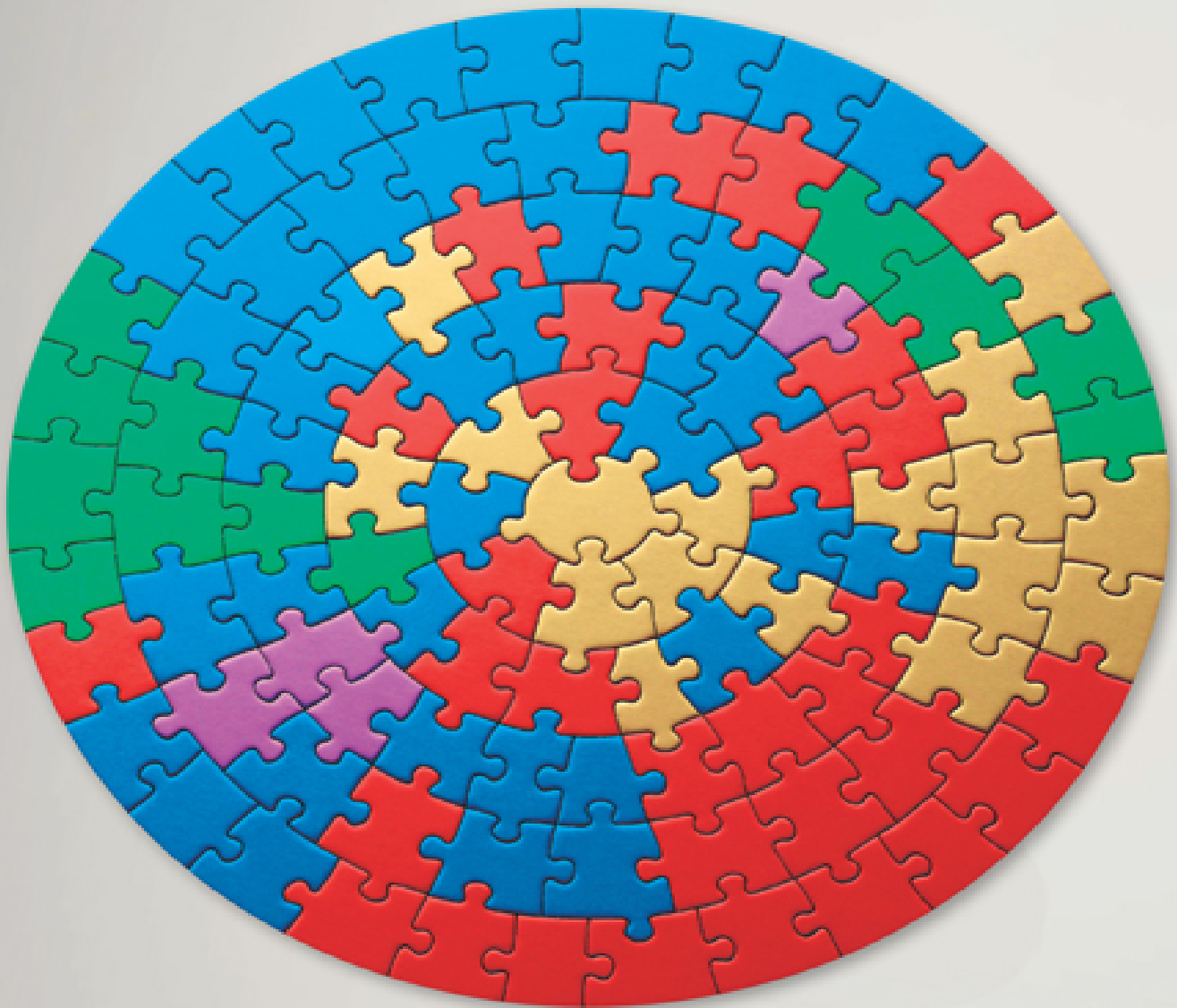


# The Great Realignment



Why the  
New Right  
is Here to Stay

**Stephen  
Davies**

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# **The Great Realignment**

## **Why the New Right Is Here to Stay**

Stephen Davies

polity

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# Introduction

Today politics is being transformed. On both sides of the Atlantic there is political upheaval and the unexpected has become normal. Every year since the financial crisis of 2008, there have been election results that have shocked commentators. Most dramatic were the 2016 Brexit vote, Donald Trump's first victory in 2016, and his triumphant comeback in 2024. Elsewhere there has been the steady rise of Marine Le Pen and the electoral breakthrough of the *Alternativ für Deutschland* (AfD) but there are many other examples. The pattern almost everywhere in the developed world is increasing success for a new kind of right-wing politics, usually described as 'populist', 'radical right' or 'far right'. The right-wing side of the political spectrum is changing, into something new. Some see this as a continuation of trends going all the way back to the 1980s or even the 1960s, but this is mistaken.

We are seeing a break from the immediate past and something new is emerging. We find ourselves increasingly in a new political era, where the term 'right' is taking on a new meaning to the one it had before. In reaction something will also happen to the meaning of 'left'. How to explain this? There are many accounts of what is happening and what its causes are. All of these, however, are lacking in important ways. The explanation and account offered in this book is this. What we are seeing is a political realignment. As used in this book, the term realignment refers to a kind of sea-change or shift in the nature of political debate and divisions. Realignments of this kind happen at regular intervals - roughly every forty years or so - in stable political communities. Politics is always ultimately binary, with two sides or camps, which we call

left and right. Every so often the issue that divides one side from the other and structures politics, changes. The issue that politics used to centre around fades away or becomes less important and a new one appears. This is a realignment. Changes in electoral patterns and party politics are downstream of this. The change in the focus of politics means that new alliances and enmities appear while old ones disappear.

As said, the thesis of this book is that a large part of the world is going through such a realignment and it is this that explains the seeming disorder and upheaval of contemporary politics. These are the outward signs of the realignment process. In some countries (e.g., France or Poland or the US) it is complete, while in others (e.g., Spain or Portugal) it is just starting. In the UK it has happened among voters but that has not yet been reflected in formal party politics, for reasons we will explore. In this realignment, the divide that is changing is a major one (as opposed to a minor one where it is one of the secondary divides that changes).

The core of the present realignment is this. We are moving on from a world in which the aligning issue is how large a role government should play in the economy and in redistributing resources – capitalism versus social democracy or socialism. That question, of what economic system to have, is no longer the primary divide. Instead, there is a new one. This is about identity and the nature of governance; the choice now is nationalism versus cosmopolitanism and globalism.

This realignment around a new issue is producing a politics that is novel, if we compare it to the politics of any time since 1945. In some ways we are seeing a resurgence of older political traditions that were submerged or forgotten during the Cold War and its aftermath. This points towards

a better understanding of the new politics. Its central features are an assertion of nationalism and particularism as opposed to cosmopolitan individualism; an insistence on popular sovereignty and a rejection of non-political governance through laws and treaties; a rejection of liberal individualism and the assertion of post or anti-liberal social and political philosophy. The last is where the revival of older traditions, or their unknowing rediscovery, comes in. It is also what connects these so-called populist movements and parties to a wider set of cultural shifts, around questions such as male and female identity.

So, this book is an account and analysis of the current state of politics in a range of countries, that explains it as the visible form or outcome of a realignment, a change in what the population at large sees as the main political issue. This realignment reflects and grows out of changes in the organization of the world economy and social life that have been gathering force over the last few decades and generating new social conflicts as they do. The book is organized in the following way. The first chapter sets the scene with an outline of recent events, and looks at the ways observers and scholars have explained and described this, and the problems with their explanations. The second sets out the theory of political alignments and realignments given earlier at greater length and distinguishes it from the long-standing debate in political science and history over the existence of party systems and realignments, most notably in the United States. It then explores how this process of realignment has happened in the past. In particular it looks at how the politics that most commentators are familiar with appeared and then evolved following a realignment in the 1970s.

The third chapter sets out the way that alignment gradually became exhausted and devolved into a world of technocratic argument and political disengagement while

subterranean shifts of both ideas and voter disaffection worked to undermine it. The fourth chapter explains the events set out in the first in terms of realignment and gives an account of what is actually going on and puts it into historical perspective. This is continued in the fifth chapter, which sets out what the new alignment of politics consists of and how to understand it. The sixth relates all of this to more foundational social and economic and cultural shifts. The final chapter is a conclusion and speculates as to what the future may hold.

# CHAPTER I

## Making Sense of the Populist Revolt

On Wednesday 9 November 2016, Americans woke up to learn that Donald Trump had won the Presidential election. Some greeted this with excited enthusiasm, many with shocked dismay and incredulity. On 6 November 2024, the news was that Trump had become only the second president in US history to win election having lost his first re-election bid. In contrast to his win in 2016, he won not only the Electoral College but also the popular vote, in what was universally seen as a decisive victory. This time, the excitement and anticipation on the one side was even greater. On the other, while there was still much incredulity and bemusement, the predominant flavour was now one of dismay and despondency, combined with fear. All agreed on both occasions that something momentous had happened. After the second there was widespread agreement that a new political era had begun. The United States is not alone in this experience. In one country after another politics has been shaken and old certainties upturned, with a feeling of triumphant vindication on the one side and trepidation and dismay on the other. This was Britain in 2016, France in 2024.

Since roughly 2005 there has been an upsurge in one country after another of a kind of politics that is usually described or labelled as 'populist'. The *Authoritarian Populism Index 2024*, published by the Swedish free-market think-tank Timbro, identified right-wing populist parties in every European country and left-wing populist ones in the large majority.<sup>1</sup> Their survey of trends and recent election results showed a clear pattern of rising support and political gains for right populist and national

conservative parties across the continent and over the entire period since about 2005, with no signs that this has yet peaked – the only significant exception to the pattern of a sustained rise is Denmark. The two victories of Donald Trump and an associated transformation of the Republican Party are universally seen as being a linked phenomenon or another example of the same thing.

The central feature of all of these parties and movements is a rejection of the political status quo, which is attacked as being a screen for the domination of a detached and mendacious elite, contrasted to ‘ordinary people’ or ‘the people’. This is combined with arguments about particular issues that are seen to involve actions by the elite or elites against the interests of the mass of the population (the ‘people’). The most prominent is immigration, with arguments that large-scale migration serves the interests of elite groups but is harmful to the interests of the indigenous population, or even their continued existence as a people. Sometimes this is also linked to criticism of free trade and economic globalization, particularly the phenomenon of ‘offshoring’ in which manufacturing production is relocated to other parts of the world. There are other elements, notably resistance to policies undertaken in response to climate change (such as ‘net zero’ commitments) and opposition to the progressive cultural movements lumped together as ‘woke’, which has replaced ‘political correctness’ as the favoured label. Arguments about culture and history also feature, along with scepticism about the direction of foreign policy in the post-Cold War world. The rhetorical opposition of elites and ordinary people is what led to the initial identification of these rising parties (along with protest movements such as the *gilet jaunes* in France) as ‘populist’.

In a succession of countries, ideas that had been marginal and confined to fringe or minority parties have gained

electoral support. Sometimes this meant parties entering the legislature for the first time; in others it meant movement from minority to major or significant party status or even, in some cases, being in power. The key point is that while many initially expected this to be a dramatic but short-lived phenomenon, it has in fact continued for over two decades. During that time populism has increased in strength, in terms of its electoral support, and has spread to countries that had previously not seen it, such as Spain and Portugal. As of now the only country in Europe that has yet to see a breakthrough is the Irish Republic and there we have seen in the last two years a succession of mass street demonstrations and protests around the issue of immigration, with the participants articulating the kind of arguments that find representation by organized parties elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> The most dramatic example of a populist breakthrough for many was Trump's two victories, but the decision by British voters to vote 'Leave' in the 2016 referendum runs it close.

All of this was both unexpected and shocking for the mass media, political commentators and established political parties. Suddenly they were confronted by parties and voters who espoused views they had regarded as banished or not intellectually or morally respectable. The new parties forcefully rejected what had become the institutional and policy structures within which all mainstream parties operated. The shock was in no small part because this populist surge came after a period following the end of the Cold War in which there seemed to be a general agreement among all parties as to what the ends, and more importantly the content, of politics and policy should be. This was captured in the well-known essay and subsequent book by Francis Fukuyama on 'the end of history'.<sup>3</sup> This meant for him not the end of events but the end of serious contestation of ideologies, of

conflicts over what the best kind of government and social order was. What remained was no longer a clash of conflicting ideas of what the political good was but technocratic argument about what specific, expert-designed, policy would best achieve generally accepted goals.

It is now fashionable to mock Fukuyama but he had accurately captured an actual moment and widespread sentiment among the political, media and academic classes. All of that suddenly ended and politics returned - to the alarm and displeasure of many actual politicians. The process accelerated markedly after the financial crisis of 2008 and the subsequent 'great recession' and had an even bigger boost from the Covid-19 pandemic and the measures taken in response to it. Many of the initial reactions held that the rise of populism was a response to the financial crisis or to the preceding decades of neoliberalism. This account is accurate but does not fully capture what is happening because it still places economic questions centre stage.

In the accounts of authors such as John Judis, the initial upsurge of populism took both left- and right-wing forms.<sup>4</sup> Among the latter were parties such as the National Rally (RN) of Marine Le Pen in France or the Freedom Party in Austria. In the US there was the Tea Party movement and then subsequently Donald Trump. The most notable examples of left populism in Europe were the Syriza party in Greece, Podemos in Spain, and arguably the Five Star Movement in Italy. In the United States there were Occupy Wall Street and, slightly later, Bernie Sanders' bid for the Democratic nomination. What united both types of populism was firstly their rhetoric, of being the vehicle for expressing popular resistance to an out-of-touch and rapacious establishment or elite, and secondly, their rejection of the policy orthodoxy of the mainstream. The

use of the labels left and right to distinguish them implies that what differentiated them was their contrasting economic views.

In this view, the left populists rejected neoliberal capitalism in the name of a radical social democracy while the right ones advocated what we may call 'capitalism in one country' - a form of neoliberal capitalism that rejected globalization and free trade while supporting it domestically. There *are* right populist parties (such as Reform in the UK or Vox in Spain) that fit that description at the moment but many others do not. Moreover, this way of thinking captures neither the emergent political economy of the so-called populists, nor the quite clear direction of their evolution, which is away from a nationalist form of neoliberalism to something quite different.

The more meaningful distinction between the left and right varieties of populism has to do with their cultural politics and their attitudes to the question of immigration and the wider question of nationalism versus cosmopolitanism. The left populists were cosmopolitan and therefore relaxed about immigration and did not make national identity a major part of their platform. In cultural politics they supported the radical identity politics usually called 'woke'. By contrast, the right populists were strongly opposed to 'woke' ideas and made resistance to cosmopolitanism and immigration and the defence of a particular notion of national identity central to their politics. It was their nationalism and (often) ethnicism and anti-woke positions that defined them as right in other words, not their economic positions. What is clear is that the early left forms of populism have not had the same staying power as their right-wing counterparts. This also shows how the distinction or division between left and right is no longer

economic policy but attitudes to national identity and questions such as migration.

## ***Common Features of New Right-Wing Movements.***

When we examine the electoral histories, the electoral patterns are clear. This is a kind of politics that in some countries has an institutional history that goes back a long way, to the 1980s or earlier (India, France, Austria – possibly the United States). In the great majority of cases though, it was either non-existent or distinctly marginal and fringe – the kind of politics found only in the subculture of dissident and heterodox ideas alongside alternative medicine, lost continents and conspiracy theories. Since about 2005 it has gained support in one country after another, typically going from fringe to minor party to major party and in a few cases to government. In Spain and Portugal, it did not even exist until recently but is now at the ‘established minor party’ stage. The movement into electoral politics has involved the shedding of many but not all of the features of the countercultural world. Despite this, this kind of politics is not accepted as legitimate by large parts of the established media and political parties. There are attempts to impose a boycott on collaboration with these insurgent parties, a ‘*cordon sanitaire*’. This is gradually weakening but, apart from in Austria and Finland, parties of the centre right have refused to enter into actual coalitions with right populists even though they will grudgingly accept support in the legislature (in Sweden, for example). The electoral story though is remarkably consistent across many countries.<sup>5</sup>

Does that mean that the phenomenon of populism is also very similar across borders, so that we can realistically

speak of a worldwide phenomenon with national instances? Alternatively, is what we have more a case of a series of specific protest movements, each with its own distinctive features and arising out of problems peculiar to each individual nation? Initially this second position was common but with time nobody has come to believe it. This is for two reasons. The first is that, even if this populist politics is purely reactive, the provocations, the things it is a reaction to in that account, are global or near global and found everywhere. One is the global financial crisis and its aftermath or even the longer-term reality of the financialization of the world economy. Another is the global migration crisis, as large numbers of people move or try to move into developed parts of the world, driven again by forces that are global or at least transnational in scope. As we shall see in more detail in [chapter VI](#), there are other world-wide or transnational processes and realities that lie behind and drive the populist upsurge. Since the various national populist movements and parties are all a response (in this view) to the same thing or things, it makes sense to see them as a single phenomenon, amended by specific national conditions but with a common nature derived from their common cause.

The second reason for seeing a global populist movement, rather than a set of distinct national ones, is that there are common features we can identify, things they all share and which are not found in other kinds of politics.<sup>6</sup> This is why observers see parties such as the RN, the Sweden Democrats, and the AfD as being examples of a wider class and see connections between European parties of this kind and things such as the Brexit vote or the electoral victory of Donald Trump. There is also the obvious reality that these parties themselves see each other as similar or on the same side and increasingly form institutional alliances. These are not only transnational but transcontinental, as in

the case of the Madrid Forum that brings together populist parties from across Latin America alongside the Vox party of Spain.<sup>7</sup> The similarities are not only a matter of being against the same things, but increasingly, a shared positive agenda. This is not to deny that nationalisms are, by their nature, competitive since national interests may conflict. It is rather that all nationalist politics have similarities, in valuing national identity, asserting the supremacy of a popular will, and rejecting liberal universalism and legalism.

## ***Explanations and Evaluations***

The unexpected eruption of populist politics into a seemingly stable system of depoliticized technocratic government has provoked rapid and intense reactions. We can distinguish between the immediate response, which really took shape after the twin shocks of Brexit and Trump's 2016 election, and the subsequent more considered ones. This can be seen by comparing reactions to Trump's first win with the still-depressed but more measured responses to his second.<sup>8</sup> As the response has become more considered, so the ways of evaluating what is going on have become more varied. The explanations offered for the phenomenon, the accounts of why it is happening, have also begun to diverge. This in turn leads to what for many is the most pressing question: are we looking at something that, however alarming or dangerous it may be, is a reaction to circumstances and therefore likely to be temporary? Alternatively, are there structural causes for it; is it the product of more fundamental shifts? In that case, we are looking at the emergence of a kind of politics that will become a permanent part of the political scene. This is much more alarming if you see the kinds of politics we are talking about as a serious danger, and more

reassuring if you see it in equally apocalyptic terms as the way to political salvation. The other perspective is the one argued for in this book, that this is something longer lasting but also neither a mortal danger nor an opportunity for redemption.

The initial reaction to populist breakthrough, typified by that to Brexit or Trump's victory in 2016, is best described as horrified incredulity. The predominant 'take' was that phenomena such as the Leave vote or Trump's victory, or the breakthrough of Marine Le Pen in 2015, were not only bad but something that simply should not have happened. They didn't make sense, in other words. Very quickly this turned into anger (not least at ignorant or prejudiced voters), and attempts to explain the inexplicable.<sup>9</sup> This took the form in roughly 2016-20 of a series of what we can accurately call centrist conspiracy theories. According to these, the success of populist movements was due to manipulation of gullible electorates by malign and self-interested external forces. Vladimir Putin and the Russian government's propaganda and subversion apparatus were the commonest targets. Other accounts identified shadowy financial or corporate interests.<sup>10</sup> This way of thinking is still widespread. A recent example happened in Romania where an election was cancelled supposedly on the grounds that there had been a Tik Tok campaign to mobilize support for a candidate seen as pro-Putin, who had then come first in the first round of voting. The presumption was that he could not have got so much support unless voters had been tricked or corrupted by propaganda, which was assumed to have a Russian origin.<sup>11</sup>

All of this was something akin to the first of the five stages of grieving - denial. They were ways of explaining electoral outcomes without any serious examination of the cause of these eruptions. It made the rise of populist parties

something unnatural and externally generated. Foreign governments and private interests undoubtedly did try to influence the political process in all sorts of ways but there is nothing new in this – actions of this kind are part of the standard practice of modern governments (not least that of the United States) and private interests with means have been investing in politics since as far back as the 1890s. The point is that while they may try to sow the seeds of dissent or political unrest and even water those seeds to encourage their growth, there has to be fertile soil for those efforts to have any effect. In plain language, Russian (or Chinese) attempts to push the politics of other countries in a particular direction are only going to bear fruit if there is something already going on, which they can at most amplify – if that. The most risible accounts are the ones found on social media and elsewhere that sees this politics as a conspiracy of neoliberal oligarchs operating on a deluded public. This is simply the left-liberal equivalent of the conspiracy theories that are widespread on the other side of the spectrum.

Therefore, many of the early responses to the populist insurgency did not fully reckon with it. One common response is to see this as a backlash of the ‘left out’ against neoliberalism. There are empirical problems with this (much of the support for these insurgent parties comes from the better off). In addition, it ignores the reality that the actual politics is clearly a reaction against established social democracy and the centre-left as well as free market neoliberalism.<sup>12</sup> Others, such as Paul Mason and Quinn Slobodian, chose to emphasize the early ‘capitalism in one country’ phase and see this in terms of a defensive response by neoliberalism to an economic crisis it has produced.<sup>13</sup> This has some credibility in the United Kingdom and United States (though it does not survive analysis) but none elsewhere. A common response is to see

this as a rebirth of fascism. This again has some surface plausibility but it misunderstands both the actual nature of historical fascism and the nature of the contemporary politics, which has more in common with other historical political traditions (such as those of the Action Française and late nineteenth-century radical conservatism in France or the politics of both the DVP (German People's Party) and the DNVP (German National People's Party) in Weimar Germany).

The more serious discussions use the concept or category of populism to explain the nature and origins of this new kind of politics. Populism is a well-known concept in political science, used to analyse a range of historical movements and figures, from the Populist Party of 1880s and 1890s America to later ones such as the Poujadist movement in France in the 1950s. It is also used as the framing of a recurrent feature of Latin American politics, that of mass popular and anti-oligarchic movements led by charismatic individuals.<sup>14</sup> The concept derives from a series of works published in the aftermath of World War II, notably Theodor Adorno's *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950) and Richard Hofstadter's 'The paranoid style in American politics'.<sup>15</sup> This framing - of a populist insurgency - is used by many authors with John Judis and Jan-Werner Mueller two of the most prominent.<sup>16</sup> The main features of the established conception of populism, which were then read into the politics of the post-2005 period, were these. Centrally, that populism is reactive and responsive, rather than being focused around a positive agenda or a definite ideology. Thus, the concept excludes even radical politics of the left or right such as fascism or revolutionary socialism. It also excludes phenomena such as Gaullism or Thatcherism, because these had definite programmes and were not simply responsive. This reactive populist politics is thought of as driven by resentment,

which leads to the other main feature of the concept. Populism, in this way of thinking, grows out of widespread psychological proclivities or characteristics that are commonly found among modern populations. The main one is 'authoritarianism'. This is an idea taken from mass psychology and in that context meant valuing stability and predictability, order, and established ways of doing things, along with intolerance for dissent or pluralism of values and ways of life. This does not necessarily translate into support for hard authoritarian politics but can do so, given the right (or wrong) circumstances. The other psychological source is prejudice and strong in-group feeling combined with suspicion and hostility towards outgroups. As the concept of populism was used more, traditional masculinity was added to the list of proclivities.

Therefore, in the classic account of populist politics, it is a response or reaction that grows out of attitudes and orientations that are widespread among the general population (there are many theories as to why they exist and what causes them). The tendencies can be played upon and exacerbated by unscrupulous or motivated demagogues but there also have to be circumstantial triggers. The most commonly identified is rapid change, whether economic, cultural or demographic - particularly if it undermines long-standing status hierarchies and causes anxiety and resentment over threatened loss of status. The other is shocks, unexpected and disruptive events of any kind, such as economic crises, wars or natural disasters (such as the Covid-19 pandemic). Populism is thought to be commonly associated with charismatic rabble-rousing leaders, who provide it with a focus and direction.

The target of populist politics is always an elite, often ill-defined and conceived of in conspiratorial terms. Populist movements, however, are often led by people who come from the elite they attack. Sometimes they are dissidents,

sometimes a faction of the actual power elite who seek to mobilize or take advantage of popular discontent for their own ends.

The final part of this framing is that populism is dangerous, not because it has any real permanence or prospect of establishing and carrying out any kind of policy change but because it is potentially a political gateway drug. Some of its supporters move on to more systematic and organized anti-democratic and anti-pluralist politics, and, while a temporary phenomenon, it can do damage of various kinds in the meantime. There is a more historically informed use of the concept, drawing on historical movements such as the People's Party in the United States. In this view, expressed by people such as John Judis and Pierre Rosanvallon, populism is a recurrent phenomenon of liberal democracy which appears because of failures by political and economic establishments to take popular concerns seriously.<sup>17</sup>

This certainly captures important features, particularly of both the rhetoric of leaders and the world view of many voters and activists. It is true that rapid change often provokes a political backlash and also that popular resentments frequently target scapegoats rather than the actual authors or causes of social problems. It is true that genuine and completely popular movements do not succeed politically on their own. They need support and leadership from among the established elites, or a split within the elite and one faction aligning themselves with the popular movement.<sup>18</sup> The alternative is for a grass-roots movement to generate its own counter-elite but this is a slow process. Vigorous attacks on elites are indeed a dominant feature of the rhetoric of the new right-wing movements. Two common criticisms of this in the literature are that this language is conspiratorial and that the elite the rhetoric targets is ill defined. The first criticism is clearly true for

much of the grass-roots support of these movements and even more its online presence, as well as some of their leaders' pronouncements. The second criticism, however, is misguided. Closer examination shows that the voters and activists have a clear idea of the composition of the elite they oppose, which reflects a kind of class consciousness or awareness of a conflict of group interests – this is examined in more detail in [chapter V](#).

However, the use of populism as the analytical framework also has very severe limitations. It emphasizes style and presentation rather than substantive content or actual programmes. It denies a positive content for the new right-wing politics and sees it as reactive, an expression of anger or discontent with circumstances without a coherent policy agenda as a response to those circumstances. More seriously, the category of populism, as it is used, denies the people who support these parties any positive agency. They are portrayed as puppets or sheep, led astray by political pied pipers. Alternatively, the blame is put on contemporary media technologies for creating unreasonable fear, so the politics is categorized as a hysteria or a mob politics.

All of these arguments and the entire 'populist' framing deny the new and rising politics legitimacy. It is presented as being a kind of politics and argument that is pathological and aberrant. These flaws mean that thinking in terms of 'populism' does not explain the nature or origins of the new right politics because it puts it in the wrong category of analysis, as ephemeral and reactive protest or a destructive eruption, rather than as something lasting and substantive, however unwelcome. By analogy, it is like trying to understand a horse while starting from the assumption that it is a cow. In several ways it does not capture the true nature of the new politics. It also means the evaluation is hampered because it has normative judgements built into

it. That makes it difficult to move beyond simple condemnation if this is the framing used.

Populism as a category refers ultimately to style or method and rhetoric rather than content. Thus, radical left movements such as Podemos are put in the same category as ones such as the AfD or RN. The clearest illustration of the weakness of this is the case of the recently elected President of Argentina, Javier Milei, who is clearly a populist in terms of his style and rhetoric. This has led people to put him in the same category as figures such as Trump or Marine Le Pen, when in fact there is almost no overlap whatsoever in terms of their actual policy positions or philosophy (he is a radical individualist libertarian which is about as far from someone like Le Pen as it is possible to be). The idea of populism as style or discourse does not in itself help us to understand why this kind of politics has sprung up now rather than at some other time and it does not explain why this has happened in so many different places. That means an emphasis on contingency and particularity, which does not make sense with what is clearly a near global phenomenon.

The common explanation for the new right politics that the populist lens leads to is that it is a reaction or protest by voters. That raises the questions of what it is they are reacting or protesting against and why they are reacting. The more conspiratorial explanation, which denies the actual voters who support these parties any agency, is that they are dupes. They are responding because they are misled, by rumours, false news and rabble rousing. As a result, they are voting for positions that are against their actual best interests. Apart from the patronizing assumption that those making these judgements know better than voters do where their interests lie, there are problems with this. One major flaw is that the interests voters are acting against are supposedly economic ones.

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