sample. We suspect that the variance of *Populism* would increase should these be included.

⁹We use Party Strength here rather than PI because Party Strength incorporates information about how much control party leaders exercise over their ticket, which allows us to distinguish between parties systems with open primaries (e.g. the U.S.) and those without.

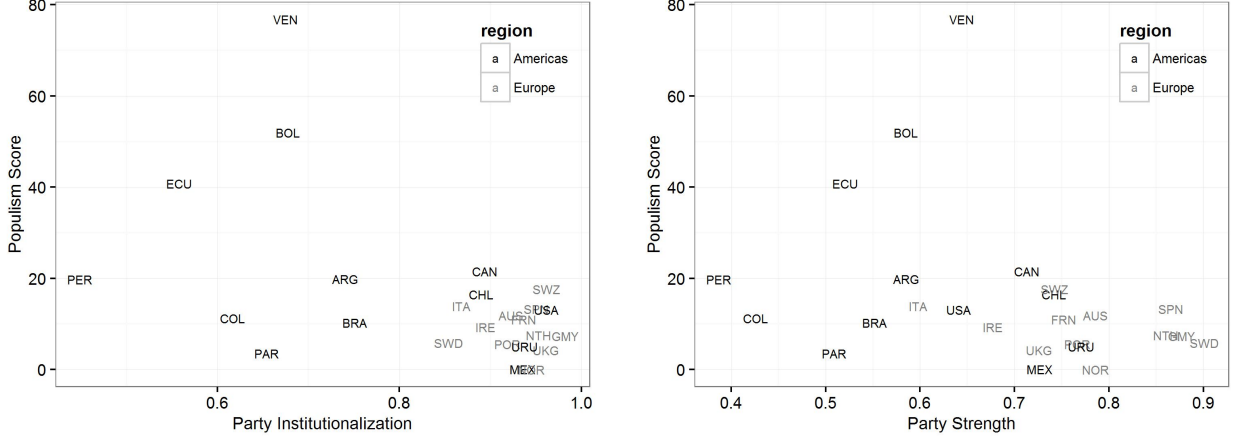


Figure 2. Party Institutionalization or Strength and Weighted Populism Score

three times the score for the other quadrants. The upper right quadrant is home to mainly cases with medium to low levels of populism. Populism is comparatively rarer in our single member district cases, as expected, but it is more common where parties are weaker (i.e. the U.S. and Canada), and rare where institutional hostility is high (bottom right). The evidence also corresponds with our expectation regarding regional differences. Populism in Latin America is largely due to low institutional hostility, where as populism in Europe occurs in an environment of strong parties and more permissive electoral systems.

The two most prominent outliers in Figure 3 are France and Canada. This was anticipated. Both countries have electoral systems that are more permissive than implied by our simple measure of electoral system restrictiveness, *AvgDistrictMag*. While France uses single member districts, it also uses multiple rounds in both its legislative and executive elections, which makes the electoral system more permissive than systems than is normally the case with single member districts. Thus, France would most likely be in the top-right dimension were we to use a different measure of electoral system restrictiveness. Turning to Canada, the high level of regionalism in the party system has regularly provided space for populist parties to enter and begin competing as regionally based parties.

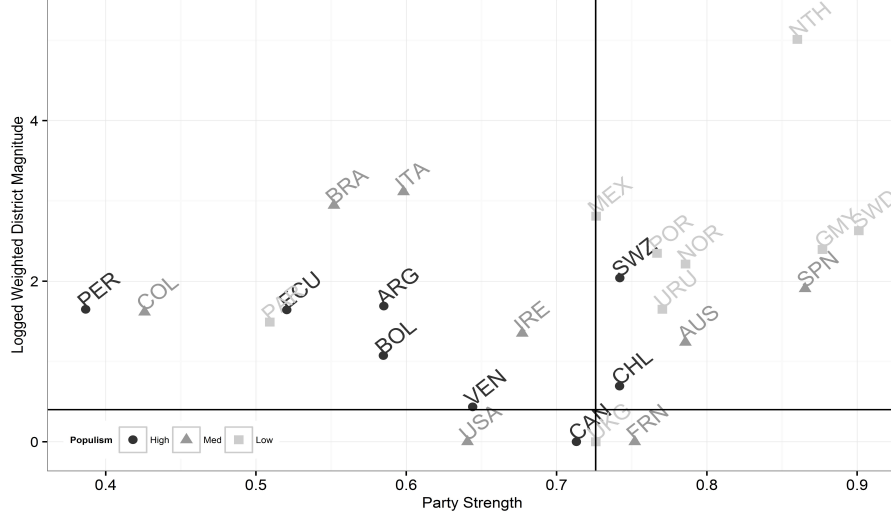


Figure 3. Institutional Hostility and Populism in Party Systems

Timing Populist Gains in Party Systems

As previously mentioned, the possibility of reverse causality (populism causing party and party system de-institutionalization) is theoretically plausible yet still an empirical question. Along with each of our brief case studies we use time-series plots of *PI* and *Party Strength* to investigate the timing of the rise of populist parties and address the issue of endogeneity. In each figure (Figures 4-10) we plot the time-series of *PI* and *Party strength* next to each other for comparison of within country time trends for each of the indicators. In each figure we plot the time-series for each indicator for each country for approximately 25 years.¹⁰ along with the global average for democracies¹¹ in order to compare the country-year trend with the global-year trend. We also highlight the years of the significant presence of populism in the party system with a gray background.

A few general findings stand out when looking at these figures. First, changes in *PI* seem to have no discernible temporal relationship with the rise of populism. In the European, Venezuelan, and U.S. cases *PI* is fairly stable prior to the rise of populism.

¹⁰In the European cases of Austria and France we extend the time horizon by 10 years to account for the first times that the FN in France and FPÖ in Austria became relatively competitive parties

¹¹To calculate the average we selected all country years where *polity2* ≥ 6 and calculate the year average for *PI* and *Party Strength*

Only in Bolivia do we observe any decrease in the level of *PI* prior to a populist period. Unlike *PI*, however, in many cases we do observe a decrease in *Party Strength* prior to the beginning of a populist period. In the cases where there is an increase or stability in *Party Strength* (Bolivia, and Venezuela), the average party strength in each of these systems is below the global democratic average of *Party Strength*. This observation supports our argument that populism is more likely to be present or increase its presence in systems with weak or weakened political parties. In instances where parties are strong (France and Austria) and the party system is well institutionalized, populist periods in these cases began after small decreases in *Party Strength*. In none of our cases do we see the onset of populism prior to a decline in *PI* or *Party Strength*.

Case Studies

Because the quantitative data is not well suited for estimating causal effects we include a number of brief case studies to provide a preliminary exploration of the timing and type of populism present in the Americas and Western Europe. We use these case studies to walk through the causal mechanisms of how institutional hostility influences the presence of populism in party systems. We also use these case studies to show how the strength of populism can fluctuate over time as a function of institutional hostility.

Populist Entry

Venezuela

We begin our cases studies with the prototypical populist case - Venezuela's Hugo Chávez. Prior to Chávez's ascendancy to the presidency in the late 1990s, the party system of Venezuela had experienced a decade-long collapse, despite previously being one of the most stable party systems in the region. If Venezuela had boasted one of the most institutionalized party systems, how did it come to collapse?

Under pressure from the IMF and facing dire economic circumstances Venezuela began to implement neo-liberal economic reforms in the late 1980s. These reforms were implemented by the AD (*Acción Democrática*) party after winning the 1989 election, despite promises to avoid austerity and return prosperity to the country (Dietz & Myers, 2007). This move "bait-and-switch" tactic served to programmatically dealign

political parties (Roberts, 2013). The fractures in the party system began to show immediately in the next presidential election as Rafael Caldera split from his previous party *COPEI* to run independently.¹² Thus, within a few short years neo-liberal reforms had opened the first major cracks into the Venezuelan party system.

After his failed coup and subsequent pardon, Hugo Chávez set to work organizing "Bolivarian Circles". These circles were loosely tied, non-hierarchical, civic organizations that would later be critical to Chávez in mobilizing the electorate (K. Hawkins, 2003; Roberts, 2006). Despite the presence and use of these circles, however, Chávez never set out to develop these organizations into a well institutionalized political party, instead leaving them to function as a quasi-party that would help mobilize voters.

If Chávez lacked an institutionalized party, how was he able to defeat political parties which had had such a strong hold on the party system? The initial cracks to the party system arose after to the bait-and-switch tactics of parties in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Not only did the introduction of IMF reforms cause parties to renege on electoral promises, but neo-liberal reforms severely weakened corporatist linkages. In addition to these reforms, however, economic decline - especially the decline of oil revenue - also undermined parties' ability to make use of clientelistic linkages. This weakening of both corporatist and clientelistic linkages helped hasten the collapse of the existing party system (Roberts, 2003, 2007).

Due to the collapse of Venezuela's party system Chávez faced little institutionalized opposition. Thus, Chávez had little incentive to build his own institutionalized party and was able to combine extreme populist rhetoric with the loosely organized Fifth Republic Movement to easily defeat his weakened opposition (K. Hawkins, 2003). The course of Venezuela's party collapse as the harbinger of the rise of Chávez is depicted in Figure 4 below. In the late 1980s and early 1990s both *PI* and *Party Strength* begin to decline, providing an inviting environment for populist entry.

¹²It is critical to note that all of this occurred well before Chávez's contested an election.

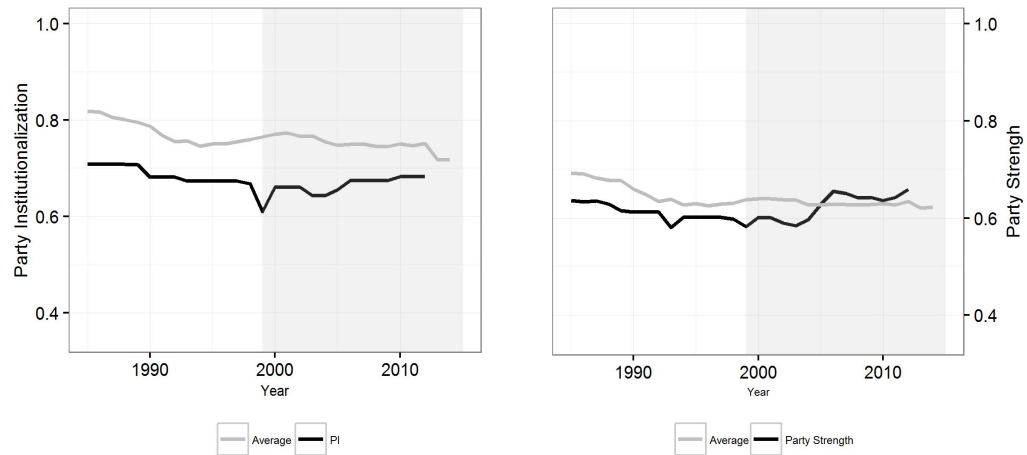


Figure 4. Venezuelan Party Institutionalization and Party Strength

Bolivia

Another participant in Latin America's populist revival (Roberts, 2007) is Evo Morales and his *MAS* party in Bolivia. The story of Bolivia's party system is similar to that of Venezuela's. Following years of state-led economic intervention, neo-liberal reforms played a critical role in undermining the foundation upon which political parties rested by significantly weakening organized labor unions (Crabtree, 2013; Roberts, 2013). From the mid-1980s, when neo-liberal reforms were first introduced, to Evo Morales' victory in 2006, the electoral and party system in Bolivia was fraught with instability.

Following the neo-liberal reforms in the mid-1980s politics was characterized by multiple parties and weak coalition governments (Crabtree, 2013). A new electoral system introduced in 1995 further contributed to upheaval in the party system (Centellas, 2009). Overall, net electoral volatility rose from 27.5 from 1980-2000 to 50.7 during 2000-2010 demonstrating the collapse of the Bolivian party system (Roberts, 2013, pg. 1441). Indicative of this instability was the rise of new parties or previously peripheral parties which garnered significant portions of the vote. The presence and success of new or previously peripheral parties is consistent with the low level of environmental hostility in the Bolivian party system. Extremely low levels of institutional hostility due to the collapse of the Bolivian party system set the stage for

the rise of Evo Morales.

Years before he would ascend to the presidency, Evo Morales rose to prominence as an organizer of coca unions. Following his capture of the previously defunct MAS party, Morales capitalized on opportunities during the Water and Gas Wars to build a larger movement that extended beyond coca growers (Webber, 2011). Using a new form of ethno-populism, Morales fused together a new movement-party that cross-cut across multiple ethnicities which had previously acted autonomously. Thus, using populism, Morales was able exploit the weakness in the Bolivian party system.

Turning to Figure 5 we see no evidence of reverse causality. However, unlike other cases in this article *PI* and *Party Strength* paint slightly difference pictures in the case of Bolivia. *PI* declines sharply prior to rise of populism, while *Party Strength* exhibits an increase prior to the rise of Morales to the presidency. However, this latter rise in follows earlier declines in *Party Strength*. Overall the Bolivian case fits our expectations for a situation in which populism can succeed. With relatively low levels of party institutionalization and a permissive electoral system new parties were able to enter and contest elections with some success.

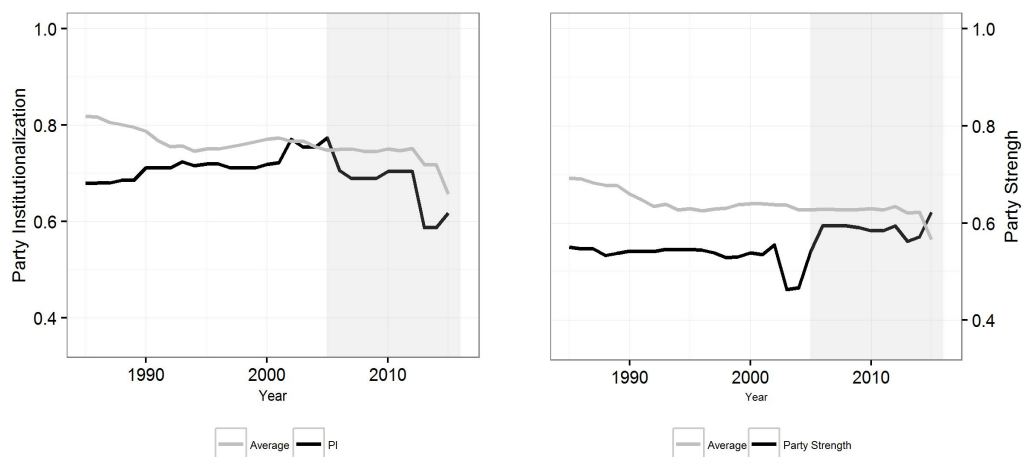


Figure 5. Bolivian Party Institutionalization and Party Strength

Spain

Both the Bolivian and Venezuelan party systems are near or below the global average. By contrast, the party systems in Europe are relatively well-institutionalized.

To what extent do we observe populist competition in systems where parties better institutionalized? The case of Spain illustrates that populists can compete and have some success where the electoral system is sufficiently permissive. Figure 6 shows that both *PI* and *Party Strength* are well above the global democratic average in Spain. Following the merger of parties that created the PP (*Partido Popular*) Spain has been a fairly stable two-party system with the PP and PSOE (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*) garnering a strong majority of the vote. This has been the case even with a fairly permissive electoral system. Following a reform of the electoral system in 1985 both the PP and PSOE garnered sufficient electoral support to maintain a two-party system despite Spain's use of multi-member district proportional representation and a fairly large district magnitude of 6.73 (Selway & Self, 2016).

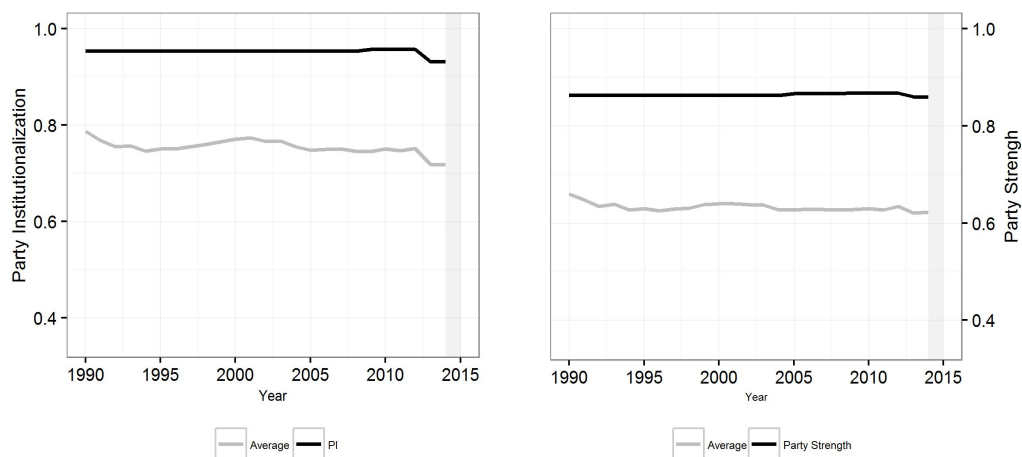


Figure 6. Spanish Party Institutionalization and Party Strength

The conditions in Spain since the 2008 global financial crisis were similar to those that led to the rise of successful populists in Bolivia and Venezuela. Following the financial crisis, unemployment rose steadily to an extremely high level (Figure 7). Yet this large and persistent economic malaise didn't immediately lead to any breakdown in the Spanish party system. Instability only began after the center-left PSOE agreed to austerity measures. Like other cases of populism in Latin America, the act of a leftist party agreeing to austerity measures was a bait-and-switch tactic with the potential to programmatically de-aligned the party with many of its followers (Roberts, 2013). In

fact, following the PSOE's introduction of austerity measures a large-scale protest broke out across the country and the party was eventually dealt a major blow, losing 15% of the vote from the previous election. However, despite the magnitude of the protests and the electoral defeat of the PSOE, the two-party system initially stayed intact with no new parties challenging the PP or PSOE in 2011.

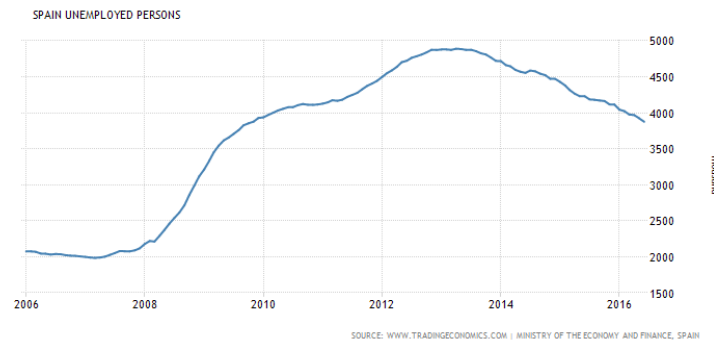


Figure 7. Spanish Unemployment (2006-2016)

Despite the electoral hold PSOE and PP maintained, the links between voters and the existing parties had been weakened as a result of the sustained economic crisis and the government responses to it. Figure 6 picks up this change, as *PI* decreases some prior to the 2015 election. As the level of institutionalization declined, the permissive electoral system allowed for the entry new competitors. In both the local and national elections of 2015, two new parties rose to prominence Podemos, one of which, Podemos, is very populist.

Given the political fragmentation after the 2015 election the parties were unable to form a government and new elections were held in mid-2016. As can be seen in Table 4 the new parties' (Podemos and Ciudadanos) as well as PSOE's electoral gains were largely unchanged with the center-right PP making modest gains.

Spain demonstrates how populist parties can enter into what had been a well institutionalized system. Following sustained and fairly extreme economic duress *and* a shift by the ruling party from their programmatic alignment with their voting base, Spain's party system began to de-institutionalize. In that less-institutionalized environment Spain's permissive electoral rules opened the door for a new populist party

to enter. However, the continued relatively high level of party institutionalization presents challenges for this new populist party. It remains to be seen whether Podemos can rely heavily on strong populist rhetoric to compete with institutionalized parties. According to our theory the (still) relatively high level of *PI* and *Party Strength* stand as an obstacle to Podemos future success.

Table 4

Elections Results in Spain (2011-2016)

Party	2011	2015	2016
PSOE	0.2876	0.22	0.2266
PP	0.4463	0.2871	0.3303
Podemos+	NA	0.2068	0.211
Cs	NA	0.1394	0.1305

Populist Targeting and Adaptation

Austria

To demonstrate how institutional hostility dampens the presence of populism in a party system we have selected the case of the FPÖ in Austria – one of the most notable cases of populism in Europe today. The FPÖ was founded in 1956 by former members of the Nazi party but was a very minor party for most of its early life. The fortunes of the FPÖ changed, however, during the 1980s following a decline in the strength of existing parties (as can be seen in Figure 8 and a change in leadership. In 1986 Jörg Haider became chairman of the FPÖ and quickly changed course. In an attempt to broaden the appeal of the FPÖ, Jörg Haider abandoned the previous agenda and retooled the party with a populist-nationalist blend which included a move to the right and strong anti-immigrant sentiment.

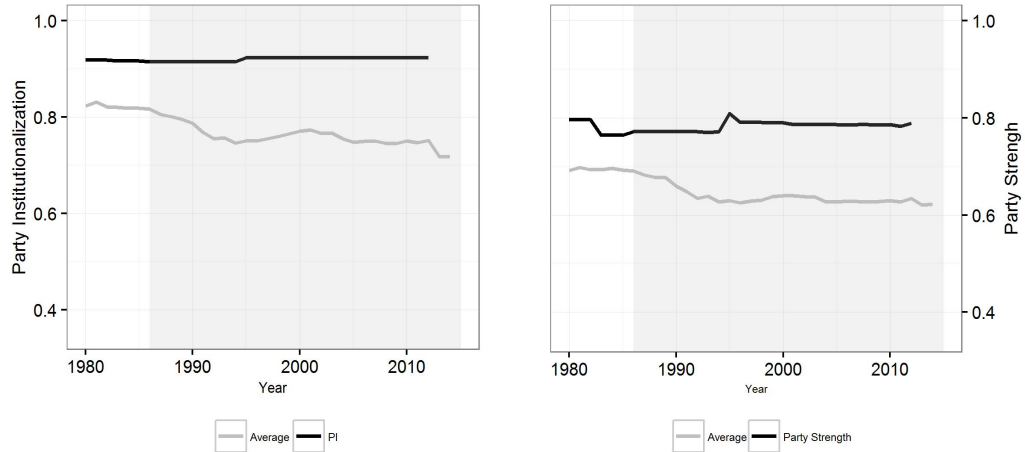


Figure 8. Austrian Party Institutionalization and Party Strength

Somewhat surprisingly the move to a populist-nationalist approach in order to broaden the appeal of the FPÖ seemed to pay off. In the years following Jörg Haider's ascendancy in the party, FPÖ started to make inroads within a highly permissive system that had been previously dominated by two parties. Unlike the case in France, which we discuss hereafter, the move to a populist strategy was successful because of lower levels of institutional hostility in the Austrian system. Even though the Austrian party system boasted two major and well institutionalized political parties (the SPÖ and the ÖVP), the nature of Austria's electoral system reduces institutional hostility. As in Spain, the presence of proportional representation in Austria reduces the pressure towards a two-party system and allows greater space for additional parties. In the case of the FPÖ, Jörg Haider was able to find space in the electoral market by using a more expansive appeal with populism after a small decline in the strength of the other parties. In this way lower institutional hostility due to permissive electoral institutions has allowed the FPÖ to become a major party (moving from approximately 5% of the vote to gaining 20.5% of the vote in 2013 National Council election and 46.2% in the 2016 Presidential elections).

The success of the FPÖ is consistent with our theoretical expectations. Austria is a prime example of populist adaptation. Given the permissive electoral system, populist parties were able to gain an early foothold in the party system. However, the presence

of highly institutionalized parties limited the number of voters available for mobilization, relegating the FPÖ to minor party status. Two things had to change in order for the party to broaden its appeal. First, a decline in party loyalty over the 1970s and 1980s—not fully captured in our *PI* and *Party Strength* measures, but well documented in the broader literature¹³—provided a set of unattached/weakly attached voters that new parties could target. Second, the FPÖ had to adapt its rhetoric to appeal to a broader set of voters. Over the course of the 1980s the FPÖ broadened and moderated its rhetoric. While the FPÖ certainly employs populist rhetoric, that rhetoric is less populist than many populist parties in Latin American cases— it falls at the midpoint in the index of populism created by K. A. Hawkins and Silva (2015). This adaptation in a moderately hostile environment has allowed the FPÖ to grow and become a major party in the system. However, the continued presence of relatively institutionalized competitors places a lower ceiling on the FPÖ’s success compared to what we observed in Latin America.

France

In addition to the FPÖ in Austria, two parties in France demonstrate how populist parties can adapt where institutional hostility is moderately high due to the presence of institutionalized parties. When speaking of populism in France, many scholars have focused their attention on the FN (*Front National*) largely because its success during presidential elections in the early 2000s. The FN entered the French party system following a decline in the average strength of political parties in the mid-1980s (as can be seen in Figure 9). This decline in party strength was the result of increased polarization within the system (Knapp, 2004), weakening links between parties and the population (Grunberg, 2008), and the difficulties of adapting to European integration (Bornschier & Lachat, 2009). These factors produced a small opening within the system that allowed a new populist party, the FN, to enter.

¹³See Müller 1993 for a review of this literature.

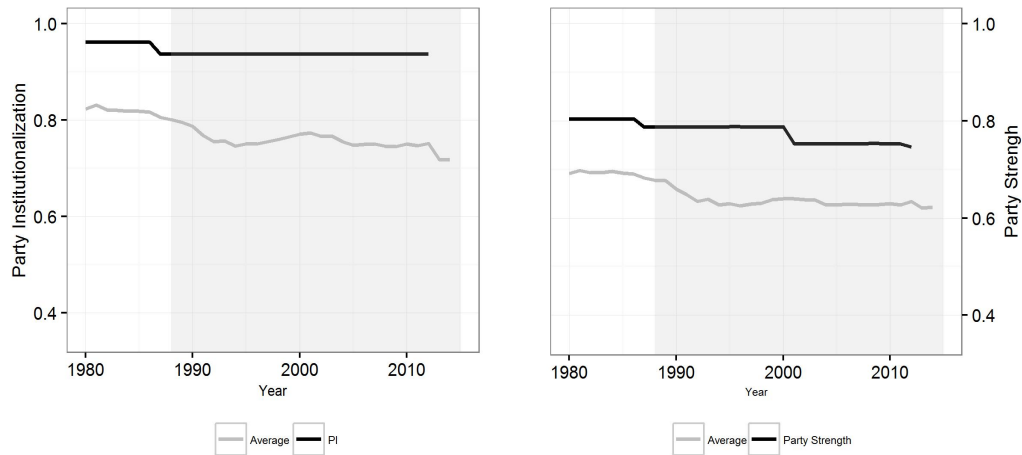


Figure 9. French Party Institutionalization and Party Strength

Although the FN was founded by Jean-Marie Le Pen in 1972, the FN first found limited electoral success (approaching 10% of the vote in the National Assembly) in 1986 and 1988. During the 1990s, the FN became more ethno-centric in order to expand its base while at the same time building links to labor unions and making use of state networks (Schain, 1999). The party's fortunes declined during the mid-2000s as Nicolas Sarkozy and the UMP moved to the right to co-opt some of FN's positions. Further problems arose for the FN as the mainstream parties began actively coordinating against the FN. This resulted in the FN's poorest electoral performance in 2007 with the party only garnering 4.3% of the vote in the National Assembly and 10.4% in the presidential election.

Following the late 2000s decline, Jean-Marie retired and his daughter, Marine, became president of the party. Marine's professional image differs from father's and she has pursued a different electoral strategy. She immediately moved to adapt and re-calibrate the FN to better compete in the party system. This included removing extremely xenophobic content from the party platform and moving the party away from the radical right (Shields, 2013) in a move to "de-demonize" the party (Mayer, 2013).¹⁴

¹⁴ Although the FN is commonly referred to as a populist party, the party's manifesto and speeches by Marine Le Pen are not heavily populist. K. A. Hawkins and Silva (2015) score (using 2012 speeches and manifestos) the FN much lower on their scale of populism than many parties commonly thought of as populist.

After Marine's move to remake the party, the FN reclaimed much of its lost support in the 2012 election. Like the case in Austria, the FN had to adapt to become more inclusive and less populist in the face of continued competition by more institutionalized political parties. The more restrictive French electoral system also produced incentives for a shift towards broader appeals.

Populist Capture

United States

Populist capture is more rare than populist entry or targeting/adaptation because it occurs where institutional hostility is high due a restrictive electoral system. Absent system-wide de-institutionalization, as we say in the Venezuelan case, the path for populist entrepreneurs is an internal one—i.e. the capture of an existing party. For this to occur at least one party has to be somewhat under-institutionalized. The most recent example of this phenomenon is the populist capture a political party in the United States by a political outsider – Donald Trump. The rise of Donald Trump did not happen overnight and the dynamics that lead to his capture of the Republican Party were in motion well before he entered the political scene.

As can be seen in Figure 10 the average strength of political parties in the U.S. party system began to decline *before* the 2008 financial crisis. In their paper, Miller and Schofield (2008) argue that political parties within the U.S. party system were going to face problems of maintaining a cohesive political base as economic and social preferences of voters and elites within the Republican Party continued to diverge.

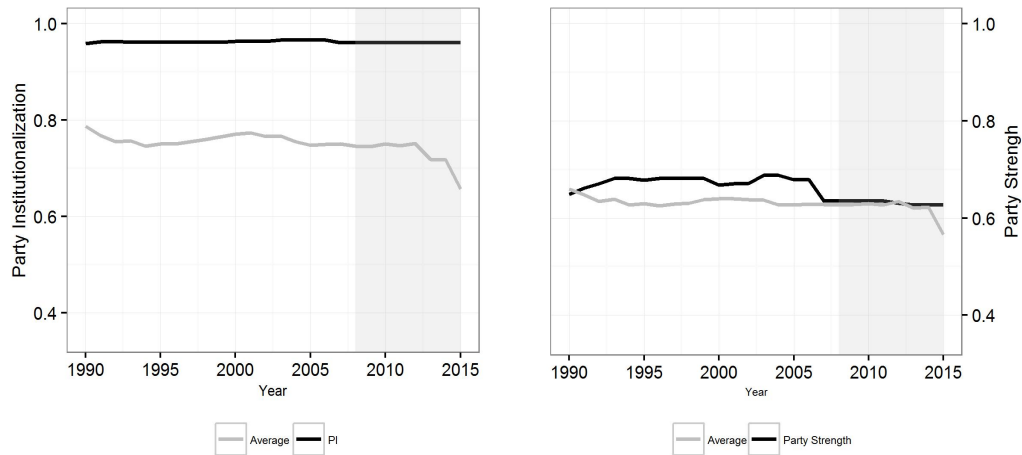


Figure 10. U.S. Party Institutionalization and Party Strength

The growth of the Tea Party faction within the Republican Party in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis and election of Barack Obama marks the beginning of the populist capture of the party. The presence of the Tea Party created significant problems of collective action at the elite level which would eventually prevent the party from coordinating against Donald Trump. The Tea Party wave of 2010 brought a new set of elites into the Republican Party who held candidate, policy, and legislative preferences that were relatively distant from mainstream party elite. Given the differences in preferences among party elite, intra-party coordination became more difficult. Witness the lack of coherent policy responses by the Republican party vis-à-vis the Democratic President. Instead of coherent policy responses, Republicans opted for "obstructionism". While many may view this as a selected strategy on the part of the Republicans, we view this as a result of a party paralyzed by the inability to coordinate elite preferences on policy.

The presence of the Tea Party faction in the Republican Party set the stage for an bitter contest for their party's nomination for the U.S. presidency. The presence of 17 declared candidates for the Republican nomination signals a complete lack of coordination on the part of party elites to select a small set of candidates.¹⁵ This

¹⁵Contrast this with the Democratic Party which coordinated to effectively excluding most challengers to Secretary Clinton

created an opening for a populist to take advantage of the party's decentralized candidate selection model and capture the Republican Party.

Donald Trump effectively employed populist rhetoric by flaunting the low; frequently using non-elite style of behavior and rhetoric to stand apart from the career politicians. Given the factionalized nature of the party, Republican elites were unable to coordinate response to Trump's populist strategy. After winning the Republican nomination, Trump built on his flaunting of the low rhetoric and introduced elements of Manichean populism—frequently referring to the Democratic Party, Hillary Clinton, and any non-supportive Republican as corrupt or morally suspect.

After winning the Republican Party nomination, Donald Trump inherited a party brand and organization, which he was able to use to mobilize voters. Mr. Trump's share of the popular vote is very similar to the same share previous Republican candidates have received in recent history. Polls of voters demonstrate that, as in other elections, voters voted according to their party identification, suggesting that it is unlikely that Trump's populism was key to his Electoral College victory.

To demonstrate that party capture was key, consider the counterfactual in which Donald Trump tries to enter the electoral arena and challenge both parties as an independent. Mr. Trump would have had no established brand with voters nor any organization to encourage potential supporters to vote. There is very little reason to believe that Donald Trump could have captured the presidency as a true outsider. This suggests that it was Donald Trump the Republican, not Donald Trump the outsider populist, that garnered sufficient electoral support to win a majority of electoral college votes and the Presidency.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to establish the plausibility of our theory using comparative data and to suggest that parties are central to understanding the electoral success of populism. We do not argue that parties function as a monocausal explanation of the success of populism in elections. Instead, we argue that the degree of populism as well as the presence of populist parties within a given party system is

dependent upon institutional hostility and that the rise of populist parties take place via three paths, *ceteris paribus*: *populist entry*, *populist targeting and adaptation*, and *populist capture*. Using cross-national quantitative data as well as a set of exploratory case studies, we come to a number of conclusions. First, the presence of populism is correlated with institutional hostility - as measured by the interaction between the average level of party institutionalization within a party system and the nature of the electoral system. Where the level of institutional hostility is higher we observe lower levels of populism within party systems. Second, populist parties tend to enter or improve their electoral success *after* average strength of existing parties decreases¹⁶. This finding is critical to addressing the issue of timing in the causal story of the rise of populist parties. Instead of populism being responsible for the weakening or de-institutionalization of parties, our evidence suggests that party weakening precedes the rise of populism. Lastly, we find institutional hostility shapes the strategies of populist entrepreneurs. In cases where electoral institutions are restrictive, populist parties must either dilute their populism brand (as in the case of the FN in France) to increase their electoral appeal or capitalize on party weaknesses to capture an existing party (as in the case of the Republican Party in the United States). When electoral institutions are more permissive, however, populist parties can win power and influence with a smaller vote share and so do not necessarily need to dilute their brand of populism to appeal to more voters (as can be seen in the case of the FPÖ in Austria).

The evidence provided in this paper provides preliminary support for our assertion that the presence of populism within party systems is tied to the level of institutionalization of other political parties in the system. Where parties within a party system are highly institutionalized (on average) populism as a mobilizing strategy appears to be less viable. The implication of these findings points to the necessity of incorporating the party system into theories seeking to explain electoral fortunes of populist parties. Simply stated, theories explaining the variation in the

¹⁶We found this to be the case in each case (Austria, France, Spain, the United States, and Venezuela) with the exception of the case of Bolivia

electoral fortunes of populist parties should not separate populism from the party.

We also emphasize that populism is not a binary concept. While a wide variety of parties or leaders can be referred to as "populist", the extent to which they rely on populist organization or rhetoric varies. The key finding, however, is that higher levels of institutional hostility decreases the payoffs of populism. In essence, political entrepreneurs face a number of potential trade-offs when considering a populist approach to electoral competition. Parties matter – but when parties are weak, political entrepreneurs can make use of populist rhetoric or organization to compete within the electoral arena. While some populist movements are dominated by exceptional individuals (e.g. Hugo Chávez), populist parties are still parties and function within a system where they must compete against other political parties.

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