Populists have disrupted long-established patterns of party competition in many contemporary Western societies. The most dramatic case is the election of Donald Trump to the White House. How could such a polarizing and politically inexperienced figure win a major party’s nomination – and then be elected President? Many observers find it difficult to understand his victory. He has been sharply attacked by conservatives such as George Will, establishment Republicans such as John McCain, Democrats such as Elizabeth Warren, and socialists such as Bernie Sanders. He has been described by some commentators as a strongman menacing democracy, by others as a xenophobic and racist demagogue skilled at whipping up crowds, and by yet others as an opportunistic salesman lacking any core principles. Each of these approaches contains some truth.

We view Trump as a leader who uses populist rhetoric to legitimate his style of governance, while promoting authoritarian values that threaten the liberal norms underpinning American democracy.

Trump is far from unique. Previous demagogues in America include Huey Long’s Share the Wealth movement, Joe McCarthy’s witch-hunting communists, and George Wallace’s white backlash. Trump’s angry nativist speeches, anti-establishment appeals, and racially heated language resembles that of many other leaders whose support has been swelling across Europe. Beyond leaders, these sentiments find expression in political parties, social movements, and the tabloid press. Populism is not new; von Beyme suggests that it has experienced at least three successive waves. Its historical roots can be traced back to the Chartists in early Victorian Britain, the People’s Party in the US, Narodnik revolutionaries in late nineteenth-century Tsarist Russia, Fascist movements in the
interwar decades, Peronism in Argentina, and Poujadism in post-war France. Authoritarianism also has a long history that peaked during the era of Bolshevism and Fascism, and has seen resurgence since the late-twentieth century.

What is populism?

Populism is understood in this book minimally as a style of rhetoric reflecting first-order principles about who should rule, claiming that legitimate power rests with ‘the people’ not the elites. It remains silent about second-order principles, concerning what should be done, what policies should be followed, what decisions should be made. The discourse has a chameleon-like quality which can adapt flexibly to a variety of substantive ideological values and principles, such as socialist or conservative populism, authoritarian or progressive populism, and so on.

As unpacked fully in chapter 3, populist rhetoric makes two core claims about how societies should be governed.

First, populism challenges the legitimate authority of the ‘establishment.’ It questions pluralist beliefs about the rightful location of power and authority in any state, including the role of elected representatives in democratic regimes. Favorite targets include the mainstream media (‘fake news’), elections (‘fraudulent’), politicians (‘drain the swamp’), political parties (‘dysfunctional’), public-sector bureaucrats (‘the deep state’), judges (‘enemies of the people’), protests (‘paid rent-a-mob’), the intelligence services (‘liars and leakers’), lobbyists (‘corrupt’), intellectuals (‘arrogant liberals’) and scientists (‘who needs experts?’), interest groups (‘get-rich-quick lobbyists’), the constitution (‘a rigged system’), international organizations like the European Union (‘Brussels bureaucrats’) and the UN (‘a talking club’). In Trump’s words, ‘The only antidote to decades of ruinous rule by a small handful of elites is a bold infusion of the popular will. On every major issue affecting this country, the people are right and the governing elite are wrong.’ The claim is not just that members of the establishment are arrogant in their judgments, mistaken in their decisions, and blundering in their actions, but rather that they are morally wrong in their core values. This claim resonates among critical citizens – those committed to democracy in principle but disillusioned with the performance of elected officeholders and representative institutions, including parties, elections, and parliaments.

In this regard, populist leaders depict themselves as insurgents willing to ride roughshod over long-standing conventions, disrupting mainstream ‘politics-as-usual.’ Donald Trump’s campaign rhetoric has been strongly counter-elitist, emphasizing the need to ‘drain the swamp’ of corrupt
Part I Introduction

politicians and lobbyists, touching a chord among his supporters. The ‘fake media’ are labelled ‘enemies of the people’ and public-sector officials are seen as part of the ‘deep state’ resisting change. For Marine Le Pen, faceless European Commissioners are the enemy: ‘No one knows their name or their face. And above all no one has voted for them.’ For pro-Brexit tabloids, ‘out of touch’ judges seeking to delay Article 50 are vilified as ‘Enemies of the People.’ In Venezuela, Hugo Chavez’s bellicose speeches berated former presidents charged with embezzlement, lambasted the Caracas elite, and attacked American imperialism (‘domination, exploitation, and pillage’).

Secondly, populist leaders claim that the only legitimate source of political and moral authority in a democracy rests with the ‘people.’ The voice of ordinary citizens (the ‘silent majority,’ ‘the forgotten American’) is regarded as the only ‘genuine’ form of democratic governance even when at odds with expert judgments – including those of elected representatives and judges, scientists, scholars, journalists and commentators. Lived experience is regarded as a far superior guide to action rather than book-learning. The collective will of the people (‘Most people say...’) is regarded as unified, authentic, and unquestionably morally right. In cases of conflict, for example, if Westminster disagrees with the outcome of the Brexit referendum, the public’s decision is thought to take automatic precedent.

On the night of the Brexit referendum to leave the European Union, for example, the leader of UK Independence Party (UKIP), Nigel Farage, crowed that ‘This will be a victory for real people, a victory for ordinary people, a victory for decent people.’ For the German protest movement Pegida, ‘We are the people’ (‘Wir sind das Volk’). Similarly, Trump’s inaugural address proclaimed: ‘We are transferring power from Washington, DC and giving it back to you, the American People ... The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer.’ In the 2017 French presidential elections, the National Front candidate, Marine Le Pen, campaigned to ‘free the French people from an arrogant elite.’ A few months after Brexit, at the 2016 Conservative Party conference, Prime Minister Theresa May expressed similar views: ‘Just listen to the way a lot of politicians and commentators talk about the public. They find their patriotism distasteful, their concerns about immigration parochial, their views about crime illiberal, their attachment to their job-security inconvenient.’ And Norbert Hofer, presidential candidate of the Freedom Party of Austria, criticized his opponent: ‘You have the haute volée [high society] behind you; I have the people with me.’ Elites questioning the wisdom of the people, or resisting its sovereignty,
are accused of being corrupt, self-serving, arrogant know-it-alls who are ‘traitors declaring war on democracy.’\textsuperscript{18} There can be no turning back from the people’s decision: Brexit means Brexit.

Therefore, populist rhetoric seeks to corrode faith in the legitimate authority of elected representatives in liberal democracies. But the revolution finds it easier to destroy the old than rebuild the new. The danger is that this leaves the door ajar for soft authoritarians attacking democratic norms and practices. Strongman leaders rise to power by claiming to govern on behalf of the ‘real’ people, sanctioned by flawed elections and enabled by partisan loyalists. The concept of ‘legitimacy’ can be best understood, in Seymour Martin Lipset’s words, as ‘the capacity of a political system to engender and maintain the belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate and proper ones for the society.’\textsuperscript{19} It is the vital quality which ensures that citizens comply with the decisions of their government, not because of the law or threat of force, but because they choose to do so voluntarily. Populist leaders knock-down safeguards on executive power by claiming that they, and they alone, reflect the authentic voice of ordinary people and have the capacity to restore collective security against threats. In Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s words: ‘We are the people. Who are you?’\textsuperscript{20} Leaders draw fuzzy lines between the interests of the state and their personal interests – along with that of their family and cronies. Democracy is thereby attacked, but not directly, which would raise too many red flags. No coup d’état is hatched. The military stay in the barracks. Elections are not cancelled. Opponents are not jailed. But democratic norms are gradually degraded by populists claiming to be democracy’s best friend (‘Trust me’).\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{What is authoritarianism?}

What is important for fully understanding this phenomenon, however, is not just the rhetorical veneer of ‘people power,’ but also what second-order principles leaders advocate – and thus what cultural values they endorse, what programmatic policies they advocate, and what governing practices they follow. In this regard, know them by what they do – not just by what they say. The populist words of parties such as the French National Front, the Swedish Democrats, or Poland’s Law and Justice – and leaders such as Orbán, Berlusconi, and Trump – are the external patina disguising authoritarian practices. It is the combination of authoritarian values disguised by populist rhetoric which we regard as potentially the most dangerous threat to liberal democracy.

The notion of ‘authoritarian’ is commonly used in comparative politics to denote a particular type of regime and in social psychology to refer to
a particular set of personality predispositions or learnt cultural values. Following the latter tradition, in this study, authoritarianism is defined as a cluster of values prioritizing collective security for the group at the expense of liberal autonomy for the individual. Authoritarian values prioritize three core components: (1) the importance of security against risks of instability and disorder (foreigners stealing our jobs, immigrants attacking our women, terrorists threatening our safety); (2) the value of group conformity to preserve conventional traditions and guard our way of life (defending ‘Us’ against threats to ‘European values’); and (3) the need for loyal obedience toward strong leaders who protect the group and its customs (‘I alone can fix it,’ ‘Believe me,’ ‘Are you in my team?’).

The politics of fear drives the search for collective security for the tribe – even if this means sacrificing personal freedoms. In this regard, the ‘tribe’ refers to an imaginary community demarcated by signifiers of us versus them – our people versus the others. This is often broadly defined by bonds of nationality and citizenship (‘We all share the same home, the same heart, the same destiny, and the same great American flag’). Or it can be demarcated more narrowly by signifiers of social identity that provide symbolic attachments of belonging and loyalty for the in-group and barriers for the out-groups, signified by, for example, race, religion, ethnicity, location, generation, party, gender, or sex. The notion of a ‘tribe’ is therefore distinct from simply joining any loose grouping or becoming a formal member of an organization. Tribes are social identity groups, often communities linked by economic, religious, or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect, typically having a recognized leader. Tribes involve loyalty, stickiness, boundaries, and shared cultural meanings and feelings of belonging.

Authoritarian values blended with populist rhetoric can be regarded as a dangerous combination fueling a cult of fear. Populist rhetoric directs tribal grievances ‘upwards’ toward elites, feeding mistrust of ‘corrupt’ politicians, the ‘fake’ media, ‘biased’ judges, and ‘out-of-touch’ mainstream parties, assaulting the truth and corroding faith in liberal democracy. Politicians won’t/can’t defend you. And authoritarians channel tribal grievances ‘outwards’ toward scapegoat groups perceived as threatening the values and norms of the in-group, dividing ‘Us’ (the ‘real people’) and ‘Them’ (‘Not Us’); stoking anxiety, corroding mutual tolerance, and poisoning the reservoir of social trust. If the world is seen as full of gangs, criminals, and fanatics, if our borders are vulnerable to drug cartels, Muslim terrorists, and illegal aliens, if liberal democracy is broken, then logically we need high walls – and strong leaders – to protect us and our nation.
Authoritarian leaders and followers seek collective strength and security because of the triumph of fear over hope, of anxiety over confidence, of darkness over light. The theme of Trump’s inaugural address perfectly encapsulates this bleak vision: ‘For too many of our citizens, a different reality exists: Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities; rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation; an education system, flush with cash, but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of knowledge; and the crime and gangs and drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential. This American carnage stops right here and stops right now.’

This discourse strikes a discordant note because it is so much at odds with the tradition of American ‘can do’ optimism. Not ‘the only thing we have to fear is fear itself’ (Roosevelt). Not ‘Ask what you can do for your country’ (Kennedy). Not ‘Its Morning Again in America’ (Reagan). Not ‘The Audacity of Hope’ (Obama).

When authoritarian values and populist rhetoric are translated into public policies, the key issue concerns the need to defend ‘Us’ (‘our tribe’) through restrictions on ‘Them’ (‘the other’) – justifying restrictions on the entry of immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and foreigners, and the use of policies such as official language requirements or bans on certain religious practices. It justifies Guantanamo Bay. It justifies ‘zero tolerance’ forcibly separating immigrant children from parents at the US border. This orientation underpins and vindicates the intolerance, racism, homophobia, misogyny, and xenophobia characteristic of Authoritarian-Populist parties. In foreign affairs, this viewpoint favors the protection of national sovereignty, secure borders, a strong military, and trade protectionism (‘America First’), rather than membership of the European Union, diplomatic alliances, human rights, international engagement, and multilateral cooperation within the G7, NATO, and United Nations. Moreover, Authoritarian Populism favors policies where the state actively intervenes to restrict non-traditional lifestyles, typically by limiting same sex marriage, LGBTQ rights and gender equality, access to contraception and abortion, and affirmative action or quotas – unless, in some cases, these types of liberal policies are framed as a defense of national cultures against attacks by ‘others.’ Finally, in the public sphere, since liberal democracy has been delegitimized, authoritarian populists favor strong governance preserving order and security against perceived threat (‘They are sending rapists’ ‘radical Islamic terrorists’), even at the expense of democratic norms protecting judicial independence, freedom of the media, human rights and civil liberties, the oversight role of representative assemblies, and standards of electoral integrity. It is the triumph of fear over hope.
Part I Introduction

9

The rise of authoritarian populism

Subsequent chapters classify and measure political parties using systematic evidence and demonstrate that authoritarian populism has taken root in many European countries.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the rising tide in the electorate. Across Europe, the average share of the vote won by these parties for the lower house in national parliamentary elections in Europe has more than doubled since the 1960s, from around 5.4 percent to 12.4 percent today.25 During the same era, their share of seats has tripled, from 4.0 percent to 12.2 percent. These forces have advanced in some of the world’s richest and most egalitarian European societies with comprehensive welfare states and long-established democracies, such as Austria, Norway, and Denmark, as well as in countries plagued by mass unemployment, sluggish growth, and shaky finances, such as Greece and Bulgaria.26 They have won government office in Eastern and Central Europe, such as in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Poland, and have taken root in the Netherlands and Germany. They have gained in consensus democracies with Proportional Representation elections and federal systems (Belgium and Switzerland), and in countries with majoritarian rules (France) and presidential executives (the United States). By contrast, they are also notably absent, the dog which didn’t bark, in several other Western

THE RISE OF AUTHORITARIAN POPULISM

Figure 1.1. Vote share for populist parties in Western societies, 1946–2017

Notes: The mean vote share for populist parties in national elections for the lower (or single) house of parliament from 1945 to 2017 in 32 Western societies containing at least one such party. For the classification of parties, see Chapter 7.

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democracies which were some of the worst affected by the financial crisis, such as Ireland and Iceland.\textsuperscript{27}

In later chapters, using reasonable cut-off points, we identify over fifty European political parties that can be classified as ‘Authoritarian-Populist.’ These have gained a growing presence in parliaments in many countries and entered government coalitions in more than a dozen Western democracies, including in Austria, Italy, New Zealand, Norway,
and Switzerland. In long-established democracies, some of the most electorally successful parties during recent decades include the Swiss People’s Party, the Norwegian Progress Party, the Freedom Party of Austria, the Danish People’s Party, the Party for Freedom and the Forum for Democracy in the Netherlands, and the Finns Party (True Finns). In Central and Eastern Europe, the largest Authoritarian-Populist parties include Viktor Orbán’s Fidesz in Hungary, Poland’s Law and Justice (PiS), the Slovenian Democratic Party, the Bulgarian National Movement II, and the Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary. Minor parties, capable of influencing the policy agenda, even if less effective in winning seats, include the Flemish Vlaams Belang, the French National Front, the Lega Nord in Italy, Greece’s Golden Dawn, Flemish Interest in Belgium, the Alternative for Germany (AfD), and the UK Independence Party. Others in this category include Australia’s One Nation Party, New Zealand First, and the Canadian Reform Party (which merged with the Conservatives in 2000). At the extreme fringe, there are also several White Supremacist party organizations, such as the British National Party in the UK, the Party of the Swedes, and the neo-Nazi German National Democratic Party.

Many world leaders have also endorsed authoritarian and populist values, to greater or lesser degree, including Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, Prime Minister Andrej Babiš and President Milos Zeman in the Czech Republic, Viktor Mihály Orbán in Hungary, Thaksin Shinawatra in Thailand, Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, as well as Narendra Modi in India – and, Donald Trump in America.

By contrast, Libertarian-Populist parties and social movements with a more progressive philosophy are less common but their support has also grown in recent years in several European states. These typically use populist discourse railing against corruption, mainstream parties, and multinational corporations but this is blended with the endorsement of socially liberal attitudes, progressive social policies, and participatory styles of political engagement. This category includes Spain’s Podemos Party and the Indignados Movement, Greece’s Syriza, the Left Party in Germany, the Socialist Party in the Netherlands, and Italy’s Five Star Movement (M5S). In the Americas, Libertarian-Populist leaders are exemplified by Bernie Sanders, as well as the Peronist tradition followed by Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in Argentina, Evo Morales in Bolivia, and Rafael Correa in Ecuador. Arguably, there are also centrist-populist leaders, such as President Emmanuel Macron in France who campaigned as an outsider, criticizing the established parties although governing more like a moderate.
Even in nations where Authoritarian-Populist parties hold few parliamentary seats, they can still exert ‘blackmail’ pressure on governments and shape the policy agenda. In Britain, for example, the UK Independence Party won only one seat in the May 2015 general election, but its rhetoric fueled rabid anti-European and anti-immigration sentiment, pressuring the Conservatives to call the Brexit referendum, with massive consequences. Similarly, in the September 2017 elections to the Bundestag, the nationalistic, anti-Islamic, and pro-family values Alternative for Germany (AfD) won only 12.6 percent of the vote, but they gained 94 seats in the aftermath of the refugee crisis, entering parliament for the first time and thereby hindering Angela Merkel’s negotiations to form a Grand Coalition government, leaving the government in limbo for four months. Mainstream parties can seek to co-opt minor parties in formal or informal governing alliances, and they can adopt their language and policies in the attempt to steal their votes. Populism and authoritarianism remain potent forces in the contemporary world, even where Authoritarian-Populist parties and leaders don’t make substantial or sustained electoral gains.

**What explains these developments?**

Many observers seeking to explain developments offer narratives focused on particular high-profile cases and leaders – such as the role of Jean-Marie Le Pen in founding the French National Front (FN), the rightwards shift and revival of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) during the 1980s under Jörg Haider, and the role of Hugo Chávez in the United Socialist Party of Venezuela.

Similarly, the 2016 US presidential elections can be seen to reflect a contingent series of idiosyncratic events catalyzing the unexpected rise of Donald Trump. Accounts emphasize the role of personalities and leadership styles: the dramatic appeal of Donald Trump, an out-spoken and unpredictable television celebrity, with the public rejecting both ‘No drama’ Obama’s reserved control and cool grace and also Hillary Clinton’s policy wonk professionalism. A lot of ink has blamed James Comey’s controversial intervention during the final days of the campaign and false journalistic equivalence in negative media coverage of Hillary Clinton’s handling of emails and Trump scandals. Others regard the outcome in terms of the evolution of political parties, with the Tea Party and Freedom Caucus pushing House Republicans to the right and deep partisan gridlock emerging in a broken Congress, with Trump inheriting the mantle of Sarah Palin. The FBI has pointed to Putin’s meddling through cyber-hacking, Facebook bots, and Twitter trolls. Theories of communications...
emphasize the growth of partisan polarization in the legacy news media and especially social media bubbles, which facilitate the spread of misinformation and conspiratorial thinking. The outcome of the 2016 election can also be attributed to a visceral white backlash against the election of Obama, the first African-American President, toughening the deep scar of racism in the US. Studies emphasize that Trump capitalized upon threats to the declining social status of white working class Americans. Economic accounts seek explanations focused on the after effects of globalization, as trade shocks from cheap Chinese imports shut factories and squeezed paychecks for low-skilled white American workers.

Contingent events clearly do help to account for the outcome of the 2016 American presidential election – for example, it has been estimated that a switch of just 77,744 votes would have tipped Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania into the Clinton column, making her President. During the fall campaign, the standard political economy model, combining presidential approval with GNP growth, predicted a tight outcome where the popular vote could have flipped either way. Given the close race, and the decisive role of the Electoral College, mechanical over-determinism should be avoided.

But accounts that focus only on Trump’s rise cannot understand the deeper roots of this phenomenon within the Republican Party and the American electorate. And those focused only on America cannot explain why support for populist parties has roughly doubled across Europe in recent decades, with leaders strikingly similar to Trump rising to power in many places around the world. The phenomenon is much broader than any individual and thus requires a more general theory. Any plausible account should be consistent with what is already known from previous research about this phenomenon in the fields of public opinion, elections, political parties, and voting behavior. Claims should also ideally generate propositions testable against a wide range of cross-national and time-series empirical data. And, finally, scientific theories should also be policy relevant, where possible furnishing insights into what can be done by those seeking to mitigate harm to democratic institutions. The plan for this book follows.

Plan of the Book

I Introduction

Chapter 2 sets out the general theory that lies at the heart of this book. The story of the cultural backlash can be broken down logically into a series of sequential steps involving: (1) long-term social structural changes
in the living conditions and security which successive generations experienced during their formative years; (2) the way these developments led to the silent revolution in cultural values; (3) the conservative backlash and authoritarian reflex that this stimulated; (4) medium-term economic conditions and rapid growth in social diversity accelerating the reaction; (5) how the conservative backlash drives voting support for Authoritarian-Populist parties and leaders; (6) how votes translate into seats (and thus government offices) through electoral systems; and finally (7) the broader consequences of this phenomenon, including for the stability of established democracies and hybrid regimes, for party competition and the issue agenda, and for the civic culture.

Building on this narrative, Chapter 3 establishes the book’s core concepts. We expand upon the argument that populism is a form of rhetoric, claiming that legitimate authority flows from the vox populi (Us), not the establishment elite (Them). Part of the appeal for the ‘deplorables’ attending Trump rallies, or media outrage over Tweet transgressions, is reflected in the Punch and Judy theatrical entertainment of cheering attacks on the politically correct liberal consensus, entrenched interests, and hoity-toity elites. But for many European parties, and world leaders, such as Donald Trump, Hungary’s Viktor Orban, Venezuela’s Nicolás Maduras, and the Philippines’ Rodrigo Duterte, behind the populist façade, a darker and more disturbing set of authoritarian values can be identified. Leaders feed upon and foster the politics of fear, anger and resentment. We discuss the core components of our updated concept of authoritarianism and why we believe that drawing upon this notion, rather than conventional labels such as the ‘radical right’ or ‘right-wing populists,’ provides a more powerful analytical lens, which accounts for both the attitudes of supporters and the values of political parties and leaders.

These concepts are operationalized and measured separately at both the party and citizen level in subsequent chapters. Citizens’ positions are determined using the European Social Survey (ESS) scaled measures of authoritarian–libertarian, populist–pluralist, and left–right attitudes and values in the electorate (Chapter 4). Authoritarianism in the European electorate is gauged not by attitudes toward immigration (which could provide a circular explanation) but by the values of security, conformity, and obedience. Populism is measured by political trust. Left–right economic attitudes are measured through positions toward the role of state vs. markets. The policy positions of 270 European political parties are gauged independently on these dimensions through expert assessments (the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, or CHES) (Chapter 7). The position of
European voters and parties are compared using continuous standardized (0-100-point) scales, avoiding arbitrary boundary errors, allowing shifts over time, and recognizing many shades of grey, not simply black-and-white categories. Thus instead of analyzing support for a specific category of Authoritarian-Populist parties which are classified as belonging to the same family, our models treat adherence to these value scales as matters of degree, where all political parties and voters can be more or less authoritarian-libertarian, populist-pluralist, and left-wing or right-wing.

II Authoritarian and Populist Values

Our backlash thesis builds upon the extensive body of research demonstrating that long-term social structural developments in post-industrial societies – growing prosperity, rising access to college education, more egalitarian gender roles, and processes of urbanization – led to the silent revolution in socially liberal and post-materialist values, which first became evident at the societal level in the late 1960s and early 1970s. To update the trends, and see whether they are continuing, Chapter 4 presents longitudinal evidence demonstrating the evolving trajectory of value changes during recent decades – the silent revolution shifting the balance between the rising proportion of social liberals and the shrinking proportion of social conservatives in Western societies. We also document the rise of ‘critical citizens,’ who endorse democracy as the ideal form of government while distrusting politicians as a class.49 We describe the long-term structural drivers underlying these developments in Western societies, including the role of intergenerational value change, college education, gender roles, ethnicity, and urbanization.

The evidence confirms the importance of generational birth cohorts in Europe and America for authoritarian values and socially conservative attitudes. Authoritarian values may also be shaped by specific periods effects (such as those from 2008 to 2013, the years of the financial crisis) and by life-cycle effects (as people enter middle-age and settle down with marriage and families). Overall, however, such factors are observed to play a secondary role in predicting values compared with birth cohort effects. Longitudinal survey evidence demonstrates that the publics of Western societies have generally become more socially liberal on many issues – but that, as expected, socially conservative values remain strongest among the Interwar generation, non-college graduates, the working class, white Europeans, the more religious, men, and residents of rural
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communities. These groups are therefore most likely to feel that they have become estranged from the silent revolution in social and moral values, left behind by cultural tides that they deeply reject. The Interwar generation of non-college educated white men – until recently the politically and socially dominant group in Western cultures – has reached a tipping point at which their hegemonic status, power, and privilege is fading. Their values make them potential supporters for parties and leaders promising to restore national sovereignty (Make America Great Again), restrict immigration and multicultural diversity (Build a Wall), and defend traditional religious and conventional moral values (‘We stand united behind the customs, beliefs, and traditions that define who we are as a nation and as a people. This is America’s heritage: A country that never forgets that we are all, all, every one of us, made by the same God in heaven.’)\textsuperscript{50}

Theoretically, there are several ways groups could react to the profound cultural changes in society which threaten their core values. One strategy could be self-censorship, the tendency for people to remain silent when they feel that their views are in opposition to the majority, for fear of social isolation or reprisal.\textsuperscript{51} Another could be adaptation, as groups gradually come to accept the profound cultural shifts which have become mainstream during their lifetimes, such as growing acceptance of women’s equality in the paid workforce and public spheres.\textsuperscript{52} A third could be a retreat to social bubbles of like-minded people, the great sorting, now easier than ever in the echo chamber of social media and the partisan press, thereby avoiding potential social conflict and disagreements. We theorize that an alternative strategy, however, is the authoritarian reflex, a defensive reaction strongest among socially conservative groups feeling threatened by the rapid processes of economic, social, and cultural change, rejecting unconventional social mores and moral norms, and finding reassurance from a collective community of like-minded people, where transgressive strongman leaders express socially incorrect views while defending traditional values and beliefs. The tipping point – as former predominant majorities become a steadily shrinking but still sizeable share of the population and the electorate – is predicted to trigger the latent authoritarian reflex. Resentment against the inflection point in the silent revolution has spawned a counter-revolutionary conservative backlash. In turn, as the advance of liberal values has stalled, this development has triggered widespread protests and mobilized resistance, especially among the younger generation, women, and minorities.\textsuperscript{53} In the long-term, the culture cleavage in the electorate is likely to fade over time through demographic trends and processes of urbanization, as Interwar
cohorts without college education, often living in relatively isolated white rural communities, are gradually replaced in the population by college educated Millennials living and working in the ethnically diverse metropolitan cities, who tend to be more open to the values of multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, and social liberalism. During the tipping point era, however, heated culture wars disrupt politics and society.

Chapter 5 considers the role of economic conditions and material insecurity in accelerating the authoritarian reflex. Many changes are transforming the workforce and society in post-industrial economies through the globalization of economic markets, compounded by the period-effect linked with the deep financial crash and Eurozone sovereign debt crisis. There is overwhelming evidence of powerful trends toward growing wealth inequality and declining real income for most of the population in the West, based on the rise of the knowledge economy, technological automation, and the collapse of the manufacturing industry; the global flows of labor, goods, capital, and people (especially the inflow of migrants and refugees); the erosion of organized labor; shrinking welfare safety-nets; and neo-liberal austerity policies.

The idea that economic conditions have deepened the cultural backlash is supported by studies of electoral geography reporting that Trump supporters were concentrated disproportionately in the Appalachian coal country, rural Mississippi, and rural counties in the Midwestern Rust Belt. In the 2016 US election, the Trump vote was correlated with areas dependent upon manufacturing sectors hit by the penetration of Chinese imports, particularly in Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. Similarly, in Brexit, support for the UK to Leave the EU was concentrated in northern England and the Midlands. Leave votes were disproportionately in ‘left-behind’ areas characterized by low income, high unemployment, and historic dependence on manufacturing industry. In the second round of French presidential elections in 2017, Marine Le Pen’s National Front support was strongest in traditional areas of low-skill employment with double digit unemployment in Northern France, as well as the traditional Mediterranean bastion, while Emmanuelli Macron won by a landslide in Paris and its affluent suburbs. And in the September 2017 Bundestag contests, Alternative for Germany attracted its highest share of the vote in former-East Germany, which lags behind the more prosperous West. Similar regional findings are reported elsewhere in Western Europe. For all these reasons, we expect that economic conditions experienced in some local communities and at individual levels are likely to reinforce authoritarian and populist values.
Building on these observations, we theorize that the authoritarian reflex arising from long-term processes of cultural change is likely to be accelerated and deepened by fears of economic insecurity, including the individual experience of the loss of secure, well-paid blue-collar jobs, and the collective experience of living in declining communities of the left-behinds.\textsuperscript{64} Material hardship is likely to make groups more susceptible to the anti-establishment appeals of authoritarian-populist actors, offering simple slogans blaming ‘Them’ for stripping prosperity, job opportunities, and public services from ‘Us.’\textsuperscript{65} This chapter considers evidence testing these arguments, at both the individual and community levels.

Chapter 6 turns to the role of migration flows, the refugee crisis, and the growing ethnic diversity of Western societies as other potential accelerants of the authoritarian reflex.\textsuperscript{66} Racial resentment in America is often thought to be the driving force behind Trump support, with fears about immigration driving white defection from the Democratic Party to the Republicans. Thus racial divisions in partisanship and voting have been found to outweigh the impact of class, age, gender, and other demographic measures.\textsuperscript{67} Similarly, European studies consistently report that anti-immigrant attitudes, and the perceived cultural threat of foreigners, are strong predictors of voting support for radical right parties.\textsuperscript{68} We believe that this is indeed an important part of the explanation for support for authoritarian populism – but, by itself is over-simplified, because xenophobic, racist, and Islamophobic attitudes are linked with a broader range of socially conservative values. The authoritarian reflex is not confined solely to attitudes toward race, immigration, and ethnicity, but also to the rejection of the diverse lifestyles, political views, and morals of ‘out-groups’ that are perceived as violating conventional norms and traditional customs, including those of homophobia, misogyny, and xenophobia. Moreover, these sentiments are strongest among those groups, such as homogeneous rural communities and older citizens, who feel the most threatened by the spread of multicultural diversity, and not among the younger generations and university-educated professionals who commonly study, live, and work in metropolitan areas that are typically more socially and ethnically diverse. To explore the survey evidence, we examine attitudes toward immigration across the European Union, testing the links between these orientations and the authoritarian reflex.

### III From Values to Votes

Processes of cultural, economic, and social change are therefore expected to be associated with the endorsement of authoritarian or libertarian values.
Yet comprehensive explanations for the rise of authoritarian populism involve not just ‘demand-side’ developments in the electorate but also the ‘supply-side’ conditions under which support for these values can be translated into votes, seats – and power. To examine these factors, we first need to look at voters’ values and also at the positions of political parties across the ideological spectrum. Chapter 7 uses the Chapel Hill expert survey (CHES) to identify the policy location of 268 political parties in 31 European countries. Continuous 100-point scales are constructed that identify the location of European political parties on three dimensions. Factor analysis confirms the multidimensional nature of contemporary European party competition, as theorized. The location of European political parties are mapped on these scales. In the four-fold classification illustrated in Figure 7.2, the authoritarian–libertarian cleavage is depicted on the vertical axis. We also demonstrate that this cleavage has become increasingly important since the 1980s, dividing parties over social and cultural issues such as abortion, immigration, Europe, and gay rights. In addition, parties are also classified on the populist–pluralist horizontal axis, based on their position toward the location of legitimate authority in governance. The traditional post-war left–right cleavage also persists, where parties compete over the role of the state versus markets in the economy and welfare services. We identify and map European political parties across these dimensions and use selected case studies to illustrate some of the main contrasts.

Building upon this framework, Chapter 8 examines individual-level cross-national European Social survey data to determine the impact of generational cohorts, period, and life-cycle effects, as well as economic and demographic characteristics, and cultural values on voting for political parties across more than 30 European societies.

This analysis raises a series of methodological challenges. In particular, voting support for minor Authoritarian-Populist parties, that attract only a sliver of the electorate, cannot be analyzed reliably using the standard sample size used in national election surveys. The profile of supporters for Authoritarian-Populist parties attracting a larger share of the vote, such as UKIP, have been analyzed at individual level using standard election surveys in each country. The diversity of these parties, however, along with the instability of voting support over time, make it difficult to generalize from specific cases. Comparative research faces the challenge of measuring voting choices consistently across countries. Electoral studies conventionally use a simple binary variable coded as whether respondents voted for a specific party (1) or whether they voted for
any other party (0). This process can be unreliable, however, as it is heavily dependent upon the prior classification of political party families.

The alternative research design employed in this book uses continuous scales (instead of categorical variables for party choice) measuring where all European political parties are positioned across the continuous scales of populist–pluralism, libertarian–authoritarianism, and left–right values, using the CHES expert data. This allows us to compare all European parties based on their positions on these indicators. For the position of citizens, this chapter draws upon the pooled European Social Survey 1–7 (2002–2014) covering 32 countries. It is worth emphasizing that the authoritarian scale used to identify the values of voters avoids asking directly about support for policies, such as attitudes toward immigration or the favorability of leaders, as this would raise risks of endogeneity. Instead, the authoritarian–libertarian scale is measured using the Schwartz scale of personal values.71 We also examine the effects of authoritarianism and populism separately, since these emerged as distinct dimensions and the drivers of each may be expected to differ.

The evidence confirms our thesis that socially liberal or conservative attitudes, and authoritarian values, in the electorate, predict support for European parties that are more authoritarian and more populist. Moreover, voting support for parties with more authoritarian positions is concentrated among the older birth cohorts and less educated population, as well as among men, the more religious, and ethnic majority populations. By contrast, several economic indicators, such as occupational class and subjective financial insecurity, turn out to be statistically significant but relatively weak predictors of support for parties that are more authoritarian. Overall, cultural values (authoritarian values, political mistrust, and left–right self-placement) are more closely related to voting support for more authoritarian parties than economic indicators. In similar models predicting voting support for the parties that are more populist, the generational effects were reversed, and both economic and cultural factors proved significant.

Chapter 9 examines the fortunes of Authoritarian-Populist parties in Europe, clarifying how the electoral system translates their share of votes into seats. The chapter compares the results of elections for the lower house of parliament held during the post-World War II era under three main types of electoral systems – Majoritarian-Plurality, Mixed, and Proportional Representation Party List – to assess how far the institutional rules of the game can explain the varied results of Authoritarian-Populist parties in gaining seats and ministerial office, even among relatively similar societies. We examine recent elections in six selected case studies, comparing Britain and France using Majoritarian-Plurality
electoral systems, Germany and Hungary using Mixed systems, and the Netherlands and Switzerland using Proportional Representation systems.

For a more in-depth case study, Chapter 10 analyzes the reasons behind Donald Trump’s victory in the 2016 American presidential election. Many situation-specific factors have been advanced to explain the outcome, the proximate cause of which was the Electoral College rules (Clinton actually won almost three million more votes than Trump). Contributing factors include a Democratic campaign that failed to invest sufficient resources in the ‘Blue Wall’ of Rust Belt states, the personal strengths and weaknesses of each candidate, the use of a personal email server by Hillary Clinton and the intervention of the FBI, the Russian hacking of the Democratic National Committee computers, Russian trolling via social media, and other situation-specific factors. But the Trump phenomenon was not an isolated event; it was rooted in enduring changes in the Republican Party and in the American electorate, as well as growing party polarization, particularly ideological shifts in cultural politics and social issues that began many years earlier. The Tea Party wing of the Republican Party advocated many of the populist themes that Trump subsequently echoed, including anti-establishment and anti-government appeals, birtherism, and climate change denial. Using the World Values Survey and the American National Election Study, the chapter documents the attitudinal and social basis of the Trump and Clinton supporters, in both the primaries and general election, and long-term changes in the partisan cleavages dividing generations in the American electorate. The evidence confirms, as expected, that Trump’s support was concentrated among socially conservative older white men, non-college graduates, and residents in small-town America, especially Republicans endorsing authoritarian values. This was the base particularly susceptible to Trump’s promise to ‘Make America Great Again,’ energized by social pessimism and a nostalgic vision of restoring the traditional social order, jobs, and lifestyles that prevailed decades ago.

Chapter 11 analyzes the populist revolution that shook the foundations of UK party politics just a few months before Trump’s victory—the June 2016 Brexit referendum in the UK, as well as the sudden rise and fall in the fortunes of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) in the 2015 and 2017 general elections. The Brexit outcome was also largely unexpected; the opinion polls had predicted a close result, but most commentators assumed that the ‘remain’ camp would eventually win. Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron decided to hold a referendum on Britain’s European Union membership both to appease Eurosceptics within his
party and to try to steal votes from UKIP. The results of the analysis confirms the impact of the generation gap, with Millennials supporting ‘Remain’ – but failing to vote in strong numbers, while the Interwar generation voted for ‘Leave’ and were much likelier to cast ballots. The subsequent UK general election in June 2017 saw the biggest generational gap in British general elections since the early 1970s, with swings to Labour among the under-40s, and swings to the conservatives among the over 55s. Moreover, in predicting Leave votes, libertarian–authoritarian values and populist attitudes were far stronger factors than social class and experience of unemployment. The series of British contests also illustrates the vulnerability of small populist parties like UKIP when a mainstream party absorbs their language and signature policy issues, as Theresa May’s Conservative Party endorsed EU withdrawal, so that authoritarian populism entered the bloodstream of British politics but UKIP failed to win seats. The aftermath of Brexit continued to reverberate in UK politics, dividing parliamentary parties and society.

IV Conclusions

This book’s final part examines the consequences of authoritarian populism and whether liberal democracies are sufficiently robust to resist its damage. This question has aroused intense concern. Debate continues about the potential impact. To understand these issues, Chapter 12 considers several consequences from the rise of authoritarian populism, including for democratic regimes, for party competition over the policy agenda, and for the civic culture.

On the plus side, it is claimed that populism by itself can be a useful corrective for liberal democracy, if it encourages innovative forms of direct participation, highlights genuine public concerns neglected or quarantined by cosmopolitan liberal elites, and brings the cynical back into politics. Liberal democracies have many flaws and reform movements can help to reduce corruption, strengthen participation, and deepen accountability. Populist parties claim to speak for forgotten segments of society and they may potentially mobilize disaffected non-voters and under-represented groups, thereby boosting campaign activism and turnout.

On the negative side, however, once coupled with authoritarian values, many sound the alarm about the potential threat that the rise of authoritarian populism poses to long-standing norms and institutions of liberal democracy. Populist discourse denigrating ‘fake’ media, dishonest politicians, and judicial authority, has the capacity to corrode respect for free speech, social tolerance, and confidence in government.
Moreover, when the forces of authoritarian populism rise to power, it is widely feared that they are likely to close borders to refugee families fleeing conflict zones, to erode alliances and multilateral cooperation among Western countries, to embolden bigots and extremist hate groups in society, to corrode social trust and ethnic tolerance, and to replace pluralistic give-and-take in politics with the divisive and polarized politics of animosity, hatred, and fear. The majoritarian principles at the heart of populism put pressures on individual rights, pluralistic diversity, and tolerance of minority dissent. The United States is a resilient democracy but under the Trump administration, the country has been torn apart in the bitter clash between the dystopian vision and divisive rhetoric of the president and his fervent supporters at campaign rallies, on the one side, and the forces of the resistance on numerous issues, on the other side. Divisions are clearest over the investigation into Russian meddling in American elections, reforms to immigration policy and the fate of the Dreamers, the decimation of the Environmental Protection Agency, and culture wars over racial, religious, and sexual politics. It has been estimated that over 8,700 protests occurred in the United States during 2017, involving up to nine million people, with 89 percent protesting against Trump or his policies. In the UK, as well, Brexit has polarized the electorate and deepened splits within the major parties, with Theresa May’s government deeply divided in negotiating an exit from the EU. The US and UK, however, are long-established democracies which can be expected to prove relatively resilient. Elsewhere, weak institutions of liberal democracy have been pushed to breaking point by populist leaders in hybrid regimes, such as in Hungary, Turkey, and Venezuela, ushering in a reversion to authoritarianism. We examine evidence of trends in democratization and selected cases to see whether anxieties over the rise of authoritarian populism are justified.

In addition, this chapter also considers the ‘contagion of the right’ thesis, which holds that the advance of Authoritarian-Populist parties has caused mainstream parties and governments to adopt more restrictive policies toward asylum seekers, migrants, and political refugees, for example in Britain and the Netherlands. We conclude that the rise of authoritarian-populist forces is likely to have important impacts on domestic politics – heightening awareness of divisive wedge issues, polarizing party competition, and shaping how mainstream parties like the center-right respond strategically to insurgent challengers, including by adopting at least some of their policy positions. Whether this is positive or negative for the health of liberal democracy remains an open question.

Finally, we also examine debates about the impact of authoritarian populism on confidence in liberal democracy. There is widespread
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corncern that many Western democracies have experienced a long-term erosion of trust in political institutions, along with growing dissatisfaction with democratic performance. Populist support has been fermented in these juices, and their rhetoric criticizing establishment institutions can also be expected to exacerbate mistrust. Yet the evidence is not clear-cut. Thus, many American polls suggest that public confidence in government either remains at an historic low or it is still sinking. Yet recent European studies seeking to detect evidence of any legitimacy crisis present more cautious assessments. Moreover populist parties may be the consequence, as much as the cause, of political discontent. This chapter analyzes trends in institutional confidence and support for democracy and considers the consequences for the legitimacy of liberal democracies.

The concluding chapter reviews the core argument, summarizes the main findings in the evidence, and suggests several alternative strategies which could be employed to mitigate the potential dangers that authoritarian populism poses for plural societies and liberal democracies.

Notes


4. As discussed further in Chapter 3, we reject alternative conceptualizations which suggest that populism in politics reflects: (1) a distinct set of policy preferences, specifically, shortsighted economic policies of state-controlled industrialization or protectionist policies that appeal to the poor, (2) a type of party organization with a mass base dominated by charismatic leaders, (3) a type of party defined by its social base, or (4) an ideology. In particular, the minimalist concept of populist rhetoric which we adopt also sets aside notions which introduce unnecessary elements into the notion, notably Cas Mudde’s definition of populism as an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite,’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people. Cas Mudde. 2004. ‘The populist Zeitgeist.’ Government and Opposition 39(4): 542–563. For a fuller discussion of the concept, see


11. After the UK High Court ruled that parliament would need to trigger Article 50, the headline below images of the judges in the *Daily Mail* on November 2, 2016 was ‘Enemies of the People.’ www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3903436/Enemies-people-Fury-touch-judges-defied-17-4m-Brexit-voters-trigger-constitutional-crisis.html.


26. See Figure 1.2.


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