

# Varieties of populist parties

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[journals.sagepub.com/home/psc](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/psc)**Pippa Norris***Harvard University, USA; University of Sydney, Australia***Abstract**

Can parties such as the Swedish Democrats, the Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary, the UK Independence Party and the Italian Lega Nord all be classified consistently as part of the same family? Part I of this study summarizes the conceptual framework arguing that the traditional post-war Left-Right cleavage in the electorate and party competition has faded, overlaid by divisions over authoritarian-libertarianism and populism-pluralism. Building on this, part II discusses the pros and cons of alternative methods for gathering evidence useful to classify party positions. Part III describes how these are measured in this study, using Chapel Hill Expert Survey data in 2014 and 2017, and how they are mapped on a multidimensional issue space. Part IV compares European political parties on these scales – including Authoritarian-Populist parties – across a wide range of European countries. The conclusion in part V draws together the main findings and considers their implications.

**Keywords**

authoritarianism, democracy, pluralism, populism

Can political parties such as the Swedish Democrats, the Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary, the UK Independence Party and the Italian Lega Nord all be classified consistently as part of the same family? Even if they adopt the same language, are there shared values among leaders as apparently dissimilar as Donald Trump, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Marine Le Pen, Viktor Orban, Hugo Chavez, Narendra Modi, Andrés Manuel López Obrador and Jair Bolsanaro? There is little dispute that certain long-established cases fall into the same boat – a broad consensus in the literature regards the French National Rally, the Freedom Party of Austria and the Danish People's Party as sharing many nativist and anti-immigration policies. But other cases raise arguments about concept-stretching and boundary issues – particularly when mainstream centre-right or

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centre-left parties take on populist colourings. Can leaders as ideologically diverse as Corbyn, Macron and May, for example, be categorized sensibly as ‘populists’ according to their speech patterns – and, if so, why does their language matter? Researchers also deploy a bewildering plethora of labels to classify party families, such as ‘radical right populists’, ‘far right’, ‘right-wing populism’, ‘alt-right populists’, ‘extreme right’ and ‘populist right’ and so on. The lack of consistency raises red flags. Accordingly, this article clarifies the underlying concepts and presents a new typology of party competition.

Part I of this study summarizes the conceptual framework and unpacks the meaning of both populism and authoritarianism. It argues that the classic ‘Left-Right’ post-war cleavage in the electorate and in party competition over the economy became increasingly overlaid from the 1960s and 1970s onwards by the cultural cleavage dividing Authoritarians and Libertarians. More recently, an additional new cleavage over the first-order principles of democratic legitimacy, dividing the rhetoric of Populists and Pluralists, has emerged. The chess game of party political competition has therefore become multidimensional in many countries, scrambling and confusing the traditional map. Building on this argument, part II discusses the pros and cons of alternative methods for gathering evidence useful to classify party positions. Part III describes how these are measured in this study and mapped on a multidimensional issue space. The Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES-2014) is used to create indices of Left-Right, Authoritarian-Libertarianism and Populism-Pluralism, each measured as continuous standardized scales. These are used to compare the position of 270 political parties in the CHES-2014 data set. The results are also updated and replicated using CHES-2017, covering a small subset of 14 countries. The location of a party position on the 100-point scales indicates how far each party endorses each of these dimensions. The indices are therefore treated primarily as matters of degree, rather than as categorical types. Identifying party positions on continuous scales avoids sharp-edged boundary issues and potential risks of misclassifications, as well as facilitating granular analysis. Researchers often treat party choices in the electorate as discrete (yes/no) categories but this is theoretically implausible, especially in multiparty systems, if people have ranked utilities (‘I like X, but also Y and Z’). This practice is also statistically problematic when analysing voting for small parties using conditional logit and multinomial logit techniques based on the standard size of national survey samples; quite simply, researchers usually have too few cases and too many confounding conditions, as well as sharply skewed distributions.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, it can also be useful to identify specific categories which exemplify types of parties for other purposes, such as when selecting concrete case studies. For this purpose, a stricter categorization can be adopted, focusing on parties which score very highly on the core Indexes. Part IV maps European political parties on the CHES-2014 scales – including Authoritarian-Populist parties – across a wide range of European countries. The classification can also be replicated and compared in a subset of countries with the CHES-2017 scales, to test for stability in the estimates across two separate expert surveys. The conclusion in part V draws together the main findings and considers their implications.

## I. The conceptual framework

In recent years, a new cleavage has emerged both within the electorate and in patterns of party competition. This overlays the traditional cleavages in party politics and it increasingly divides Populists from Pluralists. The meaning of populism continues to be debated but in recent years, a broad consensus has emerged among many scholars. A minimalist definition of populism suggests that this is a form of discourse making two core claims, namely that (i) the only legitimate democratic authority flows directly from the people; and (ii) establishment elites are corrupt, out of touch and self-serving, betraying the public trust and thwarting the popular will. In the political sphere, populist arguments challenge the legitimacy of intermediate power structures linking citizens and the state in liberal democracies, including that of elected representatives, mainstream political parties, elected assemblies and parliaments, as well as the courts, judges and rule of law, and public sector bureaucrats and mainstream media, along with the broader range of policy technocrats, professional think tanks, academic opinion-formers and scientific consultants. The roots of populism can be traced back to concepts of direct democracy and the will of the people in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1762). In this regard, populism is best treated not a distinct type or style of leadership, or even an ideological viewpoint, as is often assumed, but rather as a discourse about the legitimacy of democratic governance that can be adopted by actors across the entire ideological spectrum.<sup>2</sup> We reject the notion that populism, in itself, makes other substantive or programmatic claims about what should be done; instead, it is a rhetoric about the rightful location of governance authority in any society, with the people (via direct democracy) not their representatives (via liberal democracy). In Western democracies, the most common antithesis of populism is 'Pluralism', emphasizing the importance of tolerating multiculturalism and social diversity in society, governance through liberal democratic institutions, the role of checks and balances on executive powers and respect for minority rights to counterbalance the majoritarian voice of the people. In non-democratic countries, however, populism may also be contested by those advocating classic forms of 'elitism' – claiming that power should rest in the hands of a single leader, a leadership elite or a predominant party.

Beyond the expressive rhetoric, however, as a philosophy of *who* should govern and *how* legitimate power should be exercised, populism by itself, like pluralist theories of liberal democracy, does not furnish a roadmap prescribing any consistent set of substantive programmatic policies or provide a coherent set of beliefs about what governments should do. What matters for the public policy agenda on issues such as managing the economy, handling international relations or dealing with social problems is not populism alone, therefore but how this narrative is used in conjunction with alternative ideologies. In particular, authoritarian and libertarian forms of populism differ. Parties and leaders endorsing authoritarian values (i) advocate conformity with conventional moral norms and traditions within a group, expressing intolerance of out-groups perceived to threaten accepted group mores; (ii) expect deference and loyalty to the group and its leaders, being intolerant of dissent; and (iii) seek to strengthen collective security against perceived group threats. They reject the libertarian emphasis on the values of individualism, free-spiritedness and personal liberation. The conjunction of populism

and authoritarianism is common, since populism undermines the legitimacy of institutional checks on executive powers in liberal democracies, opening the door for authoritarian rulers. But this is a contingent relationship not a necessary condition. Both populist discourse and authoritarian values can be endorsed by all sorts of actors – leaders, political parties, organizations, social movements, media and ordinary citizens – located on both the economic Right and Left.

### *Ideological diversity and the multidimensional issue space*

How can the conceptual framework be applied to classify political parties and leaders?

The first challenge is to consider how these concepts relate to the dimension of ‘Left’ and ‘Right’ which traditionally permeate studies of party competition. The dominant research tradition, building upon standard classifications of political parties in Western Europe, reflects conventional approaches by retaining the familiar Left-Right terminology but tacking on ‘populism’. Thus, parties are categorized as ‘right-wing populist’, as well as alternative related terms, such as ‘radical right’,<sup>3</sup> ‘populist radical right’,<sup>4</sup> ‘far right’ or ‘extreme right’ parties and so on.<sup>5</sup> More recently, the term ‘alt-right’ has been adopted in America to describe a loose network composed chiefly of white supremacists, neo-Nazis, neo-fascists and other fringe hate groups. The plethora of terms common in the research literature, and practices of concept stretching where these labels are extended to cover diverse cases, is indicative of more severe problems.

Attention in the research literature has also traditionally focused upon studying only one side of the Left-Right cleavage, namely right-wing forms of populism, the type most commonly observed in Western Europe. Yet, populist parties around the world range across the ideological spectrum from market-oriented neo-liberalism (as advocated by Alberto Fujimori) to state socialism (as advocated by Hugo Chavez). This combination is particularly common in Latin America.<sup>6</sup> Thus, Chavez railed against ‘predatory’ political elite, economic austerity measures and the neocolonial foreign policies of the United States, while inspiring a socialist revolution in Venezuela.<sup>7</sup> Studies comparing the Americas, Central and Eastern Europe and Asia have identified many populist parties and leaders that favour state economic management, wealth redistribution and social justice, policies which can be classified as part of the ‘populist left’.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, there are several left-wing populist parties in Western Europe, including Podemos in Spain and (arguably) the Five-Star Movement in Italy. It has also become fairly common for left-wing parties and politicians like Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sanders to use populist rhetoric when assailing financial elites and the power of multinational corporations and big business. The discourse of radical left parties in Europe, traditionally communist and socialist, have been found to have become more populist in recent years, making broad claims about ‘the good people’ not just appealing to the working class.<sup>9</sup> In the United States, as well, populism was associated historically with the left. The Populist Party founded in 1891 was an anti-elite rural movement on the left that was critical of capitalism, especially banks, and associated with organized labor.<sup>10</sup> Following this long historical tradition in America, in his run for the Democratic nomination during the 2016 election, Senator Bernie Sanders campaigned as a socialist. His speeches attacked economic inequality, globalization and capitalism, and he proposed redistributive

taxation and programmes of social justice designed to expand access to food, housing, healthcare and education for the poor, as well as being progressive on issues of environmental protection and climate change, sexual and gender identities, civil rights and immigration.

### *Ideological inconsistency and ambiguity*

Another practical difficulty in classifying populist parties and leaders along the traditional Left-Right spectrum lies in the (intentional?) ambiguity of their programmatic appeals. Clearly it is important to distinguish several varieties of populism where the rhetoric is the façade attached to diverse ideologies. One challenge about this process is that populist rhetoric concern first-order principles about legitimate government concerning vague anti-establishment appeals, simplistic slogans and sweeping promises to fight for the ‘the silent majority’ and end corruption. But the discourse typically eschews detailed policy prescriptions about second-order policy programmes about what governments should do. As a result, rather than having a consistent common location on the classic economic Left-Right continuum, populist parties and leaders differ in their views, for example, towards the appropriate level of investment in welfare protection, public sector spending, taxation and state regulation.

As a result, many populist leaders and parties also refuse to fit neatly into Left-Right programmatic policy boxes. This can be illustrated by the first 2 years of President Trump’s administration. Trump is often thought to exemplify the ‘populist right’ yet the President’s speeches, tweets and executive actions mix together advocacy of inconsistent principles across the conventional Left-Right economic spectrum. Some economic priorities are pro-market: this includes supporting CPAC and the GOP Freedom Caucus on issues such as the aggressive deregulation of environmental protection, (failed) attempts to repeal Obamacare and rolling back corporate taxes. His economic policy positions strongly favour the rich, exemplified by regressive 2017 Tax Cut and Jobs Act cutting the corporate tax rate permanently from 35% to 21%, with benefits flowing mainly to wealthy executives and shareholders. But in his trade policies, however, Trump has practiced economic protectionism for American industry, including by abandoning the TPP, renegotiating NAFTA, seeking to restore coal mining jobs and imposing tariffs on China and many other trading partners.<sup>11</sup>

And on culture issues, while his colourful Manhattan lifestyle was relatively liberal and secular before he entered the White House, as president Trump has sought to roll back tolerant live-and-let-live social liberalism. Through executive orders, legislative bills and especially the nomination of conservative judicial and agency appointments, his administration has sought to enforce traditional values. His administration has attempted to halt the deregulation of recreational drugs, to limit voting rights, to restrict women’s access to reproductive rights, to defend gun rights, to repeal DACA and the citizenship rights of Dreamers, to advocate stronger libel laws and to limit the role of transsexuals in the military. He also endorses authoritarian practices, undermining norms of American democracy in numerous ways, including through deepening partisan and factional rancour, dividing the country instead of healing on issues of race and diversity, challenging the independence of the judiciary and rule of law, undermining the news media through

constantly lambasting 'fake' news, failing to observe standards of transparency and integrity in separating his office from financial dealings and enriching his family, threatening his opponent with imprisonment, displaying sexism in his treatment of women and racism in his remarks towards African Americans and Hispanics, failing to defend against an attack on US elections by a foreign power and denigrating friendly allies while lauding strongmen rulers in Russia, North Korea and Saudi Arabia. In rallies, he peddles the politics of fear.

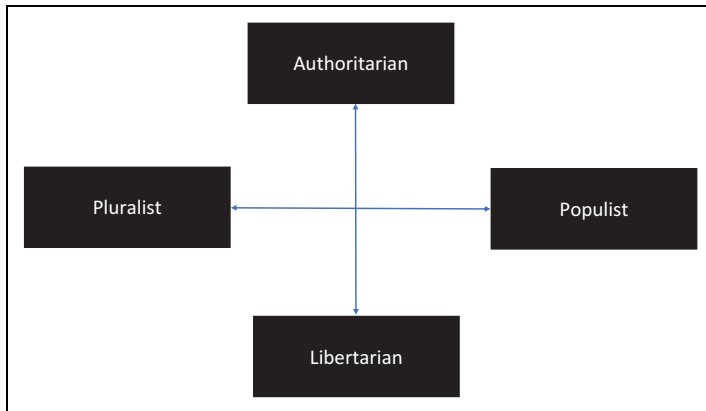
### *Collective party ideologies*

Finally, a further challenge arises because even where the Left-Right policy position of individual leaders can be classified, such as through analysing their speeches, or the collective policy positions of a political party can be determined, through the platform, this does not mean that this signifies the position of leadership factions, activists and grassroots members. Party platforms and manifestos are taken to reflect common principles as blueprints which guide party campaigns and subsequent government programmes.<sup>12</sup> But these documents may be inadequate guides to collective issue preferences in factionalized and poorly institutionalized political parties with low party discipline, which are common outside of Western Europe. The US Republican party in the Senate, for example, has arguably become more Trumpist. But this does not mean that all agency heads or Republican lawmakers march in lockstep. Multiple ideological factions within any party, like the Republican Freedom Caucus and the Conservative European Research Group, continue to battle over issues. Nor would most Republicans in Congress ever regard themselves as populists – even if they collaborate with the Trump administration to implement a shared legislative agenda. Platform documents may prove a poor guide to party positions in leadership-dominated parties, common with Authoritarian-Populist parties, as well as in candidate-centred campaigns and in coalition governments. For all these reasons, classifying political parties based on their policy position on the traditional one-dimensional Left-Right cleavage, based on programmatic disagreements about the appropriate role of the state versus markets, fails to capture competition over many other issues.

Based on these theories, Figure 1 depicts how party policy positions are expected to map onto the core cleavages. The position of parties on the Pluralism-Populism dimension of party competition, reflecting contention about where legitimate power lies in the nation-state, is predicted to divide Populists, claiming that governance should reflect the preferences of the vox populi, from Pluralists, arguing that decision should be made by the elected officials and divided among governing institutions in liberal democracy.

This cleavage can be distinguished from party positions on the second dimension reflecting the Authoritarian-Libertarian cultural cleavage, reflecting party positions on issues such as environmental protection and climate change, multiculturalism and sexual equality, human rights, international development aid and cosmopolitan or nationalistic policies.

Finally, it is also important to see how these dimensions relate to the classic Left-Right economic cleavage over the role of markets versus the state which traditionally dominated party competition in established Western democracies during the



**Figure 1.** Model of cleavages in party competition in Western societies.

mid-20th century.<sup>13</sup> Communists, Socialists and Social Democratic parties are predicted to be located on the economic Left, favouring state management of the economy, redistribution through progressive taxation and generous welfare states, social policies and public services. By contrast, Liberal, Conservative and Christian Democratic parties are expected to be located on the economic Right, favouring free markets and private enterprise, a minimal role for the state, deregulation and low taxation.

## **II. Ways to identify party divisions in the three-dimensional issue space**

What evidence would help to identify where European political parties position themselves on the Left-Right, Authoritarian-Libertarian and Populism-Pluralism cleavages? How can these concepts be measured on a reliable, consistent and valid basis? Attempts to categorize parties into distinct families have used various methods, including classifying them according to their names and organizational affiliations; analysing the discourse in leadership speeches and press releases; coding the contents of programmatic party platforms, social media or manifestos; using expert surveys to assess party positions across the ideological spectrum; conducting surveys of elected representatives, parliamentary candidates, activists and party members; and using national election surveys to measure the policy preferences of party supporters in the general electorate.<sup>14</sup> Each approach has certain distinct pros and cons.

### ***Party affiliations***

Scholars of party politics often seek to classify distinct party families through common organizational networks, such as membership in the European People's Party, or institutional affiliations with transnational federations, such as the Liberal International and the Global Greens. This is useful for classifying older party families such as the scores of labour parties, social democratic parties and socialist parties that are affiliated with the

Socialist International. This method is relatively straightforward to apply using publicly accessible information. It also reflects the way that political parties seek to build alliances and share resources with sister organizations. But these alliances are far from stable, with members and parties shifting; for example, the Italian Northern League belonged to the Rainbow Coalition in the European Parliament before moving in 1994 to join the Euro-liberals. Political parties can also be members simultaneously of different associations at European, national and regional levels

Authoritarian-Populist parties are also divided in their affiliations. Several parties in the European Parliament are currently associated with the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) group. This provides a loose alliance for the Austrian Freedom Party, the Flemish Vlaams Belang (FB), the French National Front (FN), the Alternative for Germany (AfD), the Italian Lega Nord, the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) and some individual MEPs from other countries. In the words of Marcel de Graff, the ENF's co-president:

Our European cultures, our values and our freedom are under attack. They are threatened by the crushing and dictatorial powers of the European Union. They are threatened by mass immigration, by open borders and by a single European currency: one size does not fit all.<sup>15</sup>

But the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFD) provides another rival group in the European Parliament, however, linking UK-IP, the Alternative for Germany, the Five Star Movement, the Lithuanian Order and Justice party, the Swedish Democrats and other members. The EFD is Eurosceptic, with Nigel Farage as the president, claiming to reflect 'the people's voice' by fighting 'big government, big banks, and big business' which are 'strangling national identities'.<sup>16</sup> Favouring the populist principles of direct democracy, the Charter for the EFD advocates referenda:

Convinced that the legitimate level for democracy lies with the Nation States, their regions and parliaments since there is no such thing as a single European people; the Group opposes further European integration (treaties and policies) that would exacerbate the present democratic deficit and the centralist political structure of the EU. The Group favours that any new treaties or any modification of the existing treaties are to be submitted to the peoples' vote through free and fair national referenda in the Member States. The Group does believe that the legitimacy of any power comes from the will of its Peoples and their right to be free and democratically ruled.<sup>17</sup>

Compared with the ENF, the EFD Charter also presents a more moderate position committed to direct democracy, arguing that it seeks to restore rights to national sovereignty in Europe, but it simultaneously rejects xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination. The values of this group are certainly close to the notion of populism defined earlier. But not all parties widely regarded by experts as populist belong to these two groupings, for example, the Danish People's Party and the Finns Party are members of the centre-right European Conservatives and Reformists. Therefore, it is far from easy to identify the common ideological principles and shared values



of Authoritarian-Populist political parties based on shifting allegiances to formal institutional affiliations.

### *Party names*

Other party typologies have relied on shared party names, such as ‘Social Democrats’, ‘Christian Democrats’, ‘Liberals’ and ‘Greens’. The titles that parties adopt goes to the heart of their brand name in the political marketplace and their historical origins. It seems a straightforward approach. But in practice, however, party labels can disguise deep ideological divisions, such as those between neo-classical laissez faire liberals and social liberals. Moreover, identical party labels have been adopted by parties with very different platforms and ideologies. The same name can also mask major ideological shifts over time within a party, such as the British Labour party experienced under the leadership of Tony Blair and Jeremy Corbyn. Similarly, Trump mounted a hostile takeover of the GOP, so that the policies of the party under his leadership diverged sharply from the Republican party of George W. Bush. Newer populist parties, wanting to burnish their outsider credentials, also adopt *sui generis* names to avoid being associated with traditional party labels, exemplified by the Italian Five Star Movement, the Greek Golden Dawn and the Spanish Podemos. Parties that scholars consider populist or authoritarian use a variety of labels that don’t refer to these concepts, and, like authoritarian regimes, they may even use Orwellian language that refers to their antonym, such as the Swedish Democrats, the Federal Democratic Union of Switzerland and the Croatian Democratic Union.

### *Rhetorical and discourse analysis*

An approach common in communication studies focuses on the speeches, social media and press releases of political parties, leaders and the contents of the media messages. Techniques have included human and computerized content analysis of text and visual images. From this perspective, populism is viewed as a style of communication and a language claiming ‘power to the people’ and a critique of the establishment, rather than a set of ideological beliefs about substantive public policies on issues like the economy.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, the style of communications is not confined to political parties – populist language can be adopted by any actors, such as individual politicians and leaders, social movements and political organizations, media communication outlets like the tabloid press, news channels like Fox TV or websites like Breitbart news, and by ordinary citizens. In political communications, the rise of populist leaders as diverse as Forza Italia’s Silvio Berlusconi in Italy and Podemos’s Pablo Iglesias in Spain is closely associated with ‘soft’ news outlets, like the tabloid press and cable news channels.<sup>19</sup> The tabloid press uses a populist style of language and vernacular aimed to build mass circulation though appealing to the common people. Years before the electoral success of UKIP and Brexit, British papers such as *The Sun*, *Express* and *Daily Mail* have a long history of publishing exaggerated or invented cartoonish tall stories reflecting Eurosceptic diatribes and myths about Brussels regulations (the tale of banning ‘bendy bananas’), as part of their flag-waving nationalism, as well as using colourful headlines and

graphics attacking 'politically correct' liberal views towards feminism and the women's movement, refugees and immigration and racial tolerance.<sup>20</sup> The Eurosceptic tabloid press may shape views towards the EU, especially when the media cues coincide and reinforce partisan preferences.<sup>21</sup> In the Nordic countries, as well, populist parties have gained from media coverage.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, further communications research is needed to examine populism systematically across a wide range of media outlets. Debate continues about how far the tabloid press in different countries consistently reflect an 'anti-elite' or anti-establishment perspective.<sup>23</sup> Studies have started to examine populism in mass communications, like in coverage of Brexit, but cross-national research remains underdeveloped.<sup>24</sup>

For populist leaders, the content of speeches can be analysed in terms of ethos (focusing leadership character and credibility), pathos (using emotions such as patriotism, compassion or anger) and supporting evidence. Populist campaign communications can also be scrutinized in terms of the focus on anti-elitism and appeals to the people, an informal style and anti-intellectualism, and emotional negative appeals to the politics of fear.<sup>25</sup> For example, Bonikowski and Gidron examined the discourse used in over 2000 US presidential speeches from 1952 to 1996 and found that populist language was used by both Democrats and Republicans – but especially by challengers and outsiders.<sup>26</sup> Others have scrutinized Trump's campaign speeches to understand his appeal.<sup>27</sup> His constant Twitter feed has been deconstructed for its meaning, including the way that it provides an informal, direct and provoking communication style, boosting his image while denigrating his enemies.<sup>28</sup> The visual cues from Le Pen's National Front's campaign materials have been examined for their meaning.<sup>29</sup> Similarly the rhetoric of speeches by chief executives in Latin America and 17 other countries was studied to understand its key features, drawing contrasts between populist and pluralist discourse.<sup>30</sup> This approach expanded to cover leaders in 40 countries over two decades.<sup>31</sup> Discourse analysis documents the evolution of party leadership appeals and media coverage over time within countries. But systematic cross-national and time-series data derived from leadership speeches and party campaign communications materials, like posters and election broadcasts, are not yet available to classify parties across a wide range of societies. Moreover, if populism is a fashionable form of rhetoric with empty signifiers, it is unclear whether the spread of the language carries significant consequences for political action.

### *Party elites, activists and supporters*

Another alternative approach to classify parties seeks to identify the ideological values of their elites, mid-level activists or voting supporters. This includes surveys of parliamentary candidates and Members of Parliament,<sup>32</sup> party members,<sup>33</sup> campaign managers and party officials and partisan identifiers and party voters in the electorate. These approaches could all be utilized more fully. For example, candidate surveys allow researchers to establish how politicians see their own positions, and where they perceive their party collectively, on diverse issues. But party positions may be mistaken due to motivated reasoning, selective perceptions used to reduce cognitive dissonance,

confused signals about arising from internal ideological divisions within political parties or from simple lack of political information and awareness.<sup>34</sup>

### *Programmatic policy platforms and issue positions*

The most common practice in the comparative literature has sought to distinguish the location of political parties, and the similarities across party families, based on content analysis of policy manifestos and programmatic platforms. The Comparative Manifesto Project provides the most extensive resources, widely used in the research literature, covering party manifestos published in more than 50 countries since 1945.<sup>35</sup> These documents have been analysed to identify issue salience (the amount of coverage or prominence) as well as issue positions (the direction of statements for or against issues) published in party election programmes and related proxy documents. Directional theories of party competition assume that parties vary primarily in how much prominence party manifestos devote to certain issues such as unemployment, health-care or inflation.<sup>36</sup> Most attempts at party classification based on this data have used the familiar 'left-right' cleavage, including redistributive economic issues reflecting the class cleavage, such as party positions for or against taxation, welfare spending, privatization or nationalization and so on.<sup>37</sup> These were key to patterns of party competition in many European countries during the post-war era. The traditional left-right cleavage has faded in importance since the 1980s, as party programmes have given greater prominence to socially liberal and socially conservative issue positions reflecting contemporary cultural battles.<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, the CMP data cannot be used for classifying parties in this study for two reasons. Firstly, questions remain whether the data set has the capacity to capture the two core components of Populism. There is an item on corruption in general, but the CPM data set is also not designed to gauge party populism as a style of discourse making claims about restoring legitimate power to the people and constraining the power of the establishment.

Secondly, the CMP is particularly effective for capturing changes in traditional Left-Right cleavages during the post-war decade when European parties could be classified with some degree of reliability across the economic spectrum, with Keynesian economic policies, pro-welfare state and public ownership, on the centre-left, and free-market policies favouring a smaller role for the state, deregulation and low taxes on the centre-right. These ideological divisions reflected the classic social cleavages that Lipset and Rokkan saw as dividing party families in Western Europe by social class, religion and centre-periphery.<sup>39</sup> But the traditional Left-Right economic policy cleavage provides a poor guide to the contemporary cultural cleavages in party competition revolving around socially liberal versus socially conservative values and policies. For example, the coding scheme is largely gender blind by neglecting the politics of sexuality and gender identities, and the modern agenda of the feminist and LGBTQ rights movements around the politics of sexuality and gender, including sex equality, affirmative action and equal opportunities policies, women's rights, equal pay laws, feminism, maternity or paternity leave, maternity health and childcare, gender and sexual identities, gay and transsexual rights, affirmative action in the workplace and public sphere, rights to same sex marriage

and civil unions, gender quotas in elected bodies, sexual harassment, domestic violence, women serving in the military and so on. The CMP contains an item coding policy statements for or against traditional morality, like support for abortion/divorce, traditional families and the role of religious institutions in the state, but this is unlikely to capture the full dimension of policy debates over cultural issues. The coding schema is also skewed in direction by recording positive statements about social justice and equality – but not negative statements critical of these rights, for example, where parties seek to assert ‘traditional family values’ and restrict reproductive rights, to enforce conformity with certain religious or gender-related dress codes or to roll back LGBTQ equal treatment under the law.

### III. Measuring party positions in the three-dimensional issue space

How can the three-dimensional model of party competition therefore be operationalized? European parties and party systems can be classified most consistently using systematic evidence derived mainly from expert surveys of party positions across ideological scales.<sup>40</sup> For empirical evidence of where parties fall on these dimensions, the CHES can be used to identify the ideological location of each country’s political parties.<sup>41</sup> Expert surveys are a technique which has been used increasingly to gauge complex phenomenon where we lack objective data across and within nation-states, for example, to assess levels of democracy and human rights, problems of corruption and lack of press freedom and the quality of electoral integrity.<sup>42</sup> The CHES survey asks experts to estimate the ideological and policy positions of political parties in the country with which they are most familiar. The survey has been conducted roughly every 4 years from 1999 to 2017. The study draws upon the 2014 wave, providing the broadest range of items and countries, although for replication purposes, the analysis will be compared on the key dimensions with the 2017 CHES study, in a smaller range of countries. The 2014 CHES survey covered 268 political parties in 37 post-industrial societies, including all EU member states plus Norway, Switzerland and Turkey. This includes a wide range of societies, including long-standing democracies such as Switzerland and France, as well as post-Communist states that have had divergent trajectories of democratization, such as Poland, Slovakia and Hungary. Many of these societies enjoy high standards of living but others are middle-income, with diverse levels of economic growth, unemployment and human development. Countries also vary in their level of integration into global markets. The CHES expert assessments of party positions have been widely used in the social sciences and validated against independent data based on content analysis of party platforms from the Comparative Manifesto Project.<sup>43</sup> Factor analysis with principal component rotation examined the dimensionality of 13 selected indicators contained in the data set, listed in Table 1, where experts rated the position of European parties using 10-point scales.

The *Populism-Pluralism* is treated as the first cleavage which divides parties. When it comes to measuring *Populism*, the crucial element is the importance of appeals calling for power to the people and critiquing the corrupt power of the establishment. In established liberal democracies, the antithesis is pluralism asserting the legitimacy of elected

**Table 1.** Dimensions of party competition in Europe.

CHES variable name	Description	Cultural cleavage	Populist rhetoric	Economic cleavage
	<i>Authoritarian values</i>			
Galtan	Party positions towards democratic freedoms and rights; libertarian parties favour expanding personal freedoms; authoritarian parties value order, tradition and stability	.935		
Nationalism	Pro-nationalism	.923		
Civilib_laworder	Favours tough measures to fight crime rather than the protection of civil liberties	.921		
Multiculturalism	Against multiculturalism and the integration of immigrants and asylum seekers	.911		
Sociallifestyle	Opposes liberal social lifestyles (e.g. homosexuality)	.904		
Immigrate_policy	Favours restrictive policy on immigration	.894		
Ethnic_minorities	Opposes rights for ethnic minorities	.876		
	<i>Populist rhetoric</i>			
Anti-corrupt salience	Salience of anti-corruption		.712	
Anti-elite_salience	Salience of anti-elite and anti-establishment rhetoric		.932	
	<i>Left-right economic values</i>			
Deregulation	Favours market regulation or deregulation			.965
Econ_interven	Favours or opposed to state intervention on the economy			.954
Redistribution	Favours or opposed to redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor			.928
Spendvtax	Favour or opposes cutting taxes and public services			.911

Source: Ryan Bakker, Erica Edwards, Liesbet Hooghe, Seth Jolly, Gary Marks, Jonathan Polk, Jan Rovny, Marco Steenbergen, and Milada Vachudova. 2015. "2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey." Version 2015.1. Available on chesdata.eu. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (Subsequently referenced as the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey or just abbreviated as CHES-2014).

Note: CHES-2014 expert survey of political party positions in 31 countries, including all EU member states plus Norway, Switzerland and Turkey, December 2014 to February 2015. Factor analysis with rotated varimax and Kaiser normalization.

officials and the established institutions of governance. To measure this dimension, two proxy indicators were selected from the CHES data set: (1) the importance of anti-establishment and anti-elite rhetoric and (2) the salience of anti-corruption. One important qualification should be noted: these CHES items are help to capture the typical populist critique of corrupt elites, although unfortunately the 2014 data set did not gauge populist claims about the moral legitimacy of the voice of the people or the elected representatives. The 2017 data set did add pilot items on populism, however, allowing the analysis to be expanded in future.

The *Authoritarian-Libertarian* is the second cleavage in our theoretical framework. This divides Authoritarian parties with policy positions favouring conformity with conventional social norms, collective security and loyalty towards group leaders from Libertarian parties with policy positions favouring personal freedoms, pluralism and individualism. The terms 'Liberal' can prove confusing on both sides of the Atlantic, and it can refer to both economic (*laissez faire*) liberalism and social (welfare) liberalism. For these reasons, the term 'Libertarian' is used to refer to parties which value live-and-let-live policies minimizing the role of the state in restricting personal choices, exemplified by laws protecting women and minority rights, tolerance of diversity and respect for the principles of social justice, human rights and international cooperation. This term is not perfect, but it seems preferable to other alternatives, such as 'progressives', which is too vague and ill-defined. The Authoritarian-Libertarian values of parties are measured by experts from their policy positions on seven issue items, including (1) the 'Galtan' summary measure in CHES designed to distinguish authoritarian parties valuing order, tradition and stability from libertarian parties favouring expanding personal freedoms and rights; (2) whether parties favoured nationalism or cosmopolitanism; (3) law and order or civil liberties; (4) policies of multiculturalism or assimilation of immigrants, (5) liberal positions on homosexuality; (6) restrictions on immigration; and (7) rights for ethnic minorities – all of which are linked with the cultural cleavage dividing authoritarians and libertarians.

Finally, for comparison, the *Left-Right* cleavage conventionally divides parties with policy positions located on the Economic Left (favouring regulated markets, state management of the economy, wealth redistribution and public spending) from those on the Economic Right (favouring deregulation, free markets, opposing wealth redistribution and favouring tax cuts). To gauge where political parties were located on the left-right economic cleavage, four standard issue items were used from the CHES data set, estimating party positions towards (1) market deregulation, (2) state management of the economy, (3) redistributive taxes and (4) preferences for either tax cuts or public services.

The analysis assumes that the measures of party positions reflect fairly stable positions which evolve relatively slowly. Certainly discontinuities, realignments or decisive breaks can occur, shifting parties in a different direction, particularly under new leadership, after factional splits, or following critical elections. Fringe and minor parties, in particular, are often poorly institutionalized, open to factional splits and unstable. Important shifts in party issue positions occur over time, especially in reaction to new events. For example, in an attempt to broaden the appeal of the National Front (FN), Marine le Pen sought to adopt a more populist tone and soften the hard-line immigration policies advocated by her father. By contrast, in the October 2017 election, Angela Merkel shifted towards advocating more restrictive caps on immigrant numbers flowing into Germany, in response to threats from the rival AfD. The measures from CHES-2014 should therefore be treated cautiously as a cross-national snapshot rather than necessarily reflecting enduring party positions.

The results of the principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation for the CHES-2014 data, presented in Table 1, confirm that the economic Left-Right, Authoritarian-Libertarian and Populist items form three dimensions of European party

competition, as theorized. The empirical results confirm our argument that parties adopting populist rhetoric are scattered across the map of party values. Populists do not necessarily endorse authoritarian cultural values; this is not surprising, given the vagueness and ubiquity of politicians claiming to stand ‘for the people’ and against elites. Similarly, populist language is not adopted by all traditional authoritarians on the extreme left and right, such as neo-Nazis, White Supremacist and hate groups advocating anti-Semitism, racial separation and ethnic purity. The items measuring each of these dimensions were added to generate separate ideological scales, measuring Populism, Authoritarianism and Left-Right economic policy positions, and then standardized to 100-point scales for ease of comparison. These scales are normally distributed and display a high degree of internal consistency, as measured by Cronbach’s  $\alpha$ .<sup>44</sup>

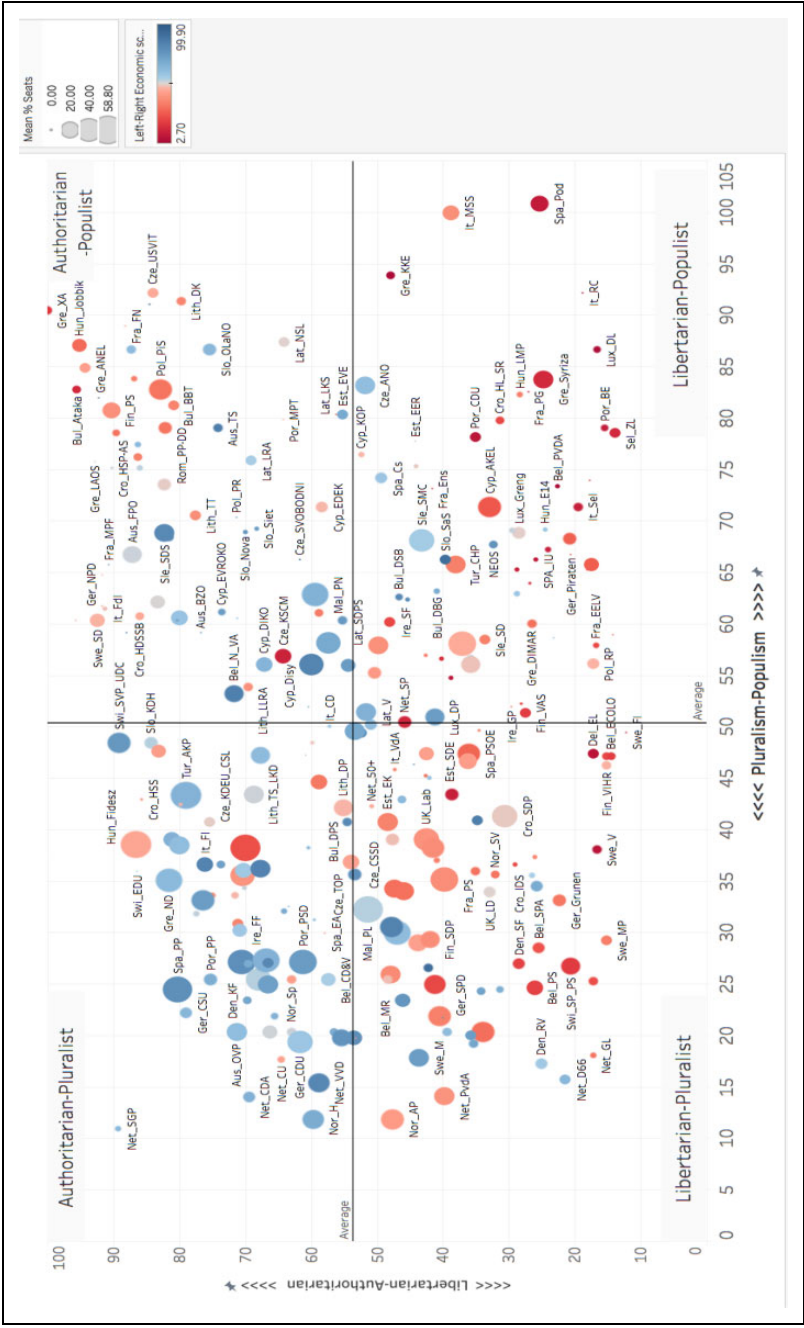
The continuous standardized scales provide fine-grained comparisons across all European parties. The ideological scales constructed from the CHES data set allow the expert-rated locations of European political parties’ policy positions to be compared across these dimensions. For a robustness check on the validity and reliability of the CHES measures, the results were compared with independent evidence. The Immerzeel, Lubbers and Coffe expert judgment survey of European Political Parties, conducted in 2010, provides one source.<sup>45</sup> This research used a similar expert survey methodology to estimate the scores of political parties in 38 European countries, focusing on populist issues such as nationalism and immigration. The two independent data sets proved to be highly correlated in the perceived position of parties on the ideological scales, lending further confidence to the CHES estimates.<sup>46</sup> In addition, for face-value validity, the list of parties ranked according to the CHES cultural values scale was found to be generally consistent with previous classifications of right-wing populist parties.<sup>47</sup> Parties can also be categorized by their average share of the vote for the lower house in national legislative elections from 2000 to 2015 and into major parties (10% or more), minor parties (4.0–9.9%) and fringe parties, which often fail to win any parliamentary seats (less than 4.0%). Each of these categories are also inevitably somewhat arbitrary but the choice of a 4% cut-off for fringe parties reflects the common minimum vote threshold used to qualify for parliamentary seats.

#### **IV. Comparing European party competition**

To examine the comparisons visually, Figure 2 illustrates the patterns of European party competition in 2014.

##### ***Authoritarian-Populist parties***

As can be observed from the scatterplot, the Authoritarian-Populist parties are located in the top right quadrant. This category includes several parties in Scandinavia such as Jimmie Åkesson’s Swedish Democrats, Jussi Halla-aho’s Finns Party, Siv Jensen’s Progress Party in Norway and Kristian Thulesen Dahl’s Danish People’s Party (DF). Similar parties and leaders in Northern Europe are Albert Rösti’s Swiss People’s Party (SVP), Geert Wilder’s Freedom Party (PVV) in the Netherlands, Heinz-Christian Strache’s Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), Marine Le Pen’s National Front (FN),



**Figure 2.** European party competition, 2014. Note: For the scale components, see Table 1. Party scores on all dimensions are standardized scales. Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES-2014).



Alexander Gauland's Alternative for Germany (AfD), Tom Van Grieken's Flemish Vlaams Belang (VB) and the UK Independence Party (UKIP). In Central and Eastern Europe, as well, several parties fall into the Authoritarian-Populist category, including the Bulgaria's Ataka, the Polish Law and Justice party (PiS), the Czech Republic's Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) party, the Polish Congress of the New Right (Kongres Nowej Prawicy or KNP) and Slovakia's Christian Democratic Movement (KDH).

Authoritarian-Populist parties are exemplified by Golden Dawn in Greece, with one of the highest scores on the Authoritarian index in Europe due to policies which are extremely anti-immigrant, ultranationalistic and hard-line eurosceptic. This has led some to classify Golden Dawn and the Independent Greeks ANEL parties as extreme right, neo-Nazi or fascist.<sup>48</sup> Yet, these categorizations are potentially confusing, since the labels can conflate social with economic conservatism. In fact, CHES experts suggest that Golden Dawn is also anti-capitalist and thus left-wing in its economic policies, for example, its 'National Plan' advocates nationalizing banks and natural resources and strengthening trade agreements with Russia, Iran and China. The party first entered parliament in May 2012 and just a few years later, in the January 2015 general elections, Golden Dawn had become the third largest party in the national parliament, winning 17 seats.<sup>49</sup>

In post-Communist Europe, another example of an extreme Authoritarian-Populist parties is Ataka (Attack) in Bulgaria, positioned closely close to Hungary's Jobbik. The party was created by Volen Siderov in April 2005 and in parliamentary election since then Ataka has been in fourth place in Bulgaria. Its programme advocates ultranationalist and xenophobic policies, especially directed against Muslim, Turkish and Roma minorities. The party seeks to assert traditional Bulgarian values, including by recognizing the Orthodox Church as the official religion of the country. It also endorses classic left-wing economic and social policies, such as restoring state ownership of major industries and increasing spending on education, welfare and healthcare.<sup>50</sup> The party blames capitalism, neo-liberal markets, globalization, the IMF, the World Bank and United States-led pro-Western forces for the country's economic problems and seeks to withdraw Bulgaria from NATO.<sup>51</sup> In the March 2017 elections, the party formed a coalition, United Patriots, with other nationalist and populist parties, including the National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria, the Bulgarian National Movement (IMRO) and the Union of the Patriotic Forces. United Patriots won 9% of the parliamentary vote and came third with 27 seats. Based on this result, United Patriots entered a government coalition led by Boyko Borisov, and nominated one third of the Council of Ministers.

### *Libertarian-Populist*

Libertarian-Populist parties, combining socially liberal policies with populist rhetoric, are located in the bottom-right quadrant. This includes Spain's Podemos (We Can), Greece's Syriza, Germany's The Left (Die Linke), and Italy's Five-star Movement.<sup>52</sup> These parties typically blend more socially liberal attitudes with anti-capitalist appeals calling for social justice and the end to austerity cuts, and some new forms of participation.<sup>53</sup> This stance is exemplified by the Greek Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza), a

coalition of the radical left formed in 2004. In the January and September 2015 elections, in the midst of the sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone, Syriza led coalition governments as the largest parliamentary party in partnership the Independent Greeks (ANEL).<sup>54</sup> The sovereign debt crisis in Greece formed the backdrop for the rise of Syriza, which fought the January 2015 elections on a platform pledged to end austerity, rewrite the bailout, and achieve substantial debt relief, attacking the international financial institutions of the EU, IMF and European Central Bank, as well as foreign governments like Germany, which sought public sector spending cuts as a condition of debt relief. The party is also socially liberal, implementing same sex civil unions in 2015, despite opposition from its coalition partner, ANEL, and the Orthodox church.

### *Authoritarian-Pluralist*

Authoritarian-Pluralist parties which combine socially conservative values with pluralist philosophies towards governance, are shown in the top left quadrant. This quadrant contains Norway's Freedom Party and the Danish People's Party, both scoring highly on the Authoritarian index, but with weaker emphasis on populist appeals. This category is exemplified by the Swiss People's Party (SVP), which is socially conservative in its values but relatively moderate in its populist discourse. SVP was established in 1971 as a farmer's agrarian party but its electoral support remained limited in the 1970s and 1970s, attracting around 11 percent of the vote mainly from cantons in the rural countryside. Party fortunes were transformed in the early-1990s, however, under the leadership of Christoph Blocher, a wealthy industrialist, when the SVP became more Eurosceptic, advocating keeping Switzerland out of the European Economic Area and the EU, and opposed to mass immigration. The party became more hierarchically organized around the leader and a tight circle of party officials, and it adopted more aggressive anti-establishment discourse.<sup>55</sup>

The party programme promoted a philosophy of national conservatism and identity politics, advocating a limited role for government in the economy and the welfare state, and the preservation of traditional Swiss values against the supranational integration of Europe and the threat of foreigners.<sup>56</sup> Asylum seekers and refugees were blamed for the rise of crime and drugs and insufficient security. The transformation of the party into the Swiss standard bearer for the socially conservative right led to its growing electoral success.<sup>57</sup> From 1959 to 2003, put of the four parties represented in the seven member Swiss Federal Council, the executive governing body, the SVP had one member. After the party gained in strength and representation in the federal parliament, in 2004 they were allocated two seats, with the Christian Democrats reduced to one.

Currently chaired by Albert Rösti and led by Toni Brunner, the SVP's economic policies oppose deficit spending, government regulation, environmental protection, military engagement abroad, and closer ties with NATO.<sup>58</sup> On cultural issues, the party has emphasized euroscepticism, strict asylum laws and opposition to multiculturalism and immigration. For example, its party manifesto says: '*The SVP is fighting the failed asylum policy that leads to skyrocketing costs, more crime and housing problems*'.<sup>59</sup> The electoral success of the SVP at municipal, cantonal and national levels polarized the Swiss party system, especially on cultural issues.<sup>60</sup> In one of its most controversial

moves, claiming to ‘stop the creeping Islamization of Switzerland’, in 2009, it pushed successfully to ban the construction of minarets – an initiative that subsequently became an amendment to the Swiss Constitution.<sup>61</sup> Following the October 2015 federal elections, and spurred by the European migration crisis, the SVP became the largest party in the Federal Assembly, winning a record number of around one third of the seats (65/200) with 29.4% of the votes. The SVP backs a referendum campaign to limit the free movement of EU citizens into the country, a bilateral accord agreed earlier to give Switzerland access to the EU single market. At the same time, the party managed to accommodate itself to being in government without giving up its ‘anti-system’ image and rhetoric and without experiencing internal factionalism. Therefore, the SVP flourishes in a highly educated plural society – as well as a stable consociational democracy and federal state and one of the affluent societies in the world.

### *Libertarian-Pluralist*

The lower left-hand quadrant depicts the Libertarian-Pluralist parties, usually long-established and mainstream parties favouring socially liberal policies and traditional forms of liberal democratic governance, including many social democratic and socialist parliamentary parties in Western Europe. Mainstream parties in this group, including many Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, Conservative, Liberals and Greens, sharing a liberal consensus concerning the value of cooperation and engagement in international affairs, generally supporting multilateral institutions of global governance, cooperation, development assistance and humanitarian engagement, and the benefits of open borders for the free movement of capital, trade, goods and labour. On the cultural dimension, Libertarian-Pluralist parties endorse socially liberal policy positions reflecting the expansion of personal freedoms and individual rights on moral issues, tolerance of pluralistic diversity, supported by liberal democratic institutions and norms of governance. Parties in this quadrant differ from each other primarily on the traditional Left-Right cleavage over the importance of free markets versus state management of the economy and thus policy positions towards issues of redistribution, taxation, regulation and social justice, as well as the role and size of the public sector and welfare states.

### *Left-Right*

How do parties compete across the Left-Right economic dimension? Figure 2 illustrates the left-right position of parties on the economy, where red represents more left-wing pro-interventionist positions while blue represents more pro-market positions. It is apparent that parties are scattered across the graph in their economic positions, with many economically right-wing parties in the top-left quadrant, while Libertarian-Pluralists in the bottom left quadrant tend to be more left-wing. Nevertheless, there are several exceptions which can be observed. To examine these patterns in more detail, we can look at Figure 3 which shows the Authoritarian-Libertarian and the Left-Right cleavages broken down by country.

**Figure 3.** Classification of European political parties by Left-Right and Authoritarian-Libertarian by country. *Note:* For the scale components, see Table 1. Party scores on both dimensions are standardized to 10-point scales. *Source:* Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES-2014).

### *Authoritarian-Right*

The top-right quadrant in Figure 3 contains the Authoritarian-Right parties. These typically favour pro-market policies and a small role for the state on issues like public sector spending and taxation, socially conservative on issues like preserving traditional family values and religious traditions and deeply eurosceptic and nationalism in international affairs. Overall 17 European parties fall into this category. As expected, Figure 3 shows that many of these parties are also Populist – denigrating the legitimacy of established elites at home or abroad – but not all. We can observe far more parties located in the Authoritarian-Right quadrant than in the Authoritarian-Left quadrant. When the position of all political parties in the CHES-2014 data set is compared, we can observe a moderately strong and significant correlation between the Authoritarian-Libertarian scale and the Left-Right scale ( $R = -0.074^{**}$  P.000, N.270).

### *Authoritarian-Left*

The top left quadrant in Figure 3 contains the Authoritarian-Left parties – again many but not all populist in their discourse towards governance authority. Overall, 22 parties fall into this category but in Western Europe and Nordic Europe, although many voters blend socialist views towards redistribution and the welfare state with adherence to traditional cultural values around issues like nationalism, it is notable that relatively few parties offer policy positions endorsing this combination, generating a representation gap.<sup>62</sup> Elsewhere around the world, however, many parties are this category.<sup>63</sup> In post-Communist Europe, this includes the Lithuanian Way of Courage (DK), the governing Polish Law and Justice party (PiS), the Slovak National Party, the National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria and the Bulgarian National Movement, the Czech Party of Civic Rights and Jobbik (Movement for a Better Hungary).<sup>64</sup> In Latin America, as well, the Peronist tradition reflects this combination of socialist state-managed economics with populist authoritarian leaders in many countries, notably Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela (becoming increasingly authoritarian over time), Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in Argentina, Eva Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador.<sup>65</sup> Latin America has a long history of populist leaders on both the economic left and right that dates back to the 1940s, when Argentina's Juan Perón came to power.<sup>66</sup> The resurgence of populism in Latin America during the last decade is exemplified by the success of Cristina Fernández in Argentina and Rafael Correa in Ecuador, commonly seen as a reaction against the economic stagnation and financial crises that hit the region during the late-1990s. Similar arguments about economic inequality have been made to explain the case of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela, PSUV).<sup>67</sup> The election of Hugo Chavez as Venezuela's president in 1998, less than 7 years after his unsuccessful military coup attempt, marked one of the most dramatic political transformations in the nation's history. This was followed in 2013 by his successor, Nicolás Maduro. Venezuela illustrates the dangers of Authoritarian-populist leaders in hybrid regimes, and how democratic institutions can be destroyed by them.

### *Libertarian-Right and Libertarian-Left*

Finally, the majority of European parties can be observed to fall into the Libertarian-Left (99) and Libertarian-Right (130) categories in the bottom quadrants shown in Figure 3. This includes many mainstream centre-right governing parties close to middle of the political spectrum, like British Conservatives, the Swiss People's Party (SVP), the German CSU and Ireland Fianna Fail.

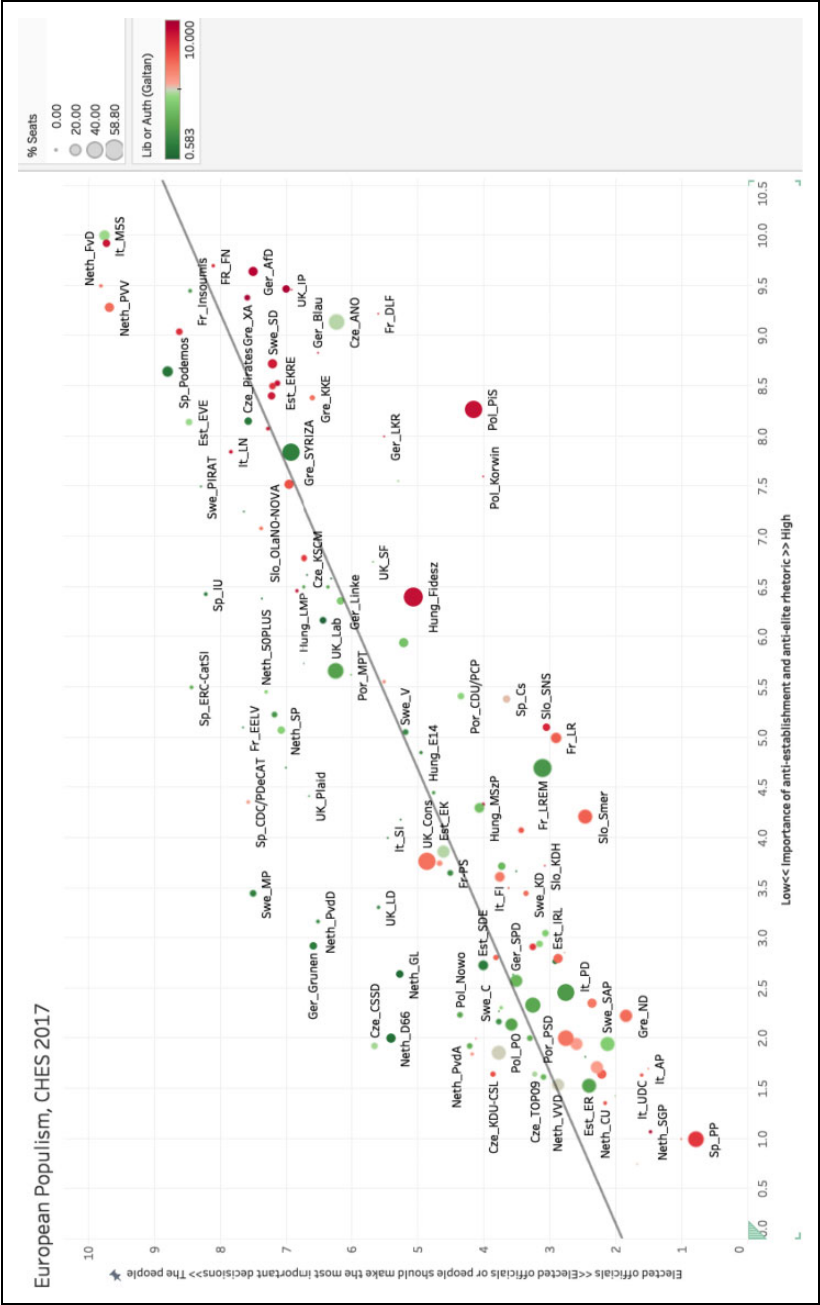
### *Measurement issues and stability over time*

Is the measure of populism in CHES-2014 reliable and conceptually valid? After all, the measure captures the anti-establishment aspect of populism but not whether parties favour direct democracy. To expand the measures, CHES-2017 included several items monitoring the latter. This included asking experts to rate the position of parties on direct versus representative democracy, using the following 10-point scale:

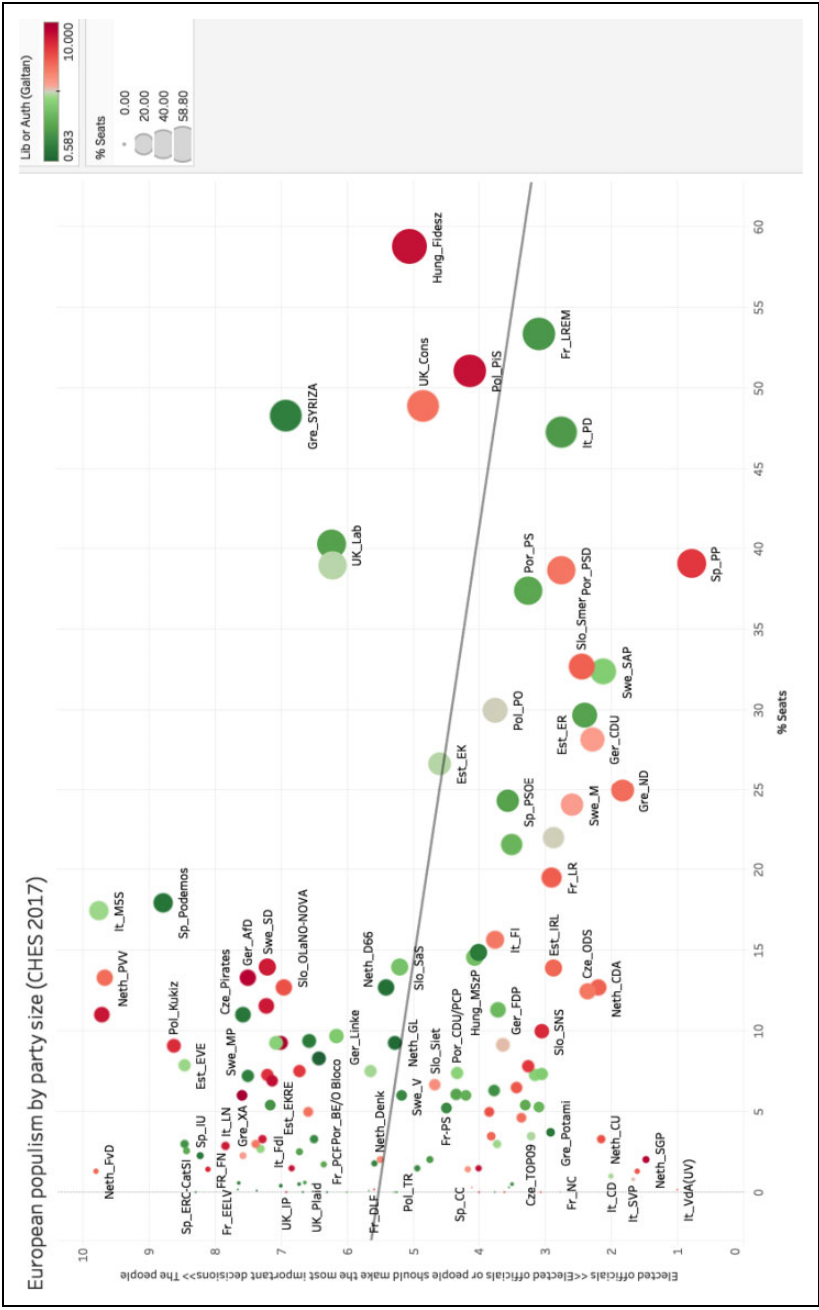
Some political parties take the position that 'the people' should have the final say on the most important issues, for example by voting directly in referendums. At the opposite pole are political parties that believe that elected representatives should make the most important political decisions.

This can be compared with expert estimates of the salience of anti-elite and anti-establishment rhetoric for parties. As shown in Figure 4, these dimensions of populism are consistently strongly correlated ( $R^2 = 0.66^{***}$ ), confirming that the logic that anti-establishment and pro-people rhetoric reflect two halves of the same underlying concept. Thus, parties such as the Dutch PVV, Italian Five Star Movement and Spanish Podemos, although divergent in their cultural values, share the use of populist rhetoric. Similarly, in France, although Macron's Insoumis and Le Pen's National Rally/National Front are bitter rivals and ideologically very different, they both emphasize similar anti-elite and anti-establishment populist appeals. Contrasts can also be observed in Greece dividing the libertarian Syriza from the authoritarian Golden Dawn – yet both are populists in their language. This emphasizes how important it is to distinguish the values which parties advocate – not simply their populist arguments. The parties at the pluralist end of the spectrum, in the bottom left corner, are equally diverse in their cultural values and party families, including proponents of both authoritarian and libertarian values.

This comparison also illustrates how certain parties conventionally seen as exemplifying populism in their rhetoric, notably Hungary's Fidesz, while certainly strongly authoritarian, are far less populist than expected when in power. It remains difficult for populists to continue to rail against corrupt governing elites and to depict themselves as anti-establishment outsiders when they hold the keys to government office. To examine this further, the use of populist language emphasizing that sovereignty and decision-making should rest with the people not elected officials. Can be compared with party size, measured by the proportion of seats they hold. As Figure 5 illustrates, there is a correlation observed, which is statistically significant albeit not very strong ( $R^2 = 0.05^{**}$ ). Thus, larger governing parties, such as the UK Conservatives, Hungary's Fidesz and the Polish Peace and Justice Party, are all in the bottom-right quadrant. There are



**Figure 4.** The anti-establishment and pro-people components of European populism. Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES-2017).



**Figure 5.** Support for people power is linked (moderately) with party size and governing status. Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES-2017).



also numerous smaller populist parties like UK Independence Party and the French National Rally/National Front in the top-left quadrant, although this is not inevitably since there are also many smaller and fringe parties which adhere to pluralist language.

Finally, are these patterns of party competition monitored through these indices stable over time? Clearly, parties can shift positions, such as in response to new events, new party rivals or new leaders. Nevertheless, if political parties move dramatically within a relatively short period of time, then this would give grounds to suspect that the measures and thus classifications are unstable. The comparison of parties from CHES-2014 in Figure 2 can be replicated and compared with party positions in a smaller range of countries using CHES-2017. As shown in Figure 6, while parties do shift, the overall pattern suggests considerable stability over time from two independent surveys. Thus, again parties such as Greece's Golden Dawn, Hungary's Jobbik, German's AfD, Italy's Lega Nord and Poland's Peace and Justice party are all observed in the top-right hand quadrant as strongly Authoritarian-Populist. Therefore, although party systems evolve, the classifications seem fairly consistent during the years under comparison.

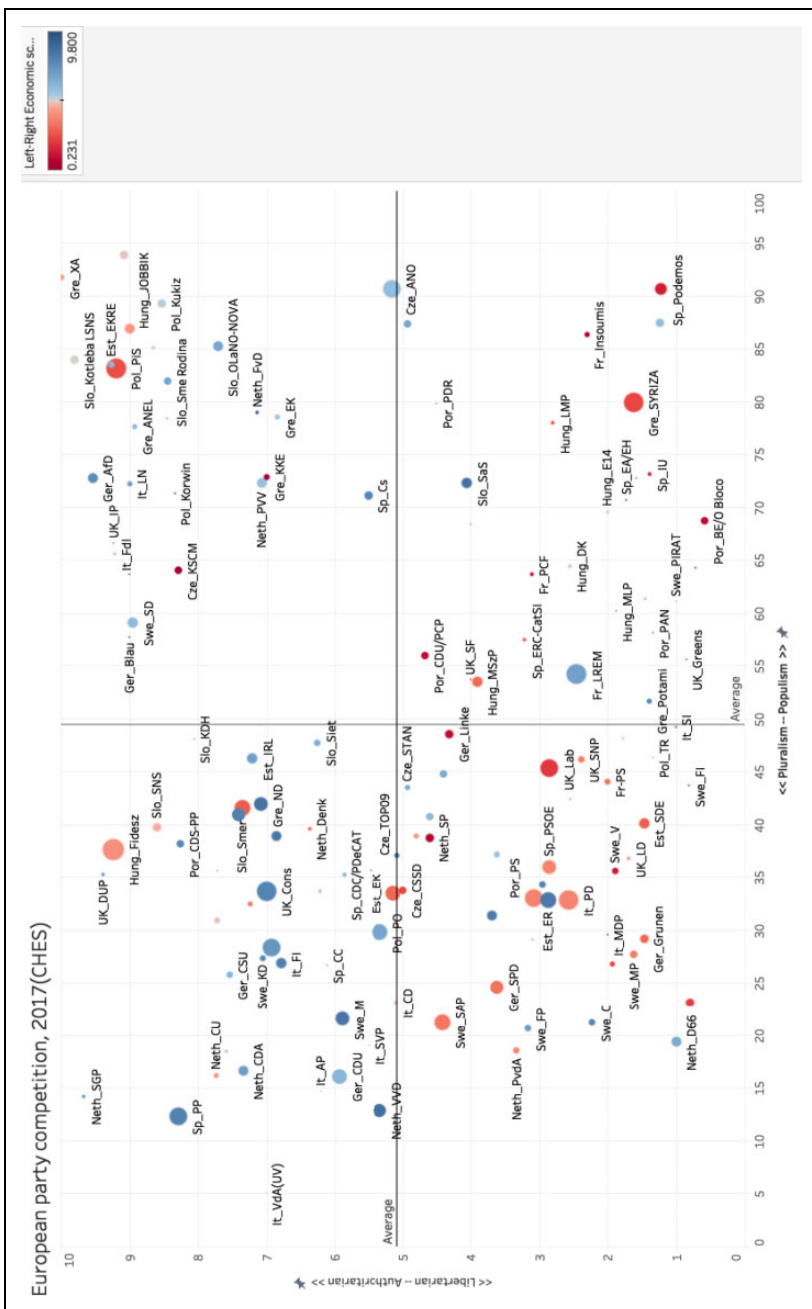
## V. Conclusions

Populist rhetoric asserts the legitimacy of popular sovereignty – if necessary, over-riding the pluralist principles of minority rights, elite expertise, conventional power structures in liberal democracy and decision-making by elected representatives and professional bureaucrats. Populism thereby delegitimizes institutional checks-and-balances on the powers of the executive, undermining faith in the impartiality of the courts and rule of law, elections, the independent news media, intellectuals and scientists, civil society organizations and interest groups, opposition parties, civil servants and elected legislators. There is broad agreement in the literature that populism emphasizes the value of faith in the wisdom and virtue of ordinary people over the 'corrupt' elite.<sup>68</sup>

This rhetoric reflects first-order principles about the moral foundations of legitimate governance. At the same time, populism provides little if any guidance about what should be done, however, and thus, it is silent about second-order principles in any ideology about public policies, thus populists are not necessarily defined by the traditional state versus market Left-Right cleavage over economic and social welfare policies nor are populists necessarily associated with one side or other in the Authoritarian-Libertarian cleavage.<sup>69</sup> Actors of various political persuasions who adopt populist discourse share a common language about what they are *against*: depicting themselves as radical outsiders rooted in the wisdom and experience of 'ordinary folks', with their leaders seen as insurgents fighting the establishment on behalf of the people. They attack the liberal conviction of moral superiority and politically correct nostrums.

The evidence in this study suggests that two main conclusions about where populists are located in patterns of party competition.

Firstly, political parties can be classified on a systematic basis from expert survey data to identify how far they reflect the Left-Right and Authoritarian-Libertarian cleavages, as well as whether they adopt Populist or Pluralist discourse. The results suggest that Populism is not best understood as a phenomenon confined to a specific party type, as so much of the literature assumes, but instead it is a pervasive discourse or style. Politicians



**Figure 6.** European party competition, 2017. Note: For the scale components, see Table 1. Party scores on both dimensions are standardized to 10-point scales. Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES-2017).

of many political stripes and persuasions can adopt populist language – especially challengers and outsiders running for office by running against the office – because this is an effective way to tap into a mood of public disenchantment with the performance or mainstream parties and other representative institutions. How else, after all, could Eurosceptic politicians campaign when seeking election to the European parliament, the very body they attack? Even policies often most closely regarded as the signature issue of ‘populists’ – such as nativism, nationalism and anti-immigration – are more a product of the ideologies attached to populism, rather than an intrinsic feature. Populism is about who should govern – not what is to be done.

In addition, the classification seeks to scrap and replace the conventional language of ‘radical right’, ‘extreme right’, ‘populist right’ and all the rest as both conceptually flawed and confusing. Instead, experts identify party positions in a wide range of European parties on three dimensions. The measures capture contemporary patterns of party competition in European societies, distinguishing the old Left-Right economic cleavage, the Authoritarian-Libertarian cultural cleavage and the Populist-Pluralist dimension which overlays both. These data are used to estimate continuous scales for all parties. Parties scoring highly in Populism are located across the Left-Right economic spectrum. Finally, several parties combine both Authoritarianism and Populism, the combination which is potentially the most dangerous for undermining liberal democracy. The consequences of these shifts in party competition are continuing to play out and it remains to be seen whether these developments reflect short-term reactions to events such as the 2007 banking crisis and the subsequent refugee crisis in Europe, or whether they signal more persistent and enduring shifts in the underlying cleavages in the European electorate and party systems.

## Notes

1. van der Eijk et al. (2005).
2. For further discussion, see Muller (2016); Laclau (2005); Moffitt (2016); Aalberg et al. (2018); Aslanidis (2016); Block and Negrine (2017).
3. See, for example, Kitschelt (1997); Norris (2005).
4. For the term ‘populist radical right’, see for example, Mudde (2007); Betz (1994).
5. See for example, Ignazi (2003); Carter (2005).
6. de la Torre and Arnson (2013); Stavrakakis, Kioupkioli, and Katsambekis (2016).
7. Lupu (2010).
8. de la Torre (2016); Remmer (2012).
9. Rooduijn and Akkerman (2017).
10. Kazin (1998).
11. Lamont, Park, and Ayala-Hurtado (2017).
12. Budge et al. (2012).
13. See Heath, Evans, and Martin (1994); Bornschier (2010).
14. See Mair and Mudde (1998).
15. <http://www.enfgroup-ep.eu/>.
16. <http://www.efddgroup.eu/about-us/our-president>.
17. <http://www.efddgroup.eu/about-us/our-charter>.
18. Jagers and Walgrave (2007); Aalberg et al. (2017).

19. Mazzoleni, Stewart, and Horsfield (2003).
20. Conboy (2006).
21. Carey and Burton (2004).
22. Herkman (2017); Herkman (2017).
23. Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart (2007); Akkerman (2011).
24. See, however, Rooduijn (2014).
25. Aalberg et al. (2016).
26. Bonikowski and Gidron (2016).
27. Lamont, Park, and Ayala-Hurtado (2017).
28. Kreis (2017).
29. Dumitrescu (2017).
30. Hawkins (2009).
31. Lewis et al. (Mar 7, 2019).
32. See <http://www.comparativecandidates.org/>.
33. See <http://www.projectmapp.eu/>.
34. Norris and Lovenduski (2004).
35. Volkens et al. (2017).
36. Laver and Budge (1992).
37. For the utility of the left-right schema, see Laver (2001).
38. Kitschelt and Hellemans (1990).
39. Lipset and Rokkan (1967).
40. Steenbergen and Marks (2007); Mair and Castles (1997); Huber and Inglehart (1995).
41. Bakker et al. (2015).
42. Schedler (2012).
43. Steenbergen and Marks (2007); Bakker et al. (2012).
44. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  0.75\*\*\*.
45. Immerzeel, Lubbers, and Coffee (2011).
46. The Chapel Hill Expert Survey and the Immerzeel, Lubbers and Coffee estimates for the ideological position of parties were compared and the simple correlations for the cultural scale were strong ( $R = 0.85^{***}$ ) and also for the L-R economic scales ( $R = 0.88^{***}$ ).
47. Comparisons were drawn with populist radical right parties listed in Mudde (2007).
48. Aslanidis and Rovira Kaltwasser (2016).
49. Lamprianou and Ellinas (2017).
50. <http://www.ataka.bg/>.
51. Ganev (2017).
52. March (2012); Orriols and Coirdero (2016); Vittori (2017).
53. Ivaldi, Lanzzone, and Woods (2017).
54. Aslanidis and Rovira Kaltwasser (2016); Mudde (2017).
55. Bornschieer (2010).
56. Skenderovic (2009).
57. Bornschieer (2010).
58. Bochsler, Gerber, and Zumbach (2016).
59. <https://www.svp.ch/partei/positionen/themen/asylpolitik/>.
60. Bornschieer (2015).
61. Ladner (2001); Albertazzi and Mueller (2013).

62. Thomassen (2012); Lefkofridi, Wagner, and Willmann (2014).
63. Polyakova (2015); Pirro (2017).
64. March (2012).
65. Conniff (1982); Edwards (2010); de l Torre (2015); Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2012).
66. Burgess and Levitsky (2003).
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