# CONFRONTING POPULIST ANXIETIES: HOW THE CENTRE-LEFT CAN QUELL THE FAR-RIGHT SURGE

Martin Eiermann – 7th March 2018

Renewing the Centre

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Populist parties have upended politics across many European countries, have shifted the political centre of gravity towards the right, and have newly altered the political calculus in countries like Italy, Germany and Austria. Yet neither economic nor cultural factors alone can explain rising levels of support for populist platforms. Instead, studies of voting trends in Western democracies suggest that such support is driven by anxieties about unmoored identities and uncertain futures. These anxieties have economic as well as cultural components, and they are exacerbated by a sense of abandonment and political powerlessness among a growing segment of the population. Voters who support populists tend to feel more uprooted, more isolated, more politically marginalised and less optimistic about the future than the average voter. This also explains why populist parties often have a broad social base and attract support not only from radical voters but also from moderates who had previously supported mainstream candidates.

This has two important consequences for the centre-left. Firstly, it requires a strategy of engagement that neither parrots the rhetoric of the reactionary right and surrenders the social progress of the last decades nor summarily dismisses the concerns of voters as irrational or prejudiced clamour from the far-right fringe. Secondly, centrist parties must do more than simply refashion the politics of the 20th century to meet the challenges of the 21st. They must offer more than a combination of progressive economic policy and toned-down right-wing populism, and they must engage with questions of identity and migration instead of ceding these issues to the far right.

Policy responses to populism have frequently prioritised economic development, partly because the social-democratic left can draw on a developed language and a set of pre-existing political programmes to address inequality, income stagnation and equitable growth. Economic programmes can also be articulated in a fairly straightforward manner, whereas issues of identity and culture are rarely so negotiable. But economic responses alone are insufficient to address and reverse rising electoral support for populist parties across Western Europe and the United States. While the centre-left has achieved significant social progress for historically marginalised groups, the right has now monopolised the political arena with a nationalism that caters to nativist and protectionist impulses, and with a conservatism that rejects multiple decades of social progress for minorities and frames empowerment as a matter of personal responsibility.

The momentum is now with populist parties, while the political mainstream frequently finds itself defending a status quo that has failed too many voters too often. But the centre-left can reclaim the mantle of change in six ways. Firstly, investments in infrastructure can link communities, boost mobility, especially in underserved areas, and make access to opportunity and prosperity less dependent on residence. Secondly, welfare reforms that reduce the group-specific targeting of individual programmes can help reduce resentment towards foreign-born welfare recipients. Thirdly, social policies that democratise access to economic and political opportunities must be defended against populist attempts to discredit and dismantle them.

Fourthly, anxieties about immigration have helped fuelled populism. Some of this has been driven by prejudice, but migrations flows have also raised questions of identity and questions of community, particularly when there have been unexpected surges. Progressive must meet this challenge and pursue reforms that refocus the debate from total numbers onto integration and shift from prejudice towards discussions of needs and the benefits for all in societies.

Fifthly, reforms to broaden public access to, and influence over, the political process can revitalise democracy for a progressive vision. Finally, policies that enable and reward local citizen engagement can help build community in diverse societies and give concrete meaning to the term 'progressive patriotism'.

# TWIN CHALLENGES FOR THE CENTRE-LEFT

In recent years, the success of the Leave campaign in the UK referendum on EU membership, the election of Donald Trump as US president, and electoral campaigns in countries like Italy, Germany and Austria have highlighted the degree to which populist sentiments now shape national discourses and have upended politics. But none of these events would have been possible without support from a large percentage of the electorate.1 In Italy, Germany and Austria, right-wing populist parties have enjoyed significant support from the proverbial middle of society and have beaten the political establishment, especially in eastern Germany, in southern Austria and across large parts of the Italian peninsula.2 In Italy, for example, populist parties now dominate politics outside three metropolitan areas around Florence, Bologna and Bozen: far right populists in the north, and the ideologically ambiguous Five Star Movement in the south.3 In the UK, support for the Leave campaign was not confined to UK Independence Party (UKIP) supporters but pervaded Labour and Tory constituencies. In short, contemporary populism is no fringe phenomenon but has roots that reach deep into the social fabric and the political mainstream.

This has two important consequences for the centre-left. Firstly, it requires a strategy of engagement that neither parrots the rhetoric of the reactionary right and surrenders the social progress of the last decades nor summarily dismisses the concerns of voters as irrational or prejudiced clamour from the far-right fringe. This paper surveys a large body of evidence about voting behaviour to identify four anxieties behind the populist surge: concerns about social change, uncertain futures, social abandonment and political powerlessness. Because these anxieties are not easily reducible to economic or cultural factors alone, political responses that focus narrowly on material conditions are insufficient to address the causes of populism.

Secondly, because anxieties are partly the result of recent trends and structural realignments, mainstream parties must do more than simply refashion politics of the 20th century to meet the challenges of the 21st. They must engage with salient debates of identity and migration instead of ceding these issues to the far right.

If politics determines the distribution of burdens and benefits in a society, it remains the task of the centre-left to reclaim the mantle of change from populist parties, to articulate a vision for this distribution, and to take the wind out of the sails of those who seek to organise politics along the narrow lines of ethnicity and citizenship.

# POPULIST CONSTITUENCIES

Why have voters in the United States and Western Europe assembled under the banners of Trump, the French National Front or the Alternative for Germany (AfD)? Over the past two years, a cleavage has emerged between those who see populism primarily as an economic phenomenon and those who regard it as a manifestation of cultural antagonism and prejudice.4 Those in the former camp argue that short-term financial distress, relative economic disadvantage and long-term economic dislocation underlie a surge in populist sympathies. Those in the latter camp marshal evidence about negative attitudes towards progressive social policies and outright racism and xenophobia. For example, economist Dani Rodrik uses evidence from economic history to argue "that advanced stages of economic globalization . . . produce a political backlash".5 Similarly, economist Joseph Stiglitz has emphasised rising inequality and downward social mobility as drivers of populism.6 Yet political scientist Lee Drutman and sociologist Rogers Brubaker also find that supporters of populist candidates are often united by their opposition to social liberalism and are disproportionately attracted to a nationalist rhetoric and more biased against minorities and non-citizens than the average voter is.7

Studies that mine voting patterns for insights into the collective psyche of populist voters also find that the evidence is decidedly mixed. Trump outperformed US Republican presidential contender Mitt Romney,—a more traditionally conservative candidate,—most strongly in the American Rust Belt—that is, in areas that have frequently experienced decades of economic decline and have lost a significant percentage of manufacturing jobs during the last ten years. In France, 2017 strongholds of the National Front in the country's north and along the Mediterranean coast are also areas with high unemployment rates and a history of gradual job loss. In Germany, according to a July 2017 study, the populist AfD trumped the Social Democrats as the party with the largest share of working-class supporters and surpassed The Left as the party with the lowest median household income.8

Yet AfD voters also report high levels of economic satisfaction, with only 10 per cent indicating a sense of concern about the financial situation. When asked about the most pressing political issues, a large majority of German AfD supporters and Italian Northern League voters cite immigration rather than personal finance. Similarly, according to a 2017 Kaiser/Washington Post survey, rural and urban voters in the United States have comparable access rates to food stamps, Medicaid, unemployment benefits and disability payments but differ starkly in their cultural values and their attitudes towards immigration.9 Thus, according to a

comprehensive study of electoral trends in the United States by New America's Voter Study Group, "the primary conflict structuring the two parties involves questions of national identity, race, and morality, while the traditional conflict over economics, though still important, is less divisive now than it used to be".10 In the UK, the think tank Policy Network likewise observes that political participation "is now a lifestyle choice, a new form of identity politics" that often divides rural and urban voters and separates populist sympathisers from the mainstream.11

Disentangling these various economic and cultural factors is difficult for four reasons. Firstly, economics and culture are frequently correlated with each other. Cultural status tends to accrue with those who also enjoy economic prosperity, contributing to a lumping of opportunities and grievances at opposing ends of the socio-economic distribution. In Western societies, poverty has historically been matched by low educational attainment. Sociologists sometimes refer to this phenomenon as the double stigma of poverty: those who are marginalised financially also tend to carry a cultural stigma.

In the United States, the quality of secondary education varies highly across income levels, and access to universities depends on the ability to take on significant student loan debt. Thus, it is not surprising that Trump won the largest share of unionised working-class households of any US Republican presidential candidate since 1984 and also the largest share of voters without a four-year college education since 1980.12

Secondly, changes in the economic domain can have subsequent effects in the cultural domain, and vice versa. There is evidence, from a recent study that compared 800 elections across 140 years and 20 countries, that economic crises often precipitate non-economic crises by increasing levels of xenophobia and decreasing levels of political stability.13 For example, the Great Depression of the 1930s contributed to an increase in electoral support for Europe's far right in many countries that had suffered from economic stagnation and hyperinflation, including Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Spain and Switzerland. More recent studies also suggest that increased economic constraints—for example, in situations where austerity policies reduce welfare expenditures—can lead to increased nativism.14 As political scientist Charlotte Cavaillé has shown,15 tighter limits on welfare spending can increase anti-immigrant sentiments by sparking distributional concerns: Who gets to benefit from welfare when there isn't sufficient money to serve everybody's needs?

In the UK, similar arguments have often appeared in debates on public housing, with demands to allocate housing based not purely on need but on citizenship or length of local residency. The intensity of such debates has only increased: while British-

born welfare recipients in the postwar years were widely regarded as deserving of public help, public opinion is significantly more biased against today's recipients with immigrant backgrounds.

Results from the 2015 American Values Survey and the 2017 YouGov VOTER poll also indicate that fears of economic decline can have a lagged effect on cultural attitudes. Increasing economic discontent was a good predictor of increasingly negative attitudes towards Muslims during the 2016 US presidential election. When avenues for economic mobility are foreclosed, cultural scapegoating against minorities or migrants can take on additional significance.

Thirdly, economic and cultural indicators can function as proxies for each other. In the United States, debates about so-called welfare queens—a term used to describe predominantly African-American women who fraudulently collect welfare payments—have couched racial antagonism in the language of economic wastefulness for several decades. In France and Germany, discussions about national prosperity are regularly infused with stereotypes about the work ethic of immigrants, their dependence on public expenditures and their ability to fit in. This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as dog-whistle politics: attitudes that the general population regards as distasteful or inappropriate can still infuse public discourse if they are phrased in the morally neutral language of fiscal politics.16 Populists are masters of this craft: they often signal underlying cultural anxieties by raising ostensibly economic issues, and vice versa.

Fourthly, economics and culture are hard to disentangle because populist voters tend to form heterogeneous coalitions rather than homogeneous blocs. In the United States, Trump united staunch Republican conservatives (who rejected social progressivism), poor rural nativists in the South, voters who were concerned about rising immigrant populations and declining wages in the Southwest, and disillusioned former Democrats in the Rust Belt.17 In Germany, the AfD has forged an enthusiastic coalition that brings urban working-class voters together with middle-class conservatives who no longer find themselves at home in Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU). In Italy, the Five Star Movement and the Northern League brought together those who suffer from Italy's slow economic recovery – one-third of Italians aged 18-25 remain unemployed – with the 45 per cent of voters who regard immigration as a threat to national security and social order.18 And in the UK, support for the Leave campaign came from traditional Labour districts as well as from Conservative counties in the East and Southwest.

In short: aggregate electoral shifts towards populist parties are composed of diverse ideological and regional trends. Populist coalitions sometimes have relatively little in common beyond a general sense of dissatisfaction and a belief that politics as usual

does not offer a path out of the malaise.19 They do not only include ideologically motivated voters who have long supported the far right but also rely on substantial support from middle-class and working-class voters who traditionally supported establishment parties and candidates. Much of the outreach of emerging populist parties in Europe now explicitly aims to drive a wedge between those voters and mainstream politics.20

This has two important consequences for strategic efforts to engage populist parties and win over populist sympathisers. It suggests that populism is not reducible to economic explanations and not extinguishable solely by pointing the fire hose of economic policy at a country's most disadvantaged regions. But it also suggests that a strategy against populism must go beyond condemning and combating bias and prejudice. Supporters of Trump or French National Front Leader Marine Le Pen harbour anti-immigrant and pro-white sentiments at much higher rates than the average voter does, but the problem of populism is not merely a problem of racism and parochialism.

Given the historical precedents, this should come as no surprise. As political scientist Sheri Berman has argued, social democracy and fascism in the 1930s grew on the shared fertile soil of economic and cultural discontent.21 In the Weimar Republic, hyperinflation grew alongside a reactionary backlash against the Treaty of Versailles. Likewise, political sociologist Dylan Riley has shown that the rise of reactionary governments in Italy and Spain resulted not directly from worsening economic conditions or deeply held illiberal sentiments but from a crisis of political representation.22 Nascent democratic institutions encouraged political participation but were ultimately unable to contain popular discontent.

## POPULIST ANXIETIES

Instead of falling back on a false binary that pits economics against culture, analysts can understand populism as the political consequence of pervasive social anxieties. Voters turn to populist candidates——and become more receptive to campaigns that target and mobilise them politically——when their sense of identity and belonging becomes unmoored, when their communities appear to decline, when their lives and their future seem uncertain, when they perceive their values (and, more generally, the status quo) to be under threat from diffuse and distant forces, and when they feel powerless to reclaim a sense of security and agency.

Some of these anxieties are rooted in long-term structural and economic transformations, from the disappearance of regionally concentrated manufacturing jobs and the internationalisation of commerce to demographic change. Others are sparked by political developments, like the gradual erosion of welfare protections in many Western countries, the detachment of European integration from national politics and the steady expansion of civil rights to marginalised groups. And some are accelerated by sudden shocks, from the 2008 economic crisis to the influx of refugees through the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean into Western Europe in recent years.

All of these anxieties tend to have economic as well as cultural dimensions. Concretely, they take four forms: frayed identities, precarious futures, marginalisation and powerlessness (see table 1).

*Table 1: Four Forms of Populist Anxiety*

|  | **Desire for security** | **Desire for agency** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Concerns about the past** | Frayed identities | Marginalisation |
| **Concerns about the future** | Precarious futures | Powerlessness |

**FRAYED IDENTITIES**

In her study of rural white Americans in the South, sociologist Arlie Hochschild argues that political preferences are profoundly shaped by a disappearing sense of belonging that makes her interlocutors feel like "strangers in their own land".[23] There is evidence from the Voter Study Group and the American Community Survey that at least two groups of Trump supporters held very traditionalist social views and espoused a nativist stance on immigration.[24] Even Republicans who disagreed on economic issues were frequently united by beliefs in American exceptionalism, self-reliance and personal responsibility.[25] Today, the strongest predictors of party allegiance in US politics are questions of national identity and morality.[26]

In Germany, two popular books of the populist right in recent years also captured fears of national decline amid European integration and demographic change. Bearing titles like Germany Does Away With Itself and The End of Germany, these books gave voice to nationalistic sentiments, which were sidelined in Merkel's grand

coalition of conservatives and Social Democrats. These sentiments regard the country's Holocaust remembrance culture as a pathological obsession with German guilt, see European integration as a sure path towards mediocrity and paralysis, demand commitment to diffuse notions of German culture as a precondition for immigration, and denounce the country's refugee policy as a reckless act of political posturing.

In France, support for the National Front in 2017 also correlated strongly with negative attitudes to immigrants that are sometimes framed as anxieties over the labour market but more often express fears about the decline of French national culture. In the UK, the Leave campaign seized on similar sentiments in its dismissals of Brussels and the European Court of Human Rights. And in Italy, the formerly regional Northern League has campaigned aggressively and successfully to broaden its appeal beyond strongholds in Lombardy, Piedmont and Veneto and to capture a broader discontent among Italians with European institutions and immigration, which are branded as threats to Italian identity and self-determination.27 Lingering in the background is often a sense of uncertainty about what it means today to be American, British, German, French or Italian.

Indeed, a persistent theme in recent voter surveys is the degree to which supporters of populist candidates see a world in cultural decline. According to the 2017 YouGov VOTER study, 68.1 per cent of Trump supporters believed that "the country is on the wrong track", compared with 55.1 per cent of supporters for Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton.28 The highest level of dissatisfaction came from voters who self-identified as "conservative" or "very conservative" and from white voters. In contrast, minority voters were about twice as likely as white voters to see the last 50 years of American history as a period of improvement rather than decline.

The 2015 American Values Survey and the 2017 Kaiser/Washington Post poll came to similar conclusions.29 Majorities of black and Hispanic Americans and of Democratic voters agreed that American culture had improved, but only 42 per cent of white Americans (and only 28 per cent of Tea Party supporters) agreed. This racial gap was mirrored by a partisan gap: Republicans in the United States were much more likely than Democrats to assert that immigrants are a burden on American society and that the values of Islam are at odds with American values. Compared with 2012, more Americans reported to be bothered by immigrants who speak little English and regarded Islam as incompatible with American society.30 Indeed, one reliable predictor of the likelihood that supporters of former US President Barack Obama switched their support to Trump in 2016 was their attitude towards Muslims: those who held more negative opinions were more likely to vote Republican.

In the UK, public opinion is split about the value of diversity, according to a Policy Network study, but older people and those without university degrees are more likely to regard diversity as detrimental to British society.31

Questions of identity are also deeply and tightly linked to questions of community. Political scientists have long worried about fraying institutions of everyday life and growing atomisation,32 and there is some evidence that the friendship networks of Americans might have shrunk in recent decades.33  These concerns are particularly acute in regions of the country that have experienced population loss and long-term dislocation. For example, communities with higher levels of economic distress have lost more jobs and seen more local businesses close in recent years than communities that have recovered more quickly since the 2008 financial crisis.34  Today, one of the biggest differences between urban and rural regions in the United States—apart from job prospects and costs of living—is the degree to which rural residents embrace community values and worry about weakened community cohesion.35 Not surprisingly, recent population loss predicted increased support for Trump especially in the American South and West—that is, in the most rural regions of the United States.36

Such fears about disintegrating communities are a prominent feature of the present political climate. In the decades after the Second World War, anxieties about work and culture often took the form of feeling stuck as a cog in an increasingly corporate machine that devalued individual contributions and eroded the individuality of workers. Institutions seemed to grow bigger and more distant from everyday experience, evidenced not only in the rise of large conglomerates like Walmart but also in the spread of mass media culture.37  In contrast, today's institutions are widely perceived to be more precarious, less likely to structure communities and less able to secure the lives of individuals.38

**PRECARIOUS FUTURES**

Amid these cultural and economic changes, many populist supporters articulate a profound sense of uncertainty about the future and a longing for stability and security in a changing world. In 2017, 62 per cent of American voters agreed that their lives overall were declining in quality. This was especially true in rural regions, where a majority of residents worried about the life prospects of their children.39  To them, the assumption of intergenerational progress—a belief that children would generally lead better lives than their parents—had begun to fray.

These concerns are partly rooted in economic and fiscal considerations. In the UK, only 13 per cent of respondents to a 2017 study agreed that living standards were improving "for you and your family".40  Fifty-four per cent suggested that British

living standards were declining overall. In the American Rust Belt, long-term decline and recent losses of manufacturing jobs were among the factors that turned formerly Democratic counties red. Among voters in the 2016 US presidential election, Trump supporters were twice as likely as Clinton supporters to say that their personal finances were getting worse, and four times as likely to say that the American economy was getting worse.41

Again, economically rooted uncertainties might be especially pronounced in the United States, where welfare protections against sudden bouts of poor health or unemployment are weaker than in most Western European countries, and where those at the low end of the income distribution often face the prospect of multiple jobs with unpredictable schedules and zero-hour contracts.42  But Trump's primary supporters were also far more likely than Democratic supporters—83 per cent to 29 per cent—and than Republican establishment supporters to agree that diversity was putting undue stresses on public services.43

There is evidence that intergenerational mobility—defined as one's propensity to reach higher percentiles of the income or wealth distribution compared with one's parents—has declined in the United States and Western Europe in recent decades. But in the American case, as economist Raj Chetty has shown, the geography of upward mobility does not map neatly onto the geography of populism.44 Mobility is lowest across Democratic strongholds in the South and in Rust Belt counties of the Northeast and Midwest, but highest in staunchly Republican and rural areas in the Midwest and West. However, uniting regions with high electoral support for Trump was a pervasive sense that intergenerational progress has peaked.

In the UK, according to a study of wealth inequality by the Resolution Foundation, average wealth has declined for each birth cohort since the Baby Boom generation, with large intergenerational gaps in areas of the country that experienced UKIP surges in recent elections.45  Real incomes have also stagnated, and regional differences in household incomes have largely persisted since the 2007–2008 financial crisis.46  It seems increasingly unlikely that the stable upwards trajectory of prior generations will be replicated for future generations as well.

In Italy, many have simply voted with their feet. In 2015, 102,000 native Italians left their country in search of a better future abroad. In 2016, another 250,000 left. The country has not experienced such emigration numbers since the end of the Second World War.47

Yet growing uncertainty is also linked to non-economic concerns about diversity, community and the security of both. Voters who were more worried about the economy in 2012 were more likely to express greater concerns about immigration,

Islam and race relations in 2016, regardless of their prior feelings about these issues.48 Seventy-nine per cent of Republicans but only 53 per cent of Democrats expressed concerns about terrorist threats in the run-up to the 2016 election—the biggest pro-Republican spread for any major political issue.49

As journalist and political scientist JoAnn Wypijewski has argued, one unifying feature of recent populist coalitions is thus a sense of insecurity, "the low-boil blues of one who almost made it, but not quite".50 To these voters, stable communities and secure identities offer a precarious link to normality in a world that appears to be anything but normal if judged against the standards of intergenerational progress, the engrained expectation that hard work unlocks socio-economic mobility, and the cultural norms of a bygone past with less diversity and less consideration for minority rights.

## MARGINALISATION

Politicians have not been successful in addressing these concerns. Many populist supporters believe that they have increasingly become marginalised within, and their voices increasingly drowned out of, national politics. Political change always appears to benefit other social groups, international businesses or the financial sector. For example, 67 per cent of rural residents in the United States believe that their communities rely somewhat, or rely heavily, on support from the federal government.51 —Yet only 4 per cent of Americans think that the federal government especially helps people in rural areas (45 per cent each believe that it helps people in cities or helps everyone equally).52 In Germany, 80 per cent of AfD supporters believe that society is unjustly stacked against them, and 98 per cent agreed in 2017 that their concerns were not represented by the then Merkel administration.53 In Italy, more than two-thirds of Northern League and Forza Italia voters see immigrants as a danger to Italian culture and as a privileged group that is supported at the expense of native Italians.54 During the 2018 election, they rallied behind Lega's Italy First platform in unprecedented numbers.

There is now a pervasive belief—aggressively fanned by established right-wing media organisations and new online media operations—that politicians selectively protect predefined groups, and that those who cannot claim membership in these groups are marginalised by the state or actively discriminated against. Trump supporters were significantly more likely than Democrats (61 per cent to 14 per cent) to agree that calls for women's equality were akin to calls for "special favours".55

Likewise, Trump voters were more likely to believe that racial minorities received unjust favourable treatment at the expense of white Americans, and that

immigrants unjustly benefitted from public spending. Political scientist Charlotte Cavaillé has documented similar sentiments in Europe, for example in debates about social housing and welfare spending that benefits recent immigrants.56 Hochschild sums up such perceptions of pervasive neglect as follows:

*You are patiently standing in the middle of a long line stretching toward the horizon, where the American Dream awaits. But as you wait, you see people cutting in line ahead of you. Many of these line-cutters are black—beneficiaries of affirmative action or welfare. Some are career-driven women pushing into jobs they never had before. Then you see immigrants, Mexicans, Somalis, the Syrian refugees yet to come. As you wait in this unmoving line, you're being asked to feel sorry for them all . . . The government has become an instrument for redistributing your money to the undeserving. It's not your government anymore; it's theirs.57*

The experience of marginality often translates into the politics of blame.

## POWERLESSNESS

The profound sense of abandonment is exacerbated by a sense of impotence—that is, by a perceived inability to reverse marginalisation, reduce uncertainties and reign in social change. This has a distinctly economic dimension: nearly two-thirds of Americans now agree that "hard work" is no guarantee of success and social mobility, a significant increase since 2013.58 Democrats are more likely than Republicans to see structural and institutional barriers to personal success, but a belief in the attainability of the American Dream seems to be declining especially in communities with high levels of economic uncertainty.

Powerlessness has a political dimension as well. In the 2016 YouGov VOTER survey, 39.9 per cent of Clinton supporters and 32.4 per cent of Trump supporters either agreed or strongly agreed that "things stay the same no matter who we vote in", while 62.2 per cent of Clinton supporters and 54.6 per cent of Trump supporters agreed or strongly agreed that "people like me don't have any say in what the government does". These numbers are striking: they illustrate both the extent to which voters regard the political process as ossified and the relative advantage of populist candidates over moderates in positioning themselves as agents of change.

Frustration with representative politics is not a novel phenomenon and has been well documented in many democratic countries. In the United States, according to Gallup, only 32 per cent of voters on average have approved of the work of the US Congress since 1974. Since 2006, approval ratings have consistently hovered at or below 20 per cent. But while dissatisfaction is generally high, there is a clear partisan difference in how voters evaluate public institutions. According to the 2015

American Values Survey, only a third of Tea Party supporters (but two-thirds of Democrats) trusted the federal government and the news media.59

There is also some evidence, from the World Values Survey and a 2017 Bertelsmann study of voter attitudes in Germany, that identification with representative politics has decreased in recent years, especially among a young generation in the United States, the UK and Germany.60 In Austria, this growing disillusion is especially visible. Not only are supporters of the right-populist Freedom Party more dismissive of democratic political institutions than supporters of other parties are, but their level of discontent has also increased significantly since 2013.61 For many populist voters, a sense of powerlessness within existing political structures thus translates into growing distrust of political institutions, demands for more direct and participatory engagement, and sympathies for charismatic and strong leaders.62 For example, populist AfD supporters in Germany are much more likely than the general electorate (88 per cent to 34 per cent) to support regular referendums as a mode of governance.63

## THE POLITICS OF CULTURE

This typology of anxieties—about change, uncertainty, abandonment and powerlessness—suggests that an anti-populist platform cannot narrowly pursue material progress at the expense of symbolic uplift, or vice versa. It alludes to the co-existence of what critical theorist Nancy Fraser has called "redistribution" and "recognition" struggles: symbolic claims are not necessarily congruent with, or reducible to, material demands.64 Voters whose electoral decisions appear to contradict their economic self-interest might well act in their emotional self-interest, and addressing concrete economic anxieties will be insufficient to reverse the populist tide and build broad electoral coalitions for a progressive agenda.65

This should make the centre-left pause. Its greatest historical legacy and greatest asset are economic policies that can usher in greater fairness, economic opportunity and equality. That remains true today, even if disagreement persists over the feasibility and desirability of particular policies. For example, the American left has retained the initiative about the economics of healthcare and the economic benefits of immigration. Progressive policy proposals have polled well even among Trump supporters, and especially among those Republican supporters whom pollster Emily Ekins identifies as "American preservationists".66

Voters also generally support social-security programmes that aim to reduce the vulnerability of people to the shocks of unemployment or ill health, evidenced in

cross-party support for the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK and the belated rallying around the Affordable Care Act in the US. In the economic realm, the primary challenges for the centre-left are rooted not in a paucity of ideas but in budgetary constraints, flagging political courage and parliamentary opposition from the right.

But the centre-left does not have a comparable toolkit of rhetoric and policy to confront pervasive cultural anxieties in the present world. Too often, it has too little to say to voters who long for a sense of community in a changing world and for a sense of agency in a society that seems to ignore their concerns. Too often, as well, the centre-left has simply dismissed these voters as parochial or "deplorable", in Clinton's words.67 But as long as populist sympathies extend deep into society and the political mainstream (instead of taking root only among the radical fringe), silence and dismissal almost guarantee poor understanding and misguided strategy.

The left certainly has not refused to talk about culture—far from it. Especially over past decades, progressive social movements have been at the forefront of debates about race, gender and sexual orientation. They have organised campaigns for formal rights since the 1960s, have embraced the language of multiculturalism especially in the 1990s, and have drawn attention to informal discrimination and implicit biases in the 2010s. This is a good thing, of course: the removal of de jure barriers for African-Americans and women has been one of the great political achievements of the latter half of the 20th century in the United States and Western Europe. The continued campaign against de facto glass ceilings is critical to the integration of the workforce, communities and schools.68

In each case, social progress has been won against resistance from the right and by winning over the (sometimes reluctant) political centre. Public opinion has also swung towards a more progressive social agenda because of persistent advocacy from the left. Support for marriage equality has increased over time in most Western countries, and American voters now predominantly trust Democrats to address environmental issues, social policy and discrimination, according a June 2017 Gallup poll.69 It is important to emphasise these histories: they illustrate the degree to which the centre-left has moved beyond a narrow materialist focus, and they highlight the scope of social change that it has achieved.

Yet the contemporary left in Western Europe and the United States has been less successful at preventing the stigmatisation of working-class voters, a constituency that finds itself increasingly uprooted by economic change and seemingly abandoned by the political system. Too often and too eagerly, it is casually lumped together with the far right, especially in rural regions. As a result, working-class

concerns about community and identity have often gone misrecognised as incorrigible racism.

Of course, racist and xenophobic sentiments are pervasive among—and have been subtly fanned by—reactionary populists. But they describe neither the full range of people nor the full scope of working-class anxieties. After many decades of anti-immigrant and anti-welfare agitation in the media and across the political spectrum, the blame for prejudicial attitudes has been placed squarely and selectively on the shoulders of the working class.

In addition, the centre-left has been less successful at preventing cultural arguments from being weaponised against progressive politics. Too often, it has preached its politics of culture to the converted. Thus, in its attempt to defend the rights and voices of marginalised groups against hate speech, the centre-left has sometimes painted itself into a corner. It outcompetes the right on economic issues but fails to mount effective campaigns against reactionary identity politics. In the fight over basic rights like freedom of speech, the centre-left has increasingly found itself on the losing side—unable to mount an effective defence and unable to stop the appropriation of liberal rhetoric by a frequently illiberal right.

In the United States, the topsy-turvy landscape is most evident. The right now poses as a defender of free speech in a debate that has long expanded beyond the confines of college campuses and football fields. The right has turned discussions of immigration into debates about cultural fit, civilisational values and extremism, driven by scant evidence and an abundance of nativist passion.

When the centre-left has spoken in abstract terms about community, its calls have often fallen flat. In Europe, hopes for a multilingual European identity have largely been disappointed. In the United States, appeals to national unity have not bridged the very real cuts that run through the social fabric and frequently divide red and blue states.

And finally, the centre-left has been seduced by the politics of individual liberation. It has emphasised personal identity as a guiding principle of social policy and as the aim of political practice, but often has little to say about the hard task of building diverse political alliances that transcend the boundaries of individual identities. As a result, the initiative has largely been ceded to the right. In the eyes of many voters, the politics of community have now become closely and narrowly identified with nativist immigration policies and a protectionist stance against the wider world. The politics of identity have been turned against the centre-left by emboldened nativists, who have pushed vitriol under the cover of liberal values.

Culture, in other words, has become a political liability for the left. Pervasive anxieties that have economic as well as cultural components will not be addressed, and the propensity of populists to mobilise them into political action will not be contained, unless progressive discourses about culture resonate as much as progressive economic policy.

## THE STRATEGIC EFFICACY OF ENGAGING WITH IDENTITY AND CULTURE

The centre-left must provide credible alternatives to the siren calls of populists. This is partly a matter of political rhetoric. In Germany, left-of-centre parties have historically (and for obvious reasons) struggled to defend the nation and have largely ceded the language of nationalism to the right. Yet historical projects of democratic consolidation always relied on narratives of national identity, from the European liberal revolutions of the mid 19th century to the New Deal in the United States and German reunification in the 1990s and 2000s. Some conception of who people are, what binds them together and what they owe each other are paramount, especially in democratic societies that do not base national identity on ethnicity or on personal leadership.

But the confrontation of social anxieties is also, and perhaps most significantly, a matter of policy and political vision. Because populist anxieties have economic as well as cultural dimensions, and because populist parties have successfully tied economic and social policy to immigration, more progressive economic policies alone will not suffice as a response from the centre-left. Neither will a steadfast insistence on the virtues of multiculturalism and social equality, evident as they may be. Global migration flows in particular have changed dramatically in recent years and have altered not only the political calculus but also the problems that must be addressed.

Significant progress in the realm of formal equality has fuelled a backlash against treatment that is perceived as preferential. The primary focus of debates about solidarity and redistribution of benefits is no longer class but citizenship status. For parties accustomed to electoral platforms that emphasise greater public spending and redistribution among citizens, formulating a vision is thus a formidable challenge. This is especially true in the current political climate. Amid sliding poll numbers, many European social democrats are justifiably anxious and often unwilling to lead public opinion. Even when their poll numbers are favourable, as they are in UK at the moment, social democrats have remained relatively mum about issues like Brexit and immigration.

As a result, the populist right has almost always dictated salient themes during electoral campaigns in Western Europe—most recently in Austria and Germany—has succeeded in linking welfare policy and other traditional bread-and-butter issues of the left to questions of migration, and has positioned itself as the defender of the public interest.

There are two main objections to the argument that the centre-left must confront identity and culture head-on. Firstly, it might be strategically advisable to focus predominantly on economic policy and attempt to reframe cultural anxieties in purely economic terms. The centre-left, in other words, should play to its strengths.70 This is true insofar as a clear economic vision is integral to any progressive political campaign. Anxiety has a distinctly material component that must and can be addressed—by pursuing policies that explicitly aim to reduce economic insecurity and broaden economic opportunity, but also by pointing out the social consequences of laissez-faire economics. Inequality tends to increase social conflict and international migration; public-sector cuts can undermine law enforcement and security.

But this strategy is misleading in that it regards economics as a carrot that can be dangled in front of voters, hoping that the promise of greater economic security will lead them to set aside grievances about identities, communities, values or political agency. In the United States, Democrats have learned this the hard way in recent years. According to a Gallup poll in June 2017, both major American parties are equally trusted to address economic concerns, but Republicans hold a clear advantage on salient non-economic issues like immigration, terrorism or gun control.71

Likewise, the 2017 YouGov VOTER survey finds that partisan polarisation often occurs along the lines of cultural issues rather than economic issues.72 As long as anxieties have a cultural dimension that cannot be boiled down to its material essence, the centre-left needs to have a plan to talk about cultural anxieties, and a set of policies to address them.

Secondly, it might be impossible for the centre-left to speak about community and identity without consenting to the logic of the reactionary right. The centre-left, in other words, has everything to lose and nothing to gain. This is an important concern. But sometimes a page of history is indeed worth a book of logic. The centre-left used to defend platforms that not only addressed economic concerns but also provided a sense of belonging and meaning under the umbrella of the welfare state and representative democracy.

The Marxist left had long proposed an understanding of class that emphasised the importance of class membership as a source of community and identity. After the Second World War, the social democratic left drew on communitarian traditions to construct social and political alliances and a sense of belonging across class lines.73 In the UK, the government of Prime Minister Clement Attlee built its social-policy platform around an emphasis of commonwealth rather than class or cohort. And progressives of varying shades, from Carlo Rosselli to Michael Walzer, organised their defences of liberal democracy around an insistence that pluralistic societies required strong communities.

These communities were meant to be inclusive (by accepting anyone who could agree on basic principles of fairness and justice) but also exclusive (by rejecting anyone who questioned the basic institutions of democracy and the premise of pluralism). Indeed, for much of the 20th century, the dividing line between the centre-left and the right was, in the words of philosopher Richard Rorty, the left's insistence on a rhetoric of national solidarity and fraternity that aimed "within the framework of constitutional democracy to protect the weak from the strong".74

The challenge today is a reclamation of this legacy at a time when class membership no longer predicts party allegiance (especially in Europe) and amid changing demographics and continuing international migration.

## POLICIES FOR A POPULIST ERA

The six policy domains below chart a policy vision to tackle anxieties about identity, community and political agency. They do not replace, but should complement, a progressive economic vision.

### NATIONAL PROJECTS

Populist platforms usually define the nation against one or more groups of outsiders that must be excluded from its territory or from access to its social services. Yet since the New Deal (in the United States) or the Attlee government (in the UK), progressives have regularly invoked the nation as something that is built from within through investment and engagement. According to the 2017 Kaiser/Washington Post survey, the primary demand rural residents had on the federal government was sustained investment in local and digital infrastructure to facilitate mobility to jobs and services.

This not only has clear economic benefits but also opens space for an understanding of national community that is not based on exclusion and isolation. It requires two

decisive moves. Firstly, it needs a rebalancing of investments in urban metropolises against investments in smaller cities and rural regions, where the economic incentives might be less pronounced but the relative impact on communities might be more significant. In the UK, per-capita infrastructure investment in London is still about 24 times higher than in parts of the North and Northeast, and twice the national average. Rail speeds are four times higher in London than in the North.75 Secondly, it suggests the possibility of agreements with the private sector to provide mobility or access to high-speed Internet in traditionally underserved areas.

## SOCIAL SERVICES

A growing body of research suggests that group-specific welfare programmes and sustained welfare cuts can contribute to social antagonism and greater hostility towards poor and non-native recipients of benefits. It also indicates that a shift towards universal entitlement programmes can aid social integration and make welfare systems more resilient to partisan attempts to dismantle them.76 Historically, social democrats have also embraced universal programmes as a path to electoral success (although in the United States, the promise of universalism was often overshadowed in practice by restrictions that excluded African-Americans and immigrants).77

At a time when many populist sympathisers rely heavily on state services to buffer the impact and uncertainty of economic shocks and old age, and when conservatives seek to make welfare access conditional on work requirements and citizenship or seek to shift from universal coverage to universal access, the centre-left should consider reforms that reduce the targeting and conditionality of basic welfare services.78

## SOCIAL CHANGE

Public opinion generally supports progressive social policies as long as they are not perceived as unjustified favourable treatment. It is true that the centre-left has had to invest considerable capital into fights over marriage equality, equal pay, gun control or abortion rights. Yet this is largely due to an organised, well-funded and articulate opposition that has framed social change as an assault on native-born, straight, rural or male voters. Recent studies suggest that voters' attitudes about, and attachments to, particular policies are relatively transient. They indicate that a strategic response to populism must not abandon existing policies but mobilise support for a progressive social agenda.

Here, the centre-left has much to gain by adopting the playbook of the right. If politics is partly about drawing boundaries between allies and opponents, who are the opponents that a liberal democratic left must organise against? The strategic aim should be a defence of progressive social policy as equal treatment that is opposed by special-interest groups. For example, the left's opponents in a fight for female wage equality are not male workers but employers who try to minimise labour costs at the expense of female employees.

**IMMIGRATION**

A strategic vision for immigration policy begins with the facts on migration. Around 260 million people now live outside their country of birth, a 50 per cent increase since 2000.79 All countries are affected by that. Nation-states have clearly defined obligations under domestic and international law to shelter refugees and forego discrimination on the basis of race or religion. Yet these obligations leave nation-states with vast leverage to design suitable immigration systems.

To address anxieties about the cultural and economic consequences of immigration—which are generally linked to unexpected surges rather than to annual levels of migration—the centre-left must address several fundamental challenges: How can the influx of immigrants become more predictable, especially in light of substantial international refugee displacement? How can the burdens and benefits of immigration be shared more equitably? And how can new immigrants be integrated into society?

Policy responses might include multilateral agreements about refugee resettlements like the ones proposed by the German Social Democratic Party, integration strategies that include a focus on language courses combined with clear paths to citizenship, and economic policies like industry-specific wage floors to buttress wage levels and social services. At the European Union level, reforms to free movement could also be made, which could include an 'emergency brake' during periods of exceptionally high inflows.

Yet policymakers should remain cautious about resolving labour-market anxieties through immigration reforms. There is some evidence that immigration leads to wage depression especially in the low-skill sector, although those effects are often dwarfed by the impacts of deregulation and outsourcing.80 There is no evidence that immigrants drive up unemployment for a native-born working class.

## REPRESENTATIVE POLITICS

Western democracies have followed different paths of democratic development. In the United States, a strong federalist tradition and relatively open national parties have led to greater local control and to lateral entrances into party politics. In many European countries, voter turnout is higher but political parties are more closed to outside ideas and candidates with backgrounds in public service or business.

There is, in short, no single model of political participation. Historically, the social democratic left has aimed to increase the agency of voters through collective action (in Europe) and the erasure of barriers to voting (in the United States). This vision remains relevant especially in light of the growing gap between voters and institutions, including at the European level. The centre-left should thus consider policies that widen avenues for political participation and increase local autonomy over local issues. In Germany, this might mean a reform of how political candidates are selected. In France, it might mean devolution of powers. In the United States, it might mean campaigns against gerrymandering and the influence of outside money.

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Institutions matter for the functioning of civil society and democracy. Indeed, liberal democracies emerged partly through the development of institutions, from trade unions and workers' athletic clubs (in Europe) to churches and the media (in the United States). As historian Eugen Weber has shown, the "French nation" did not fully emerge until schools began to teach standardised French in the 19th century that allowed people from different regions and with different dialects to communicate.81 In the United States, newspapers and the dissemination of printed pamphlets were integral to the development of a national community during the revolutionary period. And the rise of populism today is partly underpinned by a vast new media ecosystem that has destabilised monopolies over information and interpretation.

It is notoriously difficult to legislate for stronger institutions. But the centre-left could follow the example of Switzerland, where employers are required to grant temporary leave to workers and institute short-term leave programmes for volunteer activities. For example, employees could apply for a five-hour weekly work reduction under a National Volunteer Scheme without incurring a loss of pay if they commit to service in the local community. Many tech companies have implicitly adopted this model and organise regular volunteer days for their employees. The explicit aim of these innovation funds would be to strengthen cultural institutions (like the local press) that are thinning under economic pressures but still enjoy a high degree of public support.

**CONCLUSION**

Populist surges have economic and cultural causes that cannot easily be disentangled. This paper has proposed a typology of anxieties that combines the two dimensions. It has stressed concerns about fraying identities, uncertain futures, marginalisation and the prospect of political impotence as key drivers of populism.

The centre-left is well positioned to address economic root causes of these anxieties, but it often struggles to engage with cultural issues. In recent years, discussions about immigration and identity have been dominated by xenophobic and protectionist arguments from the populist right. Responding to these arguments is partly a question of political rhetoric and political mobilisation. Unless the centre-left is willing to move beyond a narrow version of identity politics, it risks preaching to the converted on cultural issues.

But a response to populist anxieties is also a matter of policy. The task for the centre-left is to defend vigorously the progress towards social equality since the 1960s by addressing the root causes of resentment. This requires concrete economic improvements, but it also requires efforts to combat social marginalisation and powerlessness.

**APPENDIX: SUPPLEMENTARY EMPIRICAL DATA**

Why have populist parties and candidates surged in recent years in the United States and Western Europe? Answers frequently take one of two forms. In the first camp are those who give primacy to economics and thus see populism as a relatively unmediated consequence of acute financial distress, recent economic crisis and long-term decline.

There is good evidence that economic factors matter. Trump outperformed Romney most strongly in the American Rust Belt—that is, in areas that are more likely to have experienced decades of economic decline and have lost a significant percentage of manufacturing jobs during the last ten years.[82] In France, strongholds of the National Front in the country's North and along the Mediterranean coast are also areas with high unemployment rates and a history of gradual job loss.[83] In Germany, according to a July 2017 study, the populist AfD now trumps the Social Democrats as the party with the largest share of working-class supporters and surpassed The Left as the party with the lowest median household income.[84]

This economic perspective reflects former US President Bill Clinton's famous insistence that elections are won by addressing voters' economic concerns and thus suggests that anti-populist strategies are fundamentally strategies of economic development to increase fairness, equality, productivity or growth. The great tragedy, according to this logic, is that economic and fiscal policies proposed by populist candidates are likely to deepen rather than alleviate economic deprivation. Trump's proposed tax and healthcare reforms are estimated to increase the burden on low-income voters; a British exit from the EU and the European Single Market would harm agricultural workers and family producers who rely on subsidies and market access.

But Trump voters also remained relatively affluent overall. According to CNN exit polls, he led Clinton in the popular vote count in every income bracket over $50,000.85 Rural voters who broke disproportionately for Trump were roughly as likely as urban voters to struggle with everyday bills, rely on Medicaid or disability payments, or access food stamps.86 Democrats lost support among union households but also won voters whose primary concern was the economy by a 10 per cent margin.87

In the UK, Labour held a significant advantage in 2017 among voters with low incomes and voters who live in social housing but lost support of lower-middle-class voters earning £21,000 to £34,000.88 In Germany, significant support for the AfD also comes from the ranks for the conservative middle class, and the party counts a lower share of part-time or temporary workers among its voters than either the Social Democrats or the conservatives.89

Thus, those in the second camp respond that voters are driven into the outstretched arms of populist candidates not primarily due to economic concerns, but because those candidates cater to latent prejudice against minorities, immigrants and especially Muslims. There is ample evidence, from the pre-election 2015 American Values Survey and the post-election YouGov VOTER Survey, that Trump supporters held more negative opinions of African-Americans and Muslims and stressed the negative effects of immigration.90

While only 46 per cent of American voters highlighted immigration as a key concern in 2016, 69 per cent of Trump supporters during the Republican primaries believed it to be the most salient political issue. Of those supporters, 80 per cent said that immigrants are a net burden to the United States and 73 per cent said that they are, or would be, bothered by immigrants who speak little English. This group of core Trump supporters held similarly negative views about American race relations. Seventy-four per cent believed that discrimination against whites has become as

significant as discrimination against minorities, and 42 per cent said that white men now face "a lot" of discrimination in the United States.91

Similar trends exist in Western Europe. In the UK, cultural measures have partly replaced economic and demographic measures as predictors of voting preferences. According to YouGov polling from April 2017, Labour and Conservative voters still differ on traditional economic indicators like income and housing status: Labour voters are more likely to have lower incomes and are more likely to rent or live in social housing.92

However, distinctions between voters who cast their ballots for mainstream parties and UKIP voters are not easily captured by economic or demographic indicators. Like Labour voters, UKIP voters are more likely to earn under £20,000. Like Tory supporters, they are more likely to be over 40 years old. But according to one study, the best predictors of UKIP support during the spring of 2017 were educational attainment and newspaper readership. UKIP supporters were less likely to have attended a university, and more likely to read tabloids such as the *Express*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Star* or the *Sun*.93

Data from the British Election Study suggests a broadly similar situation.94Support for UKIP before the 2017 election campaign was lowest among students and highest among retirees, but employment status generally had little effect on the level of electoral support. Likewise, UKIP supporters were largely undistinguishable from supporters of other parties in their evaluation of economic fairness and economic policy (although they were slightly less likely to consent to redistributive policies).

Instead, UKIP sympathy was better predicted by the belief that policies designed to ensure equal opportunities for minorities or women have "gone too far" or "gone much too far", by ethnicity and the degree to which they identify with "British" values, and—to a lesser degree—by educational attainment. As Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin, two authorities on British populism, have argued, these factors underlie a political coalition that united the coastal regions of East Anglia and the Southwest with rural counties in Wales and economically disadvantaged communities in the North and Northeast.95

By 2017, voters who abandoned UKIP moved predominantly to the Conservatives, thereby swelling their ranks with voters whose socio-economic background would have traditionally suggested an allegiance to Labour but whose age and cultural milieu more closely resembled those of Tory voters.96 Likewise, voters who abandoned Labour frequently came from working-class households in rural areas and in communities with a high percentage of industrial jobs, according to a post-election study by the Policy Network. As the study's authors observe, mirroring

observations from the United States, "there is a growing cleavage between those who populate large urban areas, and those who live in towns and rural communities". To some of these voters, political participation "is now a lifestyle choice, a new form of identity politics".97

In Germany, according to surveys in spring 2017 by the Cologne Institute of Economic Research and the public broadcaster ARD, support for the AfD extends across all income groups but correlates strongly with sex, rural residency and attitudes towards immigration.98 Less than 10 per cent of AfD voters are worried about their economic situation, but 69 per cent lament the negative consequences of immigration and worry about the fairness of a welfare system that provides basic services to refugees and migrants.

Many AfD supporters from the party's strongholds in the former East Germany have built an economically stable middle-class existence but have also experienced profound political and cultural disruptions over the past three decades—the fall of the Berlin Wall, the perennially delayed promise of investments and integration into the West, or the persistence of higher child mortality and lower life expectancy—that have engendered a sense of disillusion and a persistent experience of marginality.99

Unlike the German AfD, the French National Front attracted disproportionate support from younger voters.100 Unlike the Republican Party in the United States, its base was not predominantly rural but included a significant number of dense urban districts.101 Yet as in other countries, French support for populist candidates is strongly predicted by negative attitudes about immigrants, globalisation and the EU, according to recent pre-election data from the Pew Research Center.102 And as political scientist Luc Rouban has shown in one of the most comprehensive studies of French political preferences in 2016, general perceptions of intergenerational decline explain individual voters' propensity to support the National Front better than direct experience of economic hardship.103

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4. This distinction temporarily brackets the question of how populist constituencies are organised. A large body of works suggests that discontent of any flavour does not directly lead to political engagement but requires the mobilisation of resources, the development of organisations and leadership structures, and favourable political opportunities that empower challengers against incumbents.

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75. For data on rail speed, see http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/uk-trains-four-times-slower-south-east-london-national-rail-network-speeds-journeys-a7916791.html. For data on regional infrastructure investment, see IPPR, 2018. "Future Transport Investment in the North." Available at https://www.ippr.org/news-and-media/press-releases/new-transport-figures-reveal-north-to-receive-indefensible-2-555-less-per-person-than-london/.

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83. Burn-Murdoch, John, Billy Ehrenberg-Shannon, Aleksandra Wisniewska and Aendrew Rininsland. 2017. "French Election Results". Financial Times. Available at https://www.ft.com/content/62d782d6-31a7-11e7-9555-23ef563ecf9a?mhq5j=e3. Demographic data is publicly available from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

84. Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung 2017.

85. 2016 CNN presidential election exit polls, available at http://edition.cnn.com/election/results/exit-polls.

86. Kaiser/Washington Post 2017. Overall, rural residents are slightly more likely to depend on public assistance and social services than urban and suburban residents are.

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91. These numbers are lower among Republicans who did not support Trump during the primaries. Among that group, slightly more than 50 per cent saw immigrants as a burden, felt bothered by immigrants who speak little English, or saw anti-white discrimination as an important issue. In other words: as a group, Trump's earliest and staunchest supporters were significantly more nativist and more upset by changing race relations than the general Republican electorate. For the latter group, healthcare and unemployment tended to take precedent over immigration or race relations as the core political issues of 2016.

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98. Bergmann et al. 2017.

99. Maas, Stefan, and Christoph Richter. 2017. "Der AfD-Wähler—das unbekannte Wesen". Deutschlandfunk.

100.        Contexts matter. In France, the legacy of Jean-Marie Le Pen's party leadership continued to hang over the National Front as older voters refused to endorse the party. In Germany, the relative newness of the AfD and the party's genesis as a haven for Eurosceptics during the Greek debt crisis helped it to attract support among a conservative upper-middle-class sympathetic to fiscal nationalism, which now continues to vie for influence within the party with those who push an explicitly anti-immigrant agenda. In the UK, the aftershocks of the Brexit decision reverberated throughout spring 2017, while the structure of the British welfare state protected many older voters from Conservative public spending cuts and explains their continued loyalty to the Tory platform. In the United States, the constraints of the two-party system produced an electoral coalition that included populists as well as relatively traditional Republican voters who refused to break rank with their party.

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Rouban, Luc. 2017. La démocratie de l'entre-soi (dir. avec Pascal Perrineau). Paris: Presses de Sciences Po. For an overview of studies of recent French elections, see https://www.enef.fr/les-notes/.