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New Populist Parties in Western Europe

PAUL TAGGART

This article addresses the electoral success of far right political parties in West European party systems and suggests that there is a new type of party – the New Populist. Differentiating between neo-fascism and the New Populism is instructive in two senses. First, it reveals that the current wave of comparative electoral success is more associated with the New Populism than neo-fascism. Second, it demonstrates that there are certain parallels between the New Politics and the New Populism thereby suggesting that changes in the contemporary far right may well be telling indicators of changes in West European societies that are deeper set than a simple resurgence of racist and anti-immigrant sentiment.

THE NEW POPULISM

The 1980s and early 1990s have witnessed, not without some sense of alarm, a rising tide of right-wing extremism.[1] Attacks on immigrants and racist violence have occurred with an ugly regularity across Europe. Anti-immigrant sentiment on the streets has been matched by electoral success of prominent parties like the French National Front, the Italian National Alliance and the German Republicans. At the same time, many new parties have sprung up, some of which share an agenda with the racist right. Other new parties stressing radical regionalism, anti-political sentiments, or frustration with taxation policies more than immigration issues have added to the impression of a resurgence on the far right.

The Austrian Freedom Party has come up from near dissolution to gain 23 per cent of the vote – its best ever share of the national vote – in the 1994 election with a charismatic leader and an agenda focused against immigration. The rise of the Northern Leagues as a political force in Italy has been matched by the startling success of media magnate Silvio Berlusconi in forming a new party and gaining the largest share of the vote with Forza Italia in the 1994 elections. Switzerland has seen its own regional league in the Ticino League which has joined the

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Automobilist Party as two of the newest parties in the political system, both clearly on the right. In Scandinavia the long-established Danish and Norwegian Progress Parties that emerged as anti-taxation parties finally found a sibling in Sweden where New Democracy broke through in a seven-month period to gain election to the parliament in 1991. In Belgium, the radical nationalist Flemish Bloc achieved its best national electoral performance in the 1991 election. All these parties have combined elements of nationalism with neo-liberal economic policies, and have presented this package in a style that confronts political systems while, simultaneously, operating comfortably within the realm of parliamentary politics.

It has been tempting to see a monolithic tide of right-wing extremism sweeping across Western Europe, but a closer examination reveals two trends. Avowedly racist and neo-fascist movements have had limited success in their parliamentary aspirations. There have been significant electoral gains on the far right but those parties that have been electorally successful have shared certain features with each other rather than with the 'conventional' extreme right. Employing a comparative perspective this article suggests that the recent trend towards protest parties of the right represents a 'New Populism'. This New Populism fuses the anti-politics stance of the New Politics with the broad-based protest of the populist right. Issues such as race and immigration are, for such parties, touchstones of dissent. Along with issues of radical regionalism and opposition to taxation, the racist right's agenda is employed as a means of mobilising a larger vein of discontent that has as its focus a dissatisfaction with the foundations that underlie the 'post-war settlement'. The New Populism is therefore a telling indicator of important changes in West European politics.

DEFINING THE NEW POPULISM

Hans-George Betz has identified a wave of new parties on the far right and has termed them the 'radical populist right'. Piero Ignazi has called them the 'new right-wing' parties.[2] Ignazi offers a categorisation of the far right based on three criteria. Stressing first the spatial dimension, he argues that this minimal criterion includes a diverse range of parties located on the extreme right end of the left-right continuum.[3] In order to further differentiate, he offers an additional criterion, that of ideology, which allows him to separate those parties with a clear fascist legacy from those without.[4] Finally, he stresses that the parties can then be differentiated on the basis of their support for or rejection of the political system.[5] This provides us with a means of differentiating between 'new'

and 'old' far right parties but it does involve a high degree of uncertainty with respect to many parties. This article is an attempt to build on the theoretical basis of Ignazi's differentiation while offering an alternative set of criteria that allows us to differentiate between neo-fascist parties and New Populist parties.

The argument is that the ideological position of party is articulated not only through platforms, manifestos, speeches and policy positions, but also through party organisation and political style. In order to cut across the different dimensions of the New Populism we will address the beliefs of its elites, the organisation and strategy that those beliefs engender and the electoral bases to whom the party appeals.

The New Populist party is an ideal type of political party. Some parties conform closely to it. Other parties combine New Populism with neo-fascism and are consequently something of a hybrid. Despite this it is important to identify the New Populism because, even when it is in a hybrid form, it can represent the dominant strain. It is ascendant in the realm of party politics on the far right.[6] Where neo-fascism focuses its energies on the streets and is associated with the ideology of the 'boot-boy', the preferred arena for the New Populists is the parliamentary one, and here they are more likely to be wearing bespoke suits than military fatigues. In order to demonstrate the rise of the New Populism, it is necessary to identify the core elements of the New Populism and then it is possible to identify those parties that conform most closely to this ideal type and to compare their fortunes to those of the neo-fascist parties.

Ideology

The term 'populism' is a notoriously difficult term. Any term that encompasses radical agrarian movements in the United States, the nineteenth century intellectual movement of *narodnichestvo* in Russia, Peronist dictatorship in Argentina via Swiss direct democracy, George Wallace and Polish Solidarity necessarily verges on being a conceptual tinderbox. Nonetheless there are some elements that run through many of the different uses of the term.[7] Stripping populism of its contextual and social features, it is employed here (admittedly guardedly) to stress two elements that seem to run throughout the various meanings. These two elements are its negativity and its breadth. These factors place the New Populism on the right and 'in the mainstream'. An anti-system element is drawn from the same sources from which have also sprung the New Politics.[8]

In ideological terms, the New Populism is *on the right, against the system, and yet defines itself as in the 'mainstream'*. It is right-wing, anti-system and populist. It is of the people but not of the system. The

growth of the New Populism is itself the repudiation of any idea that politics as usual is a politics that works. This anti-system orientation has had implications for how the party both organises and behaves. It enjoys 'breaking the rules' because they are the rules of a system it sees as defunct.

Hofstadter described American populism as nativistic and anti-Semitic.[9] The idea of intolerance is often central to analyses of populism. There is, in populism then, a strong element of the negative. It is opposed to the system and to those that run the system. And it frequently invokes a notion of 'the people' that is characterised more by whom it excludes than by whom it includes. Central to this impetus is a politics of the 'heartland'.[10] Implicit and integral to populism is a vision of the heartland: a sense of what is 'normal' and, consequently, comfortable. The politics of the heartland is a vague notion, but a potent mobilising force. Unable to articulate those instincts fully, populism frequently resorts to attacking those that appear to be threatening to notions of the heartland. By challenging the legitimacy of others, populists are engaging in the politics of identity construction by default. They may not know who they are, but they know who they are not.

High on the list of the excluded for the New Populists are politicians, immigrants, bureaucrats, intellectuals and welfare recipients. While the list varies slightly from country to country according to circumstances, the core logic of exclusion remains a constant. In his examination of the Kansas populists Walter Nugent terms this a 'selective nativism' and we see something of that in the New Populism with its emphasis upon the politics of race and immigration.[11] When the New Populists talk of the 'ordinary man' and his exclusion from contemporary politics it sometimes seems to be an evocation of the excluded rather than the included. The 'ordinary man' is the typical occupant of the heartland.

The 'people' have always been central to the rhetoric of populists. As Lawrence Goodwyn notes, it is this mass nature of populism that has been so vital to the accepted academic interpretations of populism.[12] The alleged breadth of New Populists' constituency is the well-spring for the New Populists' indignation at their exclusion from political life. While they may not be the elite ('the political class') they are, so the claim goes, the many ('the mainstream'). Like Richard Nixon's 'silent majority', it is the size of the support rather than its silence which is its salient feature.

The reason for describing the New Populism as 'New' is twofold. First, it is to stress that this is a historically-contingent manifestation of populism that, although bearing strong similarities to other populist movements, has some idiosyncratic features rendering it distinct. The

New Populism is that populist instinct that is engendered by the collapse of the postwar settlement in Western Europe. In this sense it is indeed novel because it is contingent upon a particular historical and political context. It ties itself to the collapse of many of the prevailing 'meta-narratives': the 'end' of the Cold War, the 'collapse' of communism, the 'crisis' of welfarism and the 'passing' of fordism.

The second reason for the 'New' lies in the common basis that it shares with New Politics movements such as Green Parties and the new social movements.[13] In many ways, the New Populism lies across the same fault lines which have given rise to the New Politics. It clearly faces a different direction but it shares the same anti-system orientation and is a consequence of the particular social, political, and economic changes that we may characterise as the 'postwar settlement'. This settlement can be portrayed as the consensus that grew around ideas such as social democracy, the welfare state, corporatism and Keynesianism in most West European countries following the end of the Second World War. The New Populism has emerged as the postwar settlement has effectively broken up.[14] The crises of the postwar settlement have served as the facilitators of the New Populism.

The reason many observers conflate the New Populism with neo-fascism is that they both lie somewhere on the right of the political spectrum. Although many New Populists seek to deny the efficacy of the left-right distinction, there is more tenacity in that distinction than they would like to see. The denial of being on the right may well be a rhetorical device that serves to avoid alienating those on the left who are attracted by parts of its ideology. There is a good strategic reason for the New Populists cultivating an electoral base that crosses from the left to the right. In terms of activist beliefs and programme orientation, there can be little doubt that the New Populism lies on the right.

The New Populism is markedly neo-liberal in its economic orientation. The market is the legitimate and effective site for conflict resolution. The state is viewed as largely illegitimate, over-extended and ineffective. Liberty is, consequently, a key concept for the New Populism. This liberty is defined in negative and individual terms. For the New Populists, freedom consists largely of the absence of state restraints on individual action. The alleged over-extension of the state scope and scale as a consequence of the postwar settlement is the basis of much of the New Populist critique.[15] It therefore makes sense that they should emphasise the importance of the individual as an ethical norm. They are unmistakably parties of the right in this sense.

The leader of the Lombard League, Umberto Bossi declared after their election success in 1992: 'This was just the first blow against the

system, the second will be decisive.'[16] New Populism exists as a reaction to certain systemic and political factors that appear to be manifest as crises. It is therefore not surprising to find that a core belief is that the 'system' has failed. In identifying the 'system' with those who people it, the New Populists are betraying their populist roots. This anti-system attitude can manifest itself in an anti-party ideology. Such a position has important implications for the way they operate as parties. It also gives rise to the quintessential dilemma that they share with New Politics parties: how to be an effective party at the same time as being an 'anti-party'.

It is the exclusionary element of the New Populism that justifies the description as populist. In rhetorical terms, this exclusion is usually expressed in terms of their representation of the 'mainstream'. The New Populism is an appeal to majority politics: it argues that corporatism and the growing strength of interest groups have, in effect, excluded the middle ground and alienated the 'ordinary' voter. Of course, such an appeal makes some very contentious assumptions. It assumes that the multi-cultural vision of society is illegitimate and implies that the ordinary person is working in the private sector, white and most probably male. Although these assumptions are contentious, they are important factors in the construction of an electoral constituency.

The New Populist parties differ from neo-fascist parties in several ways. The most concrete difference is also very difficult to verify but is related to historical continuity: neo-fascist parties tend to have some direct link to the fascist parties of the previous era while New Populist parties appear to lack such a historical link. For example, the Italian Social Movement was formed in 1946 by Fascists set on maintaining the tenacity of their ideas in the face of the defeat of the regime.[17] Other neo-fascist parties have been associated with a fascist tradition. Ignazi makes a similar point in his differentiation between old and new far right parties.[18] He provides us with a list of those far right parties linked to fascism.[19]

Ignazi's list includes the German People's Party (DVU), and the National Democratic Party (NPD) in Germany.[20] In Greece, Spain and Portugal he highlights the National Political Union (EPEN), the National Front and the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) respectively as having strong links with the former fascist regimes in these countries. Similarly the Italian fascists have clearly found a modern incarnation in the Italian Social Movement (MSI) now renamed National Alliance. In countries without such legacies, Ignazi links the British National Front and the British National Party to fascist roots, and he traces a similar genealogy for CP'86 in the Netherlands. Even at first glance the absence

of major far right parties such as the French National Front, or the Republicans in Germany is notable.

The second difference is that, while New Populist parties often have an explicit or implicit anti-immigrant stance, this is rarely the sole source of their identity. The anti-immigrant stance is often conflated with other salient issues. For example, the Swiss Automobilists' Party was formed as a reaction to the demands of environmentalists. The Progress parties in Denmark and Norway and New Democracy in Sweden are most famously associated, sometimes primarily, with an anti-taxation agenda. The Italian Lombard League has, as its ideological centrepiece, a commitment to regional devolution and is often analysed primarily as a regional movement – albeit an exceptional one.[21] In contrast, the neo-fascist parties, while they do develop other policy positions, are almost exclusively anti-immigrant parties.

New Populism, like neo-fascism, is an ideal type party. We should consider both as ideals towards which parties of the far right may gravitate. Some parties are more unequivocally New Populist than neo-fascist. A further complication is that New Populism and neo-fascism are not *necessarily* contradictory. A neo-fascist party may assume a New Populist orientation, or a New Populist party may move towards a neo-fascist agenda if it begins to stress the immigration issue to the effective exclusion of all others. However, in practice, parties do tend to be either neo-fascist or New Populist. The examples of parties that blur the distinction are the Republicans in Germany, the National Front in France and the Flemish Bloc in Belgium.

Ideologically, New Populist parties bear the imprint of their origins. The parties are on the defensive because of threats to a perceived heartland. Their ideology therefore defines itself in largely negative terms as who it is not and who are the 'enemy'. The effect of that ideology is to draw on a certain social constituency. It also has profound implications for the way they institutionalise as parties.

Organisation

New Populist parties have two qualities that pertain to their organisation: they are very centralised and they set great store in the leadership which is both personalised and charismatic. These characteristics are not, in themselves, peculiar to New Populist parties, but they do point to a central feature of such parties: that they can reconcile anti-systemic elements with organisational elements that ensure their institutional and electoral survival. They are also the organisational articulation of key elements of their ideology.

The element of charismatic leadership is essential to the nature of the

New Populism. New Populism is an explicit attempt to offer models of party *qua* party that differ from prevailing models. It is because the prevailing party model is the 'catch-all' professional-bureaucratic party, that charismatic-based models are themselves a form of protest.[22] The other alternative is the New Politics model of devolved, decentralised and depersonalised leadership. Both are challenges to the conventional ideas of parties as organisations.

A simple rule of thumb to decide whether to exclude a party from the list of New Populist parties is to see if there is a name of an individual leader that comes to mind with the name of the party. If there is no such association, then the party will probably not be a New Populist phenomenon. In identifying such parties across Western Europe it is easy to single out leaders whose names seem inextricable from the parties they lead (or led). In one case the name has been more than identified with the party: the Norwegian Progress Party was originally called the Anders Lange Party. In its latter incarnations it was revived under, and became identified with the leadership of Carl I. Hagen. Mogens Glistrup's name goes with the Danish Progress Party, Veikko Vennamo's with the Finnish Rural Party, and Jean-Marie Le Pen's with the French National Front. Some commentators have even talked of the phenomenon of 'Lepénisme' in the latter case.[23] With the Swedish example of New Democracy the party has become associated with an unusual but definitely personalised double-act of Ian Wachtmeister and Bert Karlsson.[24] Something similar has occurred with the leadership of the Ticino League in Switzerland where Giulano Bignasca and Flavio Maspoli have indelibly stamped their mark on their fledgling creation.[25] In the case of the Austrian Freedom Party it has been the leadership of Jörg Haider that has in fact transformed the party into being a New Populist party, and it is with his leadership that the party has come to be identified. In Germany, Franz Schönhuber's role has been crucial to the development of the Republicans.

Clearly other non-New Populist parties are also identified with particular leaders so this is merely a minimal criteria for New Populist parties. For the New Populists, leadership is not merely an ingredient: it is the essence of both their message and their party. In New Populist parties, the charismatic basis of their leadership is an essential element because it represents a symbolic challenge to the prevailing models of party organisation. It serves the dual function of legitimating the parties' claim to be essentially different from other parties and allows a degree of control over the party machinery by the leadership that is designed to maximise the impact of their relatively small electoral constituency.

It is partly a consequence of the centralised structure that New

Populist parties employ charismatic leadership. In seeking to reject the traditional idea of a political party, the New Populists construct a party organisation that explicitly challenges the model of bureaucratic and hierarchical structure associated with mass parties. This means that they employ centralised organisational patterns. Where the traditional parties are strictly hierarchical and pyramidal, New Populists aim to be selective and small in structure. An example of this would be Sweden's New Democracy which has striven to make its national party independent of the encumbrances of the local or county levels, with the justification that this allows a direct line of communication between the 'people' and the national elites.[26]

The regional basis of some of the New Populist parties (e.g., the Italian Northern Leagues and the Swiss League of Ticino) can also be seen as an attempt to reject the basic rules of party organising that usually result in parties that are explicitly national in scope. It is an essential element of the Lombard League that it has advocated a radical form of federalism and of 'macroregions'.[27] It is a combination of unorthodoxy with centralisation and personalised leadership that leads Dwayne Woods to describe the Lombard League as 'a centralised political movement with decision-making concentrated in the hands of Bossi and national committee of his supporters'.[28] Such a description is typical of the organisational form favoured by the New Populists. These parties of 'ordinary people' seem to consistently depend upon the personal appeal of the most extraordinary of men to lead them.

Electoral Base

The final element of New Populists that makes them distinct is their electoral profile. The contours of the New Populist base clearly overlap with the profile of the far right that has traditionally been drawn. Neo-fascist movements have traditionally been portrayed as having an inner city, working-class, protest constituency or as poor and under-educated and predominantly male.[29] In terms of some basic demographic characteristics we can summarise from the literature that neo-fascist parties draw from poor, under-educated, urban and male constituencies.[30] The New Populists are drawing from that constituency but the net is cast somewhat wider.

The reason for assuming that New Populists will draw from a wide range of electors than neo-fascists, is that New Populism is, at root, at least in the electorate, a protest phenomenon. If the parties are successful at portraying themselves as a different type of party, then they will be at relative liberty to attract voters from across the political spectrum because they have not defined themselves out of any particular ideo-

logical milieus. In a similar vein, they aim to mobilise the citizens who have previously expressed their dissatisfaction with the dominant parties by simply not voting. It is because their ideology contains the idea that they are a 'mainstream' phenomenon that they can, and do, attract voters from across a broad range. Within this swathe there is a clear propensity for some demographic groups to be attracted to the New Populists. This means that, at one and the same time, they can portray themselves as beyond the sullied constraints of normal class-centred electoral base-building, and yet count on the support of a core group of voters – albeit a small group.

The New Populist constituency is predominantly male. On a wider note than neo-fascism, it is not necessarily poor or unemployed, but is employed in the private sector. It is not poorly educated but does draw from the middle to low educational strata. It also draws from a wide range of prior voting positions and may draw in those that previously did not take part in elections. It is also predominantly young with those who are voting for the first time having fewer ties to break with the established order. We may see examples of this in several parties.

Mitra's study of the French National Front demonstrates how there is an over-representation of the youngest cohort (18–24) in the party's electorate and also shows that the National Front's vote actually increases with higher levels of education.[31] Nonna Mayer and Pascal Perrineau also demonstrate that Le Pen's voters 'cross the left-right divide more often than any other electorate'.[32] Andersen demonstrates that the voters for both the Danish and Norwegian Progress parties are predominantly from the private sector.[33] This author has elsewhere shown that Sweden's New Democracy crosses from left to right, draws the previously apathetic and is predominantly male and private sector in its support.[34] Eva Kolinsky demonstrates that the German Republicans are disproportionately male, while Veen, Lepszy and Mnich concur with this conclusion and also point out that the voters are a 'disproportionately young "homeless" pool of voters'.[35] Knüsel and Hottinger describe the voters for the Ticino League as 'predominantly masculine, a little older and less educated than the average, living mostly in large towns, [and] Catholic but not necessarily church-going'.[36] There does appear to be some sort of a sociological profile that emerges when we compare New Populist voters.

Summarising we can say that New Populist parties are recognisable along three dimensions:

***Ideologically** the parties are on the right, anti-system in orientation, and claim to be speaking for the 'mainstream' of society.*

Organisationally *the parties are characterised by strongly centralised structures with charismatic and personalised leadership as an integral component of their institutional development.*

Electorally *the parties are defined by a constituency that is disproportionately male, private sector, young and which draws from a wide range of political orientations:*

Table 1 below provides us with a typology of New Populist and Neo-fascist parties in seventeen West European countries. The differentiation is based upon the above three criteria. It includes those parties on the far right that are still active or have been active in the past. The focus is primarily upon those parties that have taken part in elections. This is essential to all New Populist parties as they do not usually derive from a social movement basis but tend to be top-down creations that rely on elections as the currency of their existence as they are without the self-sustaining culture of the new social movements that underlies the New Politics parties, or the labour movement of social democratic parties. It excludes extra-parliamentary far right movements whose focus is racist violence. The table includes, with the names of the parties, their best electoral performances in national elections. The reason for this is that we are focusing on those parties that can truly be said to be national phenomena.

Table 1 allows us to make some important observations. The table illustrates why the New Populism is such a pertinent topic at this time: the New Populist parties are clearly in the ascendancy. The best election results have been gained mostly since 1989. The two parties which seem to buck this trend by gaining their best result at an earlier time have both experienced revivals. The Danish Progress Party dropped to 4 per cent in the 1984 election but revived its support to 9 per cent in 1988. Similarly the Finnish Rural Party dropped to a low-point of 4 per cent of the vote in 1975 but pushed this back up to 10 per cent in 1983. There does seem to be a wave of New Populism sweeping across West Europe. While New Politics parties and the more established parties appear to be losing support, the New Populists, while clearly a small minority, are a rising force.

In contrast, the neo-fascist parties have not, on the whole, been as successful as the New Populist parties in the recent period with many of them gaining their best results in the period before the success of the New Populists. The other comparison allows us to conclude that the neo-fascist parties have never been as electorally competitive as the New Populists. Where most of the New Populists have garnered over 5 per cent of the vote at one time or another, the neo-fascist parties have consistently

TABLE 1

ELECTORAL HIGHLIGHTS OF NEW POPULIST AND NEO-FASCIST PARTIES IN WESTERN EUROPE(1)

Country	New Populist Party	Best Vote (Year)	Neo-Fascist Parties	Best Vote (Year)
Austria	Freedom Party (FPö)	23 (1994)	-	
Belgium	Flemish Bloc (VB)	7 (1991)	National Front (FNb)	1 (1991)
Denmark	Progress Party (FRP)	16 (1973)	-	
Finland	Rural Party	11 (1970)	-	
France(2)	National Front (FN)	12 (1993)	-	
Germany	Republicans (REP)	2 (1990)	National Democratic Party (NPD)	4 (1969)
			German People's Union (DVU)	.6 (1987)
Greece	-		National Political Union (EPEN)(3)	.6 (1985)
Ireland	-		-	
Italy	Northern Leagues(4)	9 (1992)	Italian Social Movement (MSI)(5)	14 (1994)
	Forza Italia	21 (1994)		
Luxembourg	-		-	
Netherlands	-		Centre Party (CP'86)	.8 (1982)
			Centre Democrats (CD)	2.5 (1994)
Norway	Progress Party (FRPn)	12 (1989)	-	
Portugal	-		Christian Democratic Party (PDC)	1 (1979)
Spain	-		National Front (FNs)	2 (1979)
Sweden	New Democracy	7 (1991)	-	
Switzerland	Automobilists Party	5 (1991)	National Action (NA)(6)	4 (1983)
	Ticino League	1 (1991)		
United Kingdom	-		National Front	.6 (1979)
			British National Party (BNP)	.1 (1983)
Mean		7.4		2.2

Sources: Thomas Mackie and Richard Rose, *The International Almanac of Electoral History* (London: Macmillan, 1991); Paul Hainsworth (ed.), *The Extreme Right in Europe and the USA* (London: Pinter, 1992); Cheles, Ferguson and Michalina Vaughan (1991); *Financial Times* (various 1989–94); *West European Politics* Election Reports (Various, Vols.14–16, 1991–93); Neil Elder, Alistair H. Thomas & David Arter, *The Consensual Democracies?* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988); F.W.S. Craig, *British Electoral Facts, 1832–1987* (London: Parliament Research Service, 1989).

Notes:
(1) Best vote refers to the highest percentage of the national vote gained in national elections for lower house of legislature and therefore excludes both regional and European elections.
(2) French figures are for vote in 1st ballot. FN received 6 per cent in 2nd ballot in 1993.
(3) EPEN was dissolved in Sept. 1989.
(4) Northern League incorporates the Lombard League, the Venetian League and the Autonomous Piedmont League.
(5) Changed its name to National Alliance in the 1994 election.
(6) The Swiss NA changed its name to Swiss Democrats (SDs) in 1990.

failed to gain this level of support. By conflating these two tendencies commentators have confused what is, in reality, a very clear picture. New Populism is growing in electoral muscle and has been more popular than neo-fascism among voters. The new wave of activity on the far right is therefore not a continuation of the long-term trend of neo-fascism.

The second observation that may be made from Table 1 is that the electoral strength of German neo-fascism and German New Populism has been unduly stressed, compared with other countries. It has to be acknowledged that the far right have done very well at gaining representation at the *Länder* level.[37] This has yet to be translated into a national shift. Clearly, with Germany's Nazi legacy, any rumblings of the far right are bound to incur more attention than they would in other countries. But the electoral performance at a national level does not yet merit such attention. Indeed the danger is that an over-emphasis on the German case has occluded those cases where the far right has assumed a more dangerous position. The emphasis on Germany's far right may well follow from the rise of extra-parliamentary violence against immigrants which may be at the highest level of any European country. But this does not amount to the same thing as a rise of the far right in electoral terms. It behoves us to be clear about which phenomenon we are addressing: racist violence or the electoral rise of the far right.[38]

The third observation conclusion can be made that none of the three countries which have experienced transitions from authoritarian rule in the postwar period have given rise to significant New Populist movements and, perhaps even more surprising given the fascist past, none of the neo-fascist parties have gained more than a single percentage of the vote. Panayote Elias Dimitras concludes a study of the far right in Greece with the comment that 'most observers . . . agree that in the near future, unless there are dramatic developments, no extreme right party will play a significant role on the Greek political scene.[39] In the same volume, Tom Gallagher describes the marginalisation of the far right in Portugal resulting from Salazar's period of military dictatorship in which he suppressed any movement of the far right as he saw this as a threat: the result was that the contemporary far right has been denied a historical basis.[40] John Gilmour concludes his study of the Spanish far right with the observation that the far right 'wallowing in nostalgia and traditionalism, is now nothing more than a marginalised movement which appears to be set on a downward course into oblivion'.[41]

These three countries, due to their authoritarian periods, did not experience the consensus of the postwar settlement in the same way as the rest of Western Europe. There do seem to be common elements to the three countries' experiences such that some commentators argue for a 'Mediterranean model' of liberal democracy.[42] The nature of their authoritarian regimes, and the transitions away from those regimes point up the difficulties of mobilising a viable alternative-right formation because, in the words of one commentator '"Francoism without Franco", "Spinolismo" in Portugal, or monarchical oligarchy without the colonels

were simply not viable options.'[43] We can perhaps speculate that in periods of consolidation of liberal democracy there is a tendency for the public to eschew extreme alternatives.[44] Another common feature was the discrediting of highly personalised fascist regimes. We can observe that an extreme form of both populism and fascism had been given a long period in command of a regime. The fact that these states experienced revolutions can be seen as a repudiation of the far right. As a result Spain, Portugal and Greece have seen the right forming broad-based alliances to gain wider support and to lose the taint of fascist legacies.

The application of two models of the far right to recent election results is a relatively simple exercise but it shows a strong trend and debunks over-simplified notions of a simple re-running of history through the re-emergence of fascism. This only applies to electoral mobilisation and should not be taken to imply that the rise of racist violence is not a very real and growing phenomenon. On the contrary, comparative examination shows that in legislatures across Western Europe new actors and new potential partners for the neo-fascists are appearing, but it is necessary to recognise the different character of the parliamentary arm of the extreme right.

CONCLUSION

By separating the New Populism from neo-fascism, it is clear that the growing strength of the far right at present largely derives from the growing strength of the former rather than the latter. The New Populism, as an ideal type, has a clear identity with ideological, organisational and electoral facets. The rise of the New Populism seems to be linked, like the New Politics, to some deep set changes in the nature of West European societies and polities. Its rise is therefore a commentary on the wider context of contemporary politics.

In conclusion three points need to stressed. The first point is that the changes on the far right cannot simply be ascribed to a singular rise in support for neo-fascism. Issues of race and immigration may well be functioning as catalysts for a deeper protest about the nature of postwar politics in general. The success of the sharp-suited far right is not unrelated to the growth of extremist violence of the boot boys, but we have a clearer picture if we separate the two phenomena. Defining New Populism is a start to such a process

The second point is that the New Populists may well represent an emergent new party family. From a general overview of West European countries it is clear that in many cases there exist nascent party formations that apparently share important ideological, electoral and

organisational characteristics. In this sense they represent the right-wing equivalent of the New Politics. Like Green parties, they have self-consciously constructed themselves in opposition to the existing parties and the wider model of party politics that the dominant parties represent.

The final point is that, despite the impression easily garnered from studies of the wave of right wing extremism, the neo-fascist level of success at the ballot box has been somewhat limited. Those parties that are unequivocally racist or fascist have not benefited from a tidal wave of electoral support. Those parties that have tempered the agenda of race and immigration with other issues of protest pertinent to their populations have generally been more successful.

The New Populism is important because it sometimes explicitly shares, and sometimes hints at, the agenda of the extra-parliamentary far right. The muted radicalism of the New Populists has led to great success at entering parliaments and has the potential to transform party systems. As a nascent, but apparently effective force for change – perhaps radical change – the New Populism represents a formidable protest force. It both reflects changes in contemporary society and also is attempting to enact political change. In its potent cocktail of muted radicalism, anti-system attitudes and a right-wing populism, the New Populism is set to make its presence felt across Western Europe.

NOTES

1. With this tide of political activity has also come a wave of academic studies. Much of the academic coverage has been of an explicitly comparative nature. There have been a number of special issues of prominent journals devoted solely to this issue. In *West European Politics* 11/2 (April 1988) an issue was devoted to Right-Wing Extremism. More recently the *European Journal of Political Studies* 22/1 (July 1992) and *Parliamentary Affairs* 45/3 (Winter) 1992 have followed suit. For comparative books consult Peter H. Merkl and Leonard Weinberg (eds.), *Encounters with the Contemporary Radical Right* (Boulder: Westview, 1993), Paul Hainsworth (ed.), *The Extreme Right in Europe and the USA* (London: Pinter, 1992), Luciano Cheles, Ronnie Ferguson and Michalina Vaughan (eds.), *Neo-Fascism in Western Europe* (London: Longman, 1991), Geoffrey Harris, *The Dark Side of Europe*, 2nd ed, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1994) and Glyn Ford *Fascist Europe* (London: Pluto, 1992).
2. Hans-George Betz, 'The New Politics of Resentment: Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe', *Comparative Politics* 25/3 (1993), pp.413–27. Piero Ignazi, 'The Silent Counter-Revolution: Hypotheses on the Emergence of Extreme Right-Wing Parties in Europe', *European Journal of Political Research* 22/1 (July 1992) pp.3–34.
3. Ignazi, 'Silent Counter-Revolution', pp.7–9.
4. Ibid. pp.9–11.
5. Ibid. pp.11–12.
6. The term 'far right' is used here as an umbrella term to refer to those parties at the far end of the right side of the political spectrum, and therefore includes both New Populist and neo-fascist parties.

7. See the collection of articles in Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (eds.), *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics* (London: Weidenfeld, 1969) and Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (London: Junction, 1981).
8. For New Politics parties as anti-system forces see Ferdinand Müller-Rommel 'New Political Movements and "New Politics" Parties in Western Europe', pp.209–31 in Russell J. Dalton and Manfred Kuechler (eds.), *Challenging the Political Order*, (Oxford: OUP, 1990), Herbert Kitschelt, *The Logics of Party Formation*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1989) and Thomas Poguntke *Alternative Politics*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh, UP, 1993)
9. Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (NY: Vintage, 1955), p.61.
10. The author is grateful to B.D. Graham for this point.
11. Walter T.K. Nugent, *The Tolerant Populists: Kansas, Populism and Nativism* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1963), p.9.
12. Lawrence Goodwyn 'Rethinking "Populism": Paradoxes of Historiography and Democracy' *Telos* 88 (Summer 1991), p.54.
13. For overviews of New Politics parties see Ferdinand Müller-Rommel, (ed.) *New Politics in Western Europe* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1989) and for the new social movements see Dalton and Kuechler *Challenging the Political Order* (note 8).
14. For one description see Peter Gourevitch, *Politics in Hard Times* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1986), pp.29–31.
15. There is a strong similarity with the critique of bureaucratisation and with the consequent emphasis on liberty that characterises the New Politics critique. See Herbert Kitschelt, 'Left-Libertarian Parties: Explaining Innovation in Competitive Party Systems', *World Politics* 40/2 (1988), pp.209–11 and Thomas Poguntke, 'New Politics and Party Systems: The Emergence of a New Type of Party', *West European Politics* 10/11 (Jan. 1987), p.78.
16. Quoted in Carlo E. Ruzza and Oliver Schmidtke, 'Roots of Success of the Lega Lombarda: Mobilization Dynamics and the Media', *West European Politics* 16/2 (April 1993), p.1.
17. Roberto Chiarini, 'The 'Movimento Sociale Italiano': A Historical Profile' in Cheles *et al.*, *Neo-Fascism in Europe*, (note 1), p.26. Also see Piero Ignazi 'The Changing Profile of the Italian Social Movement' in Merkl and Weinberg, *Encounters with the Contemporary Radical Right*, (note 1), pp.77–9.
18. Ignazi, (note 2), pp.9–11.
19. Ibid., p.10.
20. Also see Richard Stöss, 'The Problem of Right-Wing Extremism in West Germany', *West European Politics* 11/2 (April 1988), pp.41–4, Michael Minkenberg, 'The New Right in Germany: The Transformation of Conservatism and the Extreme Right', *European Journal of Political Research* 22/1 (July 1992), p.56 and Geoffrey K. Roberts, 'Right-Wing Radicalism in the New Germany', *Parliamentary Affairs* 45/3 No.3, (July 1992), pp.334–6.
21. Ruzza and Schmidtke, 'Roots of Success of the Lega Lombarda' (note 16), pp.1–4.
22. See Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1988). Other commentators have recently described this party form as the 'cartel party'. See Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair 'Changing Models of Party Organisation: The Emergence of the Cartel Party' paper presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions, Limerick, 1992.
23. Michalina Vaughan, 'The Extreme Right in France: "Lepénisme" or the Politics of Fear' in Cheles *et al.*, (note 1) pp.221–5.
24. There is strong evidence to suggest that the double act is in fact dominated by the leadership of Wachtmeister both in terms of the party itself and in terms of the electoral support for the leadership which places Karlsson as one of the most unpopular Swedish political figures. See Paul Taggart 'The New Populism and the New Politics' unpublished PhD diss., Univ. of Pittsburgh, 1993 and Mikael Gilljam and Sören Holmberg, *Väljarna Inför 90-Talet* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1993).
25. René Knüsel and Julian Thomas Hottinger, 'Regionalist Movements and Parties in Switzerland: A Case Study on the "Lega dei ticinesi"', paper presented at the

European Consortium for Political Research, Joint Workshops, Madrid, 1994.

26. Paul Taggart and Anders Widfeldt, '1990s Flash Party Organisation: The Case of *New Democracy* in Sweden', paper prepared for presentation at the Political Studies Assoc. of the UK Annual Conference, Univ. of Leicester, UK, 20–22 April 1993.
27. Michéal Thompson, 'From Chanou to Bossi: The Roots of Northern Italian Regionalist Politics', *Italian Politics & Society* (Spring 1993), pp.8–16. Also see Gianfranco Miglio, 'Towards a Federal Italy', *Telos*, 90 (Winter 1990), pp.41–2.
28. Dwayne Woods, 'The Crisis of the Italian Party State and the Rise of the Lombard League', *Telos*, 93 (Summer 1992), p.125.
29. See, e.g., Paul Whitely, 'The National Front's Vote in the 1977 GLC Elections: An Aggregate Analysis', *British Journal of Political Science* 9/3, (1979), pp.370–81 and Christopher T. Husbands, 'The Netherlands: Irritants on the Body Politic', in Hainsworth, *Extreme Right in Europe and the USA* (note 1), p.120.
30. Jürgen W. Falter and Siegfried Schumann, 'Affinity Towards Right-Wing Extremism in Western Europe', *West European Politics* 11/2 (April 1988), pp.96–110.
31. Subrata Mitra, 'The National Front in France – A Single-Issue Movement?', *West European Politics*, 11/2 (April 1988), pp.54–6. Compare with William Safran, 'The National Front in France: From Lunatic Fringe to Limited Respectability' in Merkl and Weinberg (note 1), p.24.
32. Nonna Mayer and Pascal Perrineau, 'Why Do They Vote for Le Pen?', *European Journal of Political Research* 22/1 (1992), pp.127–8.
33. Jorgen Goul Andersen and Tor Bjorklund, 'Structural Changes and the New Cleavages: The Progress Parties in Denmark and Norway, *Acta Sociologica* 33/3 (1990), p.204.
34. Paul Taggart, 'Green Parties and Populist Parties and the Establishment of New Politics in Sweden', paper presented at the annual meeting of the APSA, Palmer House Hilton, Chicago, 3–6 Sept. 1992.
35. Eva Kolinsky, 'A Future for Right Extremism in Germany?' in Hainsworth (note 1), p.82. Hans-Joachim Veen, Norbert Lepszy and Peter Mnich, *The Republikaner in Germany: Right-Wing Menace or Protest Catchall?* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), p.31.
36. Knüsel and Hottinger, 'Regionalist Movements and Parties in Switzerland' (note 25).
37. Their greatest successes have so far been in Baden-Wurttemberg where the Republicans took 11 per cent of the vote and 15 seats and the DVU took 6 per cent of the vote and 5 seats in Schleswig-Holstein in 1992 (*Financial Times* 6 April 1992, p.1 and 7 April 1992, p.1). In a state election in Bremen the DVU gained 15 per cent of the vote and six seats in the parliament in 1991 (*Financial Times*, 1 Oct. 1991, p.22).
38. For a recent overview, both theoretical and empirical, of racist violence in Europe see Tore Björgo and Rob Witte, 'Introduction' in Tore Björgo and Rob Witte (eds.), *Racist Violence in Europe* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1993), pp.1–16.
39. Panayote Elias Dimitras, 'Greece: The Virtual Absence of an Extreme Right' in Hainsworth *Extreme Right in Europe and the USA* (note 1), p.267.
40. Tom Gallagher, 'Portugal: The Marginalization of the Extreme-Right' in Hainsworth (note 1), p.243.
41. John Gilmour, 'The Extreme Right in Spain: Blas Piñar and the Spirit of the Nationalist Uprising' in Hainsworth, (note 1), p.229.
42. See, e.g., Geoffrey Pridham, 'Comparative Perspective on the New Mediterranean Democracies: A Model of Regime Transition?' in Geoffrey Pridham (ed.) *The New Mediterranean Democracies: Regime Transition in Spain, Greece and Portugal* (London: Frank Cass, 1984), pp.1–29. For a contrasting perspective see A. Lijphart, T.C. Bruneau, P.N. Diamandouros and R. Gunther, 'A Mediterranean Model of Democracy? The Southern European Democracies in Comparative Perspective', *West European Politics* 11/1 (Jan. 1988), pp.7–25.
43. Philippe C. Schmitter, 'An Introduction to Southern European Transitions' in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (eds.), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Southern Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP,

1986), p.7. Also see specific contributions on Spain, Greece and Portugal in this same volume for accounts of the effects of authoritarian rule on the subsequent electoral and ideological emergence of the right.

44. Richard Gillespie, 'The Consolidation of New Democracies' in Derek W. Urwin and William E. Paterson (eds.), *Politics in Western Europe Today* (London: Longman, 1990), pp.238–43.