THE RISE OF POPULISM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT NGOS

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Author information and acknowledgments

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY FINDINGS

POLITICAL OVERVIEW

• Right-wing populism is on the rise in the democracies of the developed world. While populism is growing on both the right and left of the political spectrum, right-wing populist parties and politicians are enjoying greater success in many countries.

• Center-right parties are shifting to the right in response to populist pressure or infiltration, while some center-left parties have moved further to the left. There has been a corresponding weakening of the political center in many western democracies, as political debate and electoral politics has become more polarized.

• The political left has also been seriously weakened in a number of countries. In countries where traditional left-wing voters have been attracted by the agendas of the populist right, the left has struggled to frame effective responses. The populist right has deliberately targeted these voters, claiming popular support across the political spectrum.

• There is increasing solidarity on the populist right and international cooperation between right-wing populist parties and politicians. This growing pattern of political collaboration and alliances includes leaders of authoritarian regimes outside of the west, and may presage major geopolitical realignments.

• The rise of right-wing populism is a long-term phenomenon that predates the events of 2016. Yet, these trends do not constitute a resurgence of the far right political movements of the early twentieth century. The current wave began to take shape in the 1980s, and while some right-wing populist parties have older historical roots in fascism, others do not. While there may be important parallels between contemporary events and the rise of fascism, a theory of a resurgence of the extreme right is widely rejected.

ELECTORAL TRENDS

• Right-wing populist parties have experienced mixed electoral fortunes since 1980, yet evidence suggests they have seen a recent resurgence in
several countries. In 13 European countries in our sample, populist right parties achieved their biggest electoral gains in the most recent election.

- Right-wing populist politicians, parties, and other organizations, have also had important indirect impacts on electoral outcomes. The Brexit vote and the results of the U.S. presidential election in 2016 have been the most spectacular examples to date of such political ‘capture’ by the populist right.

- Recent electoral gains among populist right-wing parties may be driven by multiple causes. Public opinion data points toward voter concerns over the economy, refugees and migration, corruption, and terrorism. Further evidence suggests divergent generational and cultural views play a part. For instance, older white males make up large portions of far right party supporters. Voters also signal disapproval of cultural shifts concerning the empowerment of minorities, LGBT communities, and women. In the U.S. they also worry about the retreat of Christianity from public life and the increase of political correctness.

PUBLIC OPINION

- Recent public opinion surveys suggest alignment with ideas associated with populist right narratives (such as fear of refugees, racism, and Islamophobia) among a significant number of respondents in many EU countries and in the U.S. However, expression of these opinions is greater than votes cast for populist right party candidates in EU elections.

- There are differences between the EU and the U.S. concerning fears of migrants. EU respondents are concerned mostly with migration, followed by security and terrorism often associated with refugees from Syria and Iraq. In the U.S., migrants are seen as less of a security threat, or competitors for jobs. Among Trump voters, many see growing numbers of newcomers as a threat to American values and a weakening of American society.

- EU concerns about migration and refugees are associated mostly with a trend toward Islamophobia. Yet, views of Muslims vary widely across European countries.

- A majority polled across 10 EU countries voiced concern about increased terrorism from refugees. Further, people with more negative views of Muslims are also more concerned about the threat of refugees to their country.

- A minority polled across 10 EU countries sees diversity as good for their country. In all EU country surveyed, less than 40% said that having an increasing number of people from many different races, ethnic groups and nationalities makes their country a better place to live.
• Islamophobic sentiments are more common among Americans who are 45 and older, those who are Republican, and those who are white. A large majority of U.S. citizens (76 percent) says that undocumented immigrants are as hard-working and honest as U.S. citizens, while 67 percent say they are no more likely than citizens to commit serious crimes.

• 61 percent of Americans oppose building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. Yet, a proposed border wall draws support from 91 percent of those who support Trump strongly, compared with 67 percent of those who do not. Clinton backers are solidly opposed regardless of strength of support for her candidacy.

EMPIRICAL TRENDS

Refugees in the U.S.

• The number of refugees admitted to the U.S. has seen ups and downs since the mid-1970s, with the largest numbers in 1975 and 1980. The number of refugees plummeted after 9/11 and slowly regained in the ensuing years.

• Nearly 44 percent of refugees in 2015 were children.

Illegal immigration in the U.S.

• Illegal immigration grew steadily throughout the 2000s, but has leveled off since 2009. There are currently an estimated 11.1 million unauthorized immigrants in the U.S.

• While Mexicans comprise 52 percent of illegal immigration, the number of unauthorized Mexicans has been on the decline. Currently, unauthorized migrants from other regions of the world have been rising.

Refugees in Europe

• The number of asylum seekers entering the EU skyrocketed to 13.2 million in 2015, though 2016 saw far fewer numbers.

Illegal immigration in Europe, 2015

• The number of unauthorized immigrants also skyrocketed in 2015, compared to previous years.
EXPLANATIONS FOR WHAT IS DRIVING THESE TRENDS

Economic globalization

• Mainstream media often suggests the rise of right-wing populism in Europe and North America results from decades of globalization, which has left workers lagging behind economically.

• However, the globalization theory is an insufficient explanation. For instance, it fails to explain why a majority of residents of Scotland and Northern Ireland voted in favor of remaining in the EU, despite having been impacted by globalization in much the same ways as those parts of the UK that voted to leave.

The influence of parties and politicians

• Explanations that solely focus on economic globalization miss an array of ‘supply side’ factors i.e., what established and populist radical right parties offer the voters.

• Given that populist right parties have rarely been a part of modern European governments, their influence comes from outside. Between 1980 and 2014, only 21 of more than 300 governments have included a populist radical right party. Therefore, their influence on government comes from: their effect on public opinion; their ability to push other parties further right; their influence on government to develop more authoritarian policies on issues like migration; and their broader influence on the political systems of Europe.

• There’s reasonable evidence that populist right parties push other parties further right. For instance, it was fear of losing support (and MPs) to the U.K. Independence Party (UKIP) that pushed the center-right Conservative Prime Minister, David Cameron, into making the rash promise of a referendum on EU membership that he believed he wouldn’t have to follow through on.

• Often, charismatic political leaders and demagogues are important to furthering populist right-wing agendas and influencing public opinion. But charisma is double-edged, and populist politicians may be hated in equal measure by their political opponents.

• Political disillusionment may be a driver of polarization that benefits populist right parties. Widespread disillusionment with politics-as-usual may be driving ‘democracy fatigue.’ And such fatigue may be driving voters towards ‘anti-politics’ and radical politicians at either end of the political spectrum.

• The traditional left may have lost political ground to the populist right. In Europe the political space that had been occupied by the traditional left was in many cases readily colonized by the populist right, promising to defend the
interests of the crisis-hit lower and lower middle classes against the economic and cultural impacts of globalization and other external shocks.

**THE DISCOURSES OF RIGHT-WING POPULISM**

- Populist radical right parties are often identified by their use of narratives, though each party may give priority to different combinations of them and not necessarily employ them all.

- Popular narratives include: anti-elite narratives, anti-globalization narratives, and anti-immigration/refugee narratives.

- The allure of right-wing populism resides in the combination of the seemingly reasonable with the radical, and the promise of a quick fix for political, economic, and social problems that are experienced more widely.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT NGOs**

*The strengthening of culture wars—what next for the role of rights-based NGOs in the world?* The rise of right-wing populism in western democracies poses a serious threat to the global order in ways that go against the vision and efforts of organizations like Oxfam. This trend is being driven by economic globalization and other global and regional shocks (including the refugee crisis in the Middle East and Europe, and terrorism worldwide) that are fuelling economic hardship and cultural alienation among the squeezed lower and middle classes, many of whom have become easy prey to the politics of blame. Although international NGOs are already working on many related issues, there is scope for greater emphasis on the interconnections between the different factors identified here at global, regional, and national scales. This includes work in those countries with quite different political cultures, but that share discourses similar to those negative narratives outlined in the paper.

*The rise of the populist right clashes with the values of international development.* International NGOs should be concerned with the capacity of populist political leaders to tap into xenophobic, authoritarian, and anti-establishment sentiments among populations to accumulate political representation in government. Such acquisition of political power poses a threat to their key values and work, for example around increasing the number of political and economic refugees into Europe and the U.S. The increasing political power of right-wing populist parties and movements threatens other core elements of rights-based agendas. For instance: tackling anthropogenic climate change and its consequences; the continuing fight for gender equality, and the expansion of LGBT rights; and the importance of scientific and secular reasoning
as the basis for informing and setting public policy decision-making. Particularly troubling is that the negative values espoused by the radical right are so widely held.

The threat of right-wing discourse to civil society space. The politics and discourses of right wing populism threaten civil society space and the freedom of international organizations to speak out on behalf of vulnerable people. Alarmingly, the character and tone of populist discourses on the right exhibit a blatant disregard for evidence, and a widespread distrust of ‘experts’ and their knowledge. This poses a further challenge to the ethos of many NGOs and their use of robust evidence to support public positions, campaigns, and other programs. Civil society is not a homogenous space. It requires review to understand how right-wing discourses take hold and the space in civil society for diversity and inclusion.

Exposing invisible power. Should international NGOs shift more attention to exposing and challenging ‘invisible power’ and entrenched attitudes and behaviors? Does their experience in areas such as women’s empowerment and, more generally, analyzing and tackling visible and hidden power, provide a foundation for this shift?

Narratives and beliefs matter. This paper highlights the negative narratives that appeal to growing numbers of people, and in some cases have become embedded in public opinion. Using well-researched evidence to debunk the myths and assumptions that underlie such narratives must be a priority. But evidence is not sufficient. As a complement, NGOs should consider whether they give sufficient attention to understanding the drivers behind multiple beliefs and cognitive frames which embrace narratives counter to their values and principles. What is the mass appeal of specific negative narratives? How can alternative narrative acquire this relevance and appeal? Organizations should give careful consideration to the language (including metaphors and visual images) that they use, and work closely with local communities and constituencies to develop messaging.

Sufficient attention and investment in collective action? Should international NGOs review the attention they give to collective action compared to a focus on nation-state policy shifts to address global challenges (such as migration/displacement, climate change, tax justice, gender justice), providing that they also continue to work at national and other levels? Collective action, including collaboration with others, should perhaps focus more than it does on the development of positive visions for the future, including the alternative economic and social paradigms that the world clearly need.
INTRODUCTION

Recent political events in Europe and North America pose a problem for Oxfam and organizations like it whose mission is to eradicate global poverty and injustice. The rise of populism, and specifically right-wing populism, has challenged the internationalism underlying that mission and threatened aid budgets. It has undermined the development consensus and many different components of it, including the struggle for gender justice and the fight against climate change. And it has left many development practitioners and policy-makers uncertain how to respond or even how to interpret these events and the mass of commentary about them.

This paper, originally commissioned as an internal trends analysis and discussion brief, is intended as a first-stop guide to the rise of right-wing populism in western democracies and its broad implications for the development sector. It answers three main questions:

1. What changes in political action and discourse characterize the resurgence of the right? What are the most significant trends and can they be measured?

2. What explains these trends? Are they primarily a reaction to the impacts of globalization? What are the alternative explanations? What other factors are relevant?

3. What are the political, economic, and social implications of these developments? What are their implications for organizations like Oxfam and its partners?

To answer these questions, the paper draws from existing empirical data, public perception data, and review of political rhetoric. It comprises an overview and data about the political trends, a review of the principal explanations that have been advanced for them, and a discussion of their implications for development in general and non-government organizations in particular.
I. DATA ON POLITICAL TRENDS

Overview

The rise of right-wing populism. Many political scientists and commentators recognize that the extraordinary electoral results of 2016, the Brexit vote in the U.K. and Donald Trump’s election as U.S. president, were not entirely independent events, but manifestations of a more general trend, the rise of right-wing populism in the democracies of the developed world.¹

General political characteristics. This is a long-term trend that is currently characterized by:

- The growth of populist politics on both right and left, with right-wing populist parties and politicians enjoying greater success in many countries;

- The shift of mainstream right-wing parties further to the right in response to populist pressure or infiltration, and of center-left parties further to the left;

- A corresponding weakening of the political center in many western democracies, as electoral politics has become more polarized;

- Increasing dismay and disarray on the political left in countries where traditional left-wing voters have been attracted by the agendas of the populist right and switched their allegiance;

- Increasing solidarity on the populist right, with growing international cooperation between right-wing populist politicians, including leaders of authoritarian regimes outside of the west.

Definitions and disagreements. ‘Populism’ is a catch-all for claims to represent the interests of ordinary people against those of the political establishment. Although academic definitions can run to many pages, at its core populism is the politics of us-and-them, and the opposite of pluralism. Left-wing populism typically targets economic elites, while right-wing populists are often distinguished by their authoritarianism and political attacks on a variety of others, including refugees and immigrants, people of different faiths, and cultural progressives in their own society.² Whereas left-wing populists are more likely to accept the label, those on the right usually reject the term ‘populism’ as a


description for their politics and ideology. They also frequently reject the label ‘right-wing’, asserting, as the French National Front has done, that they are neither on the left nor right. Some left-wing observers have also suggested that these terms might be redundant, as they are in many non-Western countries.

**Populism or fascism?** Although some populist right parties have historical origins in neo-fascist groups, many do not. Until recently there was little academic support for the thesis, more often advanced in the media, that a direct line can be drawn between the rise of Nazism in the inter-war period in Europe and contemporary developments, and the theory of a renaissance of fascism is widely rejected. Instead it is generally recognized that a new wave of populist radical (but democratic) right-wing parties in Europe began to gather momentum in the mid-1980s. A key moment was the electoral breakthrough of the French National Front in 1984, described as “the starting point for the rise of parties combining anti-establishment populism and anti-immigrant politics based on ethno-nationalist ideology”. Some analysts, however, have begun to make more of the parallels between historical fascism and contemporary right-wing populism, arguing that to label the latter anything but fascism is to underestimate the threat it poses.

Notwithstanding these divergent views, the phrase ‘right-wing populism’ is the most widely accepted and therefore the one used in this paper.

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Electoral Trends

*Electoral successes of the populist right.* The progress of the populist right in Europe is most often measured in terms of electoral trends. Figure 1 gives a snapshot of how this political shift has played out in the electoral results of right-wing populist parties in a number of European countries. Countries in which these parties achieved their highest result in the most recent national legislative elections are highlighted. Although populist right parties have experienced mixed electoral fortunes since 1980, there is evidence to suggest that in a number of countries they have been enjoying a recent resurgence.⁶

Figure 1. Results of European populist right and far right parties in general elections, 1980-2017 (October 2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Year founded</th>
<th>Best result (%)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Last result (%)</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ)</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom Party of Austria (FPO)</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Flemish Interest (VB)</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People’s Party (PP)</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patriotic Front (IMRO/NFSB)</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bulgaria Without Censorship (BBC)</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>National People’s Front (ELAM)</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Dawn – National Coalition (USVIT)</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Finns Party (FPP)</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>National Front (FN)</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Alternative for Germany (AfD)</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Golden Dawn</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent Greeks</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz)</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Northern League (LN)</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Party for Freedom (PVV)</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Kukiz’15</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>2015</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Law and Justice Party (PiS)</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>Kotleba – People’s Party Our Slovakia</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2016</td>
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<td>12.9</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>Swiss People’s Party (SVP)</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>UK Independence Party (UKIP)</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Mudde (2015), Aisch et al. (2016),⁷ Nordsieck (2017)⁸

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⁶ This recent resurgence is not evident in the original table published in C. Mudde (2015) op. cit., p. 298, which covers the period 1980-2014 and shows only two parties gaining their highest result in the last election.


Some parties have performed even more strongly in other elections. In the European Parliament elections in May 2014, the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and the National Front (FN) in France both led their national vote, with 26.6 percent and 24.9 percent respectively. According to the European Council on Foreign Relations, “insurgent” populist parties – mostly, but not only, right-wing – held 1,329 seats in 25 EU countries and were playing a direct role in the government of eight member states at the time of counting in June 2016. In the rerun of the Austrian presidential election on 4 December 2016, the leader of the Freedom Party (FPO), Norbert Hofer, polled second with 46.2 percent of the vote. In the first round of the French presidential election on 23 April 2017, the FN candidate Marine Le Pen polled second with 21.3 percent of the vote, and her share of the national vote rose to 33.9 percent in the second round on 7 May. Although she was well beaten, this was by far her party’s best performance in any presidential race.

Referendums are especially prone to capture by populist agendas. As is well known, the Brexit referendum of 23 June 2016 was prompted by UKIP success and a misguided attempt to neutralize their growing influence on the right of British politics. The anti-immigration arguments of UKIP proved particularly influential during the referendum, despite the party’s exclusion from the official “Leave” campaign. Immigration was the central issue in the Hungarian referendum that was held on 2 October 2016. It was called by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (Fidesz) to consider whether the government should accept the EU’s proposed mandatory quotas for relocating migrants. The result was a resounding rejection (98.4 percent) of the EU migrant quotas, though turnout was too low (44.0 percent) to make the vote valid.

The general shift to the right. Other data show that there has also been a more general movement to the right in many electorates, as well as a shift in the same direction within many traditional ‘mainstream’ parties of the right, including the Conservatives in the U.K. and the Republicans in the U.S. The nomination of Donald Trump as the Republican candidate for president was particularly remarkable because it signaled the capture of the GOP by a populist outsider and an alt-right coterie that has dominated policy-making since his election. The Canadian conservative party has also shifted right under Stephen Harper, and the Australian Labour Party succumbed to what has been described as ‘the

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west’s most heinous refugee policy.’ The ability of the populist right to push political debate and other parties and their policies further to the right may be its most important impact in many countries, including those in which systems of proportional representation make the attainment of outright control unlikely.

**Limitations of the data.** Quantifying these trends is not straightforward, given that there is no simple measure of how far right a particular political party, coalition, policy or opinion is, or agreement on which electoral results to compare. Perhaps not surprisingly, there are also differing interpretations of the trends that are identified, how these should be characterized, and what other social and economic changes they can be linked to. What we can say is that in 13 European countries in our sample (Figure 1), populist right parties achieved their biggest electoral gains in the most recent legislative election. This is plausibly interpreted as part of a wider political trend that includes North America and other developed countries, and that appears to have reached a tipping point in the case of the Brexit vote and the U.S. presidential election.

**Looking ahead.** It remains to be seen whether this rightward populist trend will translate into similar electoral “shocks” in other countries, including those with systems of proportional representation that have historically proven better able to contain political extremism. Electoral results in key European countries in the first half of 2017 were hailed as signaling a reverse of the right-wing populist tide. In the Netherlands Geert Wilders failed to perform as well as some opinion polls had predicted in the run-up to the March 15 vote: his Party for Freedom (PVV) came second in the general elections, and was subsequently locked out of coalition talks. In the U.K. Theresa May’s Conservative Party failed to make the large gains that she had hoped for when she called for a snap election on June 8. Despite sweeping up the votes of many former UKIP supporters, the resurgence of the Labour Party under the left-wing populist Jeremy Corbyn left her without a parliamentary majority and much weaker than before. In France the centrist Emmanuel Macron won the presidential election by a decisive margin, and his new party, La République En Marche! (REM), dominated the legislative elections in June 2017.

**Voting for Brexit and Trump**

**Overview.** The Brexit referendum and the U.S. presidential election in 2016 have provided the most unexpected successes to date for the populist right. Analyses of voting patterns in these two very different elections highlight a number of common features as well as obvious differences.

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https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/feb/12/the-left-is-having-a-moment-everywhere-except-in-australia
Figure 2. The Brexit vote at a glance

Source: The New York Times

Brexit voters. Research undertaken in the wake of the Brexit vote emphasized the role played by the deep “sense of angst, alienation and resentment among more financially disadvantaged, less well-educated and older Britons who are often only one financial crisis away from disaster” (Goodwin 2016). The concentration of such people in the declining industrial strongholds and fading coastal towns of England and Wales helps explain the pattern of voting shown in Figure 3, though other factors were also at play, including the Euroscepticism of many traditional Conservative Party supporters in rural England, and local political allegiances in Scotland and Northern Ireland. More recent research has confirmed that the result of the referendum reflected feelings about national
identity and reactions to change more broadly, not just the grievances of “the left behind”. Both immigration and sovereignty were key issues for leave voters.¹⁵

Figure 3: The U.S. presidential vote at a glance

![Map of the U.S. showing presidential votes.](image)

Source: CNN / Greenberg Quinlan Rosner¹⁶

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Electoral Votes</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trump</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stein</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trump voters. Despite the very different contexts, there are striking parallels between the demographic characteristics and economic circumstances of Trump and Brexit voters. “Class has been a bigger factor in this election than in any election since the New Deal era. Trump’s insurgency rode largely on middle- and working-class fears about globalization, immigration and the cultural arrogance of the “progressive” cultural elite. […] Trump owes his election to what one writer has called “the leftover people.” These may be “deplorables” to the pundits but


their grievances are real – their incomes and their lifespans have been decreasing. […] Many of these voters were once Democrats, and feel they have been betrayed. And they include a large swath of the middle class” (Kotkin 2016). This helps explain Trump’s success in the declining industrial heartland of the Rust Belt. Like the Brexiteers, Trump also drew a significant proportion of his support from older and less educated voters. However, race and gender were much more important factors than they were in the U.K., with whites and men turning out in much greater numbers for Trump.

Public opinion trends

**Overview.** Recent public opinion surveys suggest alignment with ideas associated with populist right narratives (such as fear of refugees, racism, and Islamophobia) among a significant number of respondents in many EU countries and in the U.S. However, support for these opinions is higher than populist right party electoral results in the EU.

**Different fears about migration.** Notably, the data shows in the EU that migration is the first concern among respondents, followed by a growing preoccupation with security and terrorism that is often associated with refugees from Syria and Iraq. In the US, the majority of respondents do not see migrants as a security threat, or as competitors for jobs. Further, EU concerns about migration and refugees are associated mostly with a rising trend toward Islamophobia. In the U.S., the anti-immigration discourse is strongly focused toward Mexican and Central American migrants, characterized by an anti-Latino narrative, which is essentially absent in the EU.

---


Migration and terrorism in Europe. As Figure 5 suggests, migration and terrorism are very clearly ahead in terms of concerns at EU level. Close to half of Europeans see immigration as one of the two most important issues facing the EU (48 percent). Immigration’s importance, however, lost ten percentage points from the previous survey last year. This is after a twenty-point increase between spring and fall 2015, and the first time immigration declined on the Eurobarometer since spring 2013. After a 14-point increase, terrorism is now mentioned by 39 percent of Europeans, consolidating its position as the second most important concern. This is the fourth successive increase since fall 2014 (an increase of 33 percent from 6 percent in 2014). In total, 58 percent of EU citizens claim the statement ‘immigration of people from outside the EU’ evokes
negative feelings. Whereas the statement evokes fairly negative feelings for 35 percent and very negative feelings for 23 percent of respondents. Respondents from eastern and southern European countries score much higher than the rest of the EU.

**Muslims in Europe.** Views of Muslims vary widely across European countries. A Pew Research Center survey conducted during the spring of 2016 in 10 countries found that in eastern and southern Europe, negative views prevailed. However, the majority of respondents in the U.K., Germany, France, Sweden and the Netherlands gave Muslims a favorable rating. Views about Muslims seem tied to political ideology. While 47 percent of Germans on the political right gave Muslims an unfavorable rating, only 17 percent who identify on the left responded unfavorably. The gap between left and right is also roughly 30 percentage points in Italy and Greece.

**Refugees in Europe.** When asked about refugees, a median of 59 percent across the 10 EU countries voiced concern about the prospect of increased terrorism. This includes 76 percent in Hungary and 71 percent in Poland. Around six-in-ten in Germany (61 percent), the Netherlands (61 percent) and Italy (60 percent) also think refugees will increase terrorism in their country. Majorities in Poland, Hungary, Greece and Italy say that a large number of refugees leaving places like Iraq and Syria are a major threat to their countries.\(^\text{20}\)

\(^{20}\) The survey was conducted prior to terrorist attacks in France and Germany that occurred over the summer.
Figure 5. Views of Muslims and concerns about refugees in select European countries

Views of Muslims more negative in eastern and southern Europe

Unfavorable view of Muslims in our country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Pew Research Center

Many Europeans concerned with security, economic repercussions of refugee crisis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top three reasons</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refugees in our country</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees not helping us</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees are more dangerous than other groups</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: National sample sizes are in italics, and the US is shown in bold.
Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey

Many Muslims considered ideologically right more unfavorable toward Muslims in most countries

Unfavorable view of Muslims in our country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Pew Research Center

Many Europeans see refugees from Syria and Iraq as a major threat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Pew Research Center

Source: Pew Research Center

http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/19/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/
In all 10 EU countries surveyed, people with more negative views of Muslims are also more concerned about the threat of refugees to their country. In no EU country surveyed did more than four-in-ten say that having an increasing number of people from many different races, ethnic groups and nationalities makes their country a better place to live. And in two nations, Greece and Italy, more than half said that increasing diversity makes the country a worse place to live. Regardless of whether they see refugees as a threat, or whether they think they increase terrorism, crime or take jobs, Europeans overwhelmingly believe that the EU is doing a poor job of handling the refugee crisis. Majorities in every country surveyed say they disapprove of how the EU is handling refugees, including a staggering 94 percent of Greeks and 88 percent of Swedes.

**Figure 6. EU perceptions of Muslims, diversity and handling of refugees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived refugee threat higher among those with negative view of Muslims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Differences shown are statistically significant.
Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey.

**Few Europeans say growing diversity makes their country a better place to live**

Overall, do you think having an increasing number of people from many different races, ethnic groups and nationalities in your country makes this country a better place to live, a worse place to live or doesn’t make much difference either way?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A worse place to live</th>
<th>Doesn’t make much difference</th>
<th>A better place to live</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
Migration, refugees and values in the U.S. As Figure 8 suggests, 59 percent of Republican voters who think that the growing number of newcomers to the U.S. “threatens traditional American customs and values,” have warm feelings toward Donald Trump – with 42 percent saying they feel very warm toward him. Islamophobic sentiments are more common among Americans who are 45 and older, those who are Republican, and those who are white. A large majority of US citizens (76 percent) says that undocumented immigrants are as hard-working and honest as U.S. citizens, while 67 percent say they are no more likely than citizens to commit serious crimes.
Figure 7. Association between Republican views on immigration, Islam, and diversity and Trump

Within GOP, views of immigration, Islam, diversity strongly associated with ratings of Trump

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of Republican and Republican-leaning registered voters who rate Trump on a “feeling thermometer” from a (coldest rating) to 100 (warmest rating) ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Rep/Rep-leaning voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among those who say ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing number of newcomers from other countries ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatens U.S. values (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthens U.S. society (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Islamic religion is ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More likely than others to encourage violence (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No more likely to encourage violence (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>According to census, in 30 years U.S. pop. will be majority black, Latino &amp; Asian. This is ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad for the country (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good/Neither good nor bad for the country (61%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feeling thermometer ratings: Very cold (zero to 24), somewhat cold (25-49), neutral (50), somewhat warm (51-75), very warm (76-100).
Source: Survey conducted April 5-May 2, 2016.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Warmer feelings about Trump among Republicans critical of immigration, growing diversity, Islam

Among Republican and Republican leaning registered voters, # of degrees more warmly toward Donald Trump (on a 0-100 feeling thermometer) associated with each of the following positions/characteristics

| Growing number of newcomers from other countries threatens U.S. values | 18 |
| Islam more likely than other religions to encourage violence | 8 |
| Bad for country that blacks, Latinos, Asians will be majority of the population | 8 |
| Businesses make too much profit | 6 |
| Poor people have it easy because of government benefits | 4 |
| Economic system in U.S. unfairly favors powerful | 2 |
| Homosexuality should be accepted | 1 |
| Society just as well off if marriage and family aren’t people’s priorities | 0 |
| Diplomacy is best way to ensure peace | 0 |

Note: The number shown is the number of degrees more warmly (on the 0-100 feeling thermometer) an individual holding this view or characteristic feels toward Donald Trump compared with an individual who has the opposing view or different characteristic, controlling for all of the other factors in the model. Numbers in bold indicate a statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level. Those in grey do not reach statistical significance at the 95% level.
Source: Survey conducted April 5-May 2, 2016.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
Keeping immigrants out of the U.S. The survey also finds continued public opposition to building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border: 61 percent oppose this proposal, which is little changed from earlier this year. Differences across demographic and political groups remain stark. While more whites say they are opposed (54 percent) than say they are in favor (43 percent) of the U.S.-Mexico border wall, they are far less likely than blacks and Hispanics to oppose the proposed wall. Roughly three-quarters of both blacks (76 percent) and Hispanics (76 percent) say they oppose the proposal, while just about one-in-five favor the wall. Partisan differences in opinion also are wide: A 63 percent majority of Republicans and Republican leaners support building a wall along the U.S.-

23 http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/02/more-warmth-for-trump-among-gop-voters-concerned-by-immigrants-diversity/
Mexico border, while 34 percent stand opposed to it. By contrast, an overwhelming share of Democrats (84 percent) oppose the wall, while just 14 percent are in favor.25

The Pew Research Center reports that Americans have not been especially welcoming of refugees, with only a quarter of the public expressing approval of Cuban refugees in 1980, and only slightly higher numbers for Hungarians in the late 1950s and Indochinese in the late 1970s.26

**Figure 8. U.S. perceptions about undocumented immigrants, crime and the border wall**

**Most say undocumented immigrants are no more likely than U.S. citizens to commit serious crimes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mostly fill jobs U.S. citizens</th>
<th>Mostly fill jobs U.S. citizens do not want</th>
<th>Are not as honest, hard-working as U.S. citizens</th>
<th>Are more likely than U.S. citizens to commit serious crimes</th>
<th>Are NO more likely than U.S. citizens to commit serious crimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rep/Leon Rep</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dem/Lean Dem</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Don’t know responses not shown. Source: Survey conducted Aug. 9-18, 2016.

**Most Republicans favor building border wall; even more Democrats are opposed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Oppose</th>
<th>Favor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican/Lean Rep</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat/Lean Dem</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Don’t know responses not shown. Source: Survey conducted Aug. 9-18, 2016.


Half of all Trump supporters say undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. are more likely than American citizens to commit serious crimes. However, 59 percent of Trump supporters who support him strongly say this, compared with 42 percent of those who do not support him strongly. Similarly, while fewer than three-in-ten Trump backers who only moderately support the candidate think that undocumented immigrants mostly fill jobs American citizens would like to have (29 percent) these views are somewhat more prevalent among those who support Trump strongly (41 percent). A proposed border wall draws support from 91 percent of those who support Trump strongly, compared with 67 percent of those who do not. Clinton backers are solidly opposed regardless of strength of support for her candidacy. Fully 8 percent of Clinton supporters express opposition, compared with 10 percent who are in favor of a wall along the entire border with Mexico. 

http://www.people-press.org/2016/08/25/on-immigration-policy-partisan-differences-but-also-some-common-ground/
Empirical migration trends

Overview: The following aims to compliment the public opinion trends with empirical data on the flows of refugees and both legal and illegal migration that American and European respondents claim as concerning (namely, Muslim majority countries, Central America, and Mexico).
Figure 10. Refugees in the U.S.A.

The shifting origins of refugees to the U.S. over time
Number of refugees admitted to the U.S., by region of origin of principal applicant and fiscal year

- 1975 Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act results in increased refugees from Vietnam
- 1999 U.S. raises quotas on Soviet refugees
- 1999 U.S. accepts refugees from Kosovo
- 2004 50% of overall admitted refugees in 2004 were from Somalia, Cuba, and Laos
- 2008 Bhutanese were granted refugee status

Source: Refugee Processing Center, 1975-2016.
Note: Data do not include special immigrant visas and certain humanitarian parole entrants. Does not include refugees admitted under the Private Sector Initiative. Europe includes former Soviet Union states. Asia includes Middle Eastern and North African countries. Africa includes sub-Saharan Africa, but not Sudan and South Sudan. Latin America includes Caribbean. Data for fiscal 2017 are through Oct. 31, 2016; fiscal 2017 began Oct. 1, 2016.

U.S. admits its highest number of Muslim refugees on record in fiscal 2016
Number of refugees entering the U.S. by religious affiliation

Note: "Other religions" include Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and other religions. Data do not include special immigrant visas and certain humanitarian parole entrants. Fiscal years are Oct. 1 through Sept. 30 each year.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
Refugee Arrivals By Relationship To Principal Applicant And Sex: Fiscal Year 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Principal Applicants</th>
<th>Dependents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Spouses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69,920</td>
<td>28,400</td>
<td>10,792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33,335</td>
<td>10,082</td>
<td>8,688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36,584</td>
<td>18,317</td>
<td>2,104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 2015, Department of Homeland Security

As Figure 11 demonstrates, U.S. admittance of refugees has seen ups and downs since the mid-1970s. The largest number of refugees were admitted in 1980 and 1975, respectively, and there have been historically fewer refugees admitted since the September 11th terrorist attacks. The religious composition of refugees has been largely non-Muslim majority, however 2016 saw the largest number of Muslim refugees on record. In 2015, 44 percent of refugees to the U.S. were children under the age of 18. Of the more than 70,000 refugees who have been admitted to the U.S. so far in fiscal year 2016, the largest numbers have come from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burma and Syria.

Figure 11. Illegal immigration in the U.S.A.

After climbing for over a decade, illegal migration to the U.S. has leveled off since 2009 and hovers around 11.1 million individuals. While approximately 52 percent...


29 [http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/10/05/key-facts-about-the-worlds-refugees/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/10/05/key-facts-about-the-worlds-refugees/)
of illegal migrants are Mexicans, the total number from Mexico has been declining since 2007, from 6.9 to 5.8 million. Concurrently, illegal migrants from other regions of the world increased from 5 to 5.3 million between 2009 and 2014. These migrants largely arrive from Asia and Central America. In fact, looking at net immigration to the U.S. since 2008, Asians make up a larger number compared with Latin Americans. Across the U.S., no state saw a statistically significant increase in the number of illegal migrants between 2009 and 2014, and seven states saw a decline largely explained by the falling number of unauthorized Mexican immigrants. Illegal migrants in the U.S. are also increasingly becoming long term residents. In 2014, unauthorized illegal migrants had lived in the U.S. for a median of 13.6 years.\(^{30}\)

**Figure 12. U.S. immigration from Muslim majority countries and Central America**

**Persons obtaining lawful permanent resident status in the U.S. from select Muslim majority countries\(^{31}\)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total from select Muslim majority countries</th>
<th>Total persons obtaining residency</th>
<th>Percentage from select Muslim majority countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>89,512</td>
<td>1,266,129</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>70,691</td>
<td>1,052,415</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>80,170</td>
<td>1,107,126</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>100,794</td>
<td>1,130,818</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>89,921</td>
<td>1,042,625</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>87,843</td>
<td>1,062,040</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>86,586</td>
<td>1,031,631</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>77,095</td>
<td>990,553</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{31}\) Countries: Syria, Iran, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Turkey, UAE, Egypt, Indonesia, Nigeria, Libya, Afghanistan and Morocco.
U.S. public opinion data collected among voters leaning toward Donald Trump indicated concern that newcomers present a threat to American values and society. Though not demonstrated in the data provided earlier, such sentiments may fuel Trump’s supporters’ desire for a wall along the border with Mexico, and for curbing admittance of persons from Muslim majority countries. Yet, as the trends represented in Figure 9 suggest, person from Muslim majority countries are a tiny portion of those becoming lawful permanent residents (green card holders). Likewise, the numbers of Central Americans and Mexicans obtaining permanent status have been on the decline for at least a decade.
European Union countries, plus Norway and Switzerland, received a record 1.3 million refugees in 2015. About half of refugees in 2015 trace their origins to just three countries: Syria (378,000), Afghanistan (193,000) and Iraq (127,000). Among destination countries, Germany (442,000 applications), Hungary (174,000) and Sweden (156,000) together received more than half of asylum seeker applications in 2015.  

**According to the Pew Research Center, far fewer refugees entered Europe in 2016 than in 2015.** In summer 2016, an average of about 100 migrants from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and other countries landed each day on Greece’s shores, down from the thousands who arrived daily in 2015. Meanwhile, migration into Italy in 2016 continues at a similar pace to 2015. An average of about 500 refugees, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa, arrived daily between January and August of both 2015 and 2016.  

The number of illegal migrants entering Europe surged in 2015, compared to data going back six years. According the Frontex, the company responsible for

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32 http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/10/05/key-facts-about-the-worlds-refugees/

33 http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/10/05/key-facts-about-the-worlds-refugees/
coordinating the security of the EU’s land and sea borders, 1.8 million people crossed over illegally in 2015.\textsuperscript{34} This figure is incredibly higher than previous years. For instance, the figure for 2014 is 280,000 detections of illegal border crossings. Importantly, this data reflects detections of illegal entrances by migrants and is admittedly not an exact count. Some migrants enter without detection and others are counted more than once if they have crossed EU borders twice, or tried to enter several times.

**Figure 14. Illegal immigration in Europe, 2015**

European respondents expressed concern for increased terrorism and crime as a result of the growing number of refugees and migrants entering the EU. To separate facts from misconception, some governments are actively releasing statistics on these issues to educate their citizens. For instance, in response to the claim that refugees are driving increased crime, the Swedish government pulled data from the National Council for Crime Prevention. Derived from two reports, these studies confirm that the majority of those suspected of crimes were born in Sweden to Swedish-born parents, and that the majority of persons from foreign backgrounds are not suspected of crimes.\textsuperscript{35} In contrast to the belief that refugees are driving up crime, Germany’s Federal Criminal Police Office reported a spike in attacks on refugees and their homes in 2016. The agency recorded 970 attacks on asylum accommodation centers and 2,396 crimes against refugees outside of the residences.\textsuperscript{36} In response to the claim that Muslims will

\textsuperscript{34} http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/18/illegal-migration-to-eu-rises-for-routes-both-well-worn-and-less-traveled/

\textsuperscript{35} http://www.government.se/articles/2017/02/facts-about-migration-and-crime-in-sweden/

\textsuperscript{36} http://www.dw.com/en/bka-2016-crime-rates-show-germany-continues-to-be-dangerous-for-refugees/a-37394946
so be the majority in Sweden, government figures confirm that there are 140,000 Muslims in the country, about 1.5 percent of the total population.37

II. EXPLANATIONS FOR DRIVERS OF TRENDS

This section examines five explanations that have been put forward for regarding the electoral and public opinion trends summarized above. Political scientists usefully distinguish between two sets of explanations for the rise of right-wing populism: the demand side (why are particular groups of people being drawn further to the right?) and the supply side (what are right-wing populist politicians and parties doing to attract them?).

Demand side explanations

• The economic globalization theory
• The cultural backlash theory
• The consequences of other geopolitical and economic shocks

Supply side explanations

• The actions of parties and politicians on both right and left
• The role played by populist discourses and especially negative narratives

The Demand Side: Economic globalization theory

The thesis that globalization created ‘winners and losers’, and that the losers are flocking to the radical right

The mixed consequences of economic globalization. The mainstream media often suggests the rise of right-wing populism in Europe and North America results from decades of globalization, which has left workers lagging behind economically. In the immediate aftermath of the Brexit referendum, this was the first and most compelling explanation to emerge for British voters’ rejection of EU membership. It is also applied to the Trump “phenomenon”, and remains the default position of many commentators. Yet, the data suggests the economic consequences of globalization for workers in rich countries have been mixed. While free trade benefits citizens of rich countries through cheaper goods, blue collar workers face job losses and wage stagnation in industries rendered

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uncompetitive. In the U.S., the median income for full time male workers is lower in real, inflation adjusted dollars than it was 42 years ago. In Europe, the earnings stagnation among workers is only marginally better.\footnote{J.E. Stiglitz (2016) ‘Globalization and Its New Discontents’, Project Syndicate, 5 August 2016, \url{https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/globalization-new-discontents-by-joseph-e--stiglitz-2016-08}.}


\textit{The ‘winners’ of globalization}. People at the median of the global income distribution saw the biggest relative income gains – approximately 80 percent – during this period. Not only was growth high for those at the median, but also for individuals between the 40th and 60th percentiles. In all, these individuals represent nearly one-fifth of the world’s population. Who are these individuals? Nine out of ten of them are from emerging Asian economies, namely China and India, but also Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand. Similar to where they sit in the global distribution, these individuals are also situated around the middle of their country distributions. As such, they do not represent the extreme rich of their countries (those individuals are situated further to the right of the reclining ‘s’ curve since their incomes are higher). The other big winners of globalization are the world’s richest one percent, many of whom are citizens of the U.S. and the world’s other wealthiest countries.
Figure 15. Winners and losers of globalization

The ‘losers’ of globalization. In contrast to the global picture above, the world’s most developed economies saw earning stagnation among those around the middle of their country distributions. These individuals are largely situated around the sagging portion of the line in Figure 2, near the 80th percentile. The graph in Figure 3 plots the gross earnings of the richest ninth decile relative to the fifth decile (the median) of earners over time in a sample of 20 OECD countries in Europe, North America and beyond. As the chart shows, the average earnings of the richest ninth decile increased relative to the median worker in these countries between 1995 and 2014.

Figure 16. Decile ratios of gross earnings between decile 9 and decile 5 (average among 20 OECD countries)

Source: Authors’ calculation, OECD (2016)

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42 The countries are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Slovak Republic, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States. The graph is based on our own calculations from OECD data.
The negative impacts on labor. Some supporters of the globalization explanation suggest neoliberal economists and political leaders advocating liberalization failed to anticipate the negative consequences on lower income workers. Part of the problem was overreliance on an economic dogma that assumes perfect markets in which the wages of unskilled workers eventually even out through trade liberalization. In theory, dynamic industrialized economies move displaced workers into more technologically advanced jobs where they can compete in global markets. Yet, in the 20 plus years since China emerged as a global trader, such an adjustment among displaced American workers, for instance, has not occurred. In fact, wage declines in labor markets most exposed to Chinese competition are estimated to have cost workers $213 per adult per year. In terms of the number of jobs lost, a separate estimate suggests Chinese exports are responsible for nearly 2.4 million job losses in the U.S. between 1999 and 2011.

Social and political correlations. Commentators have not shied away from pronouncing on the political effects of globalization, especially in the wake of Brexit and the rise Trump. Here’s one example, from Matt O’Brien writing for The Washington Post: “Displaced workers felt like immigrants were taking jobs and benefits that should have been theirs. They were worried about losing the one thing — their national identity — the market couldn't take. And, a lot of times, they just didn't want to be around people who didn't look, sound, or worship like they did.” Variations on these arguments can be found in the mainstream media on both sides of the Atlantic, and it has not gone unnoticed that there is a reasonable fit between political developments and the shift to free market neoliberal policies that came to characterize the Washington Consensus and globalization as we know it. This coincidence in timing is cited in support of the theory that economic globalization is responsible for the political trends outlined in this paper.

Long-term change? Some commentators have speculated that this is part of longer-term patterns of change. Paul De Grauwe suggests that, “There is

something cyclical here [...] We must keep in mind that we have seen these dynamics before” – a reference to the economic and political upheavals that followed the end of the “golden age” of globalization in the early 20th century and culminated in two world wars.\(^\text{48}\) Paul Mason, in contrast, argues that the income inequality evident in the ‘elephant chart’ is just one of a number of signs that the end of capitalism is nigh.\(^\text{49}\) Variations on these speculative views can also be found in the literature.

**Challenges and refinements to the economic globalization theory**

*Why globalization may be a necessary but not sufficient condition for shifts to the radical right: the cultural backlash thesis and other demand-side explanations*

**The cultural backlash thesis.** The economic globalization theory has not gone unchallenged. In a recent paper based on extensive survey data from 31 European countries, Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris conclude that an “economic insecurity” perspective does not explain rising support for populist parties as consistently as their “cultural backlash thesis,” "in large part as a reaction against progressive cultural change” by the generation whose values were formed in first postwar decades.\(^\text{50}\) They note that economic inequality and cultural backlash theories are interconnected: “if structural changes in the workforce and social trends in globalized markets heighten economic insecurity, and if this, in turn, stimulates a negative backlash among traditionalists toward cultural shifts.”\(^\text{51}\) These two dynamics are an expanded economic globalization theory.

**Limitations of the economic globalization theory.** The globalization theory, however, does not explain many of the political developments at regional and country level, and differences between them. Milanovic himself is cautious when generalizing from global income distributions hence his assertion that “[t]he political implications of a global ‘elephant chart’ are being played out in national political spaces.”\(^\text{52}\) The results of the June 2016 Brexit referendum illustrated this, when a majority of the residents of Scotland and Northern Ireland voted in favor of remaining in the EU, despite having been impacted by globalization in much the same ways as other parts of the UK that voted to leave.


\(^{51}\) R.F. Inglehart and P. Norris (2016) op. cit., p. 3.

**The impact of other geopolitical and economic events.** Specific historical events that must also be considered in any fuller account include the following: (1) the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the subsequent break-up of the Soviet Union, and the trajectories of post-socialism in Eastern Europe; (2) the growth of economic migration into Europe, North America (especially from Mexico and Central America into the U.S.) and Australia, as well as labor migration within Europe as a consequence of the freedom of movement in the EU; (3) the refugee crisis in Europe that has been most recently fuelled by the impacts of the civil war in Syria and other regional conflicts and crises in the Middle East, Maghreb, and Sub-Saharan Africa; (4) the development of terrorism that claims its justification in fundamentalist interpretations of Islam, including 9/11 and the recent surge of terrorist attacks (2015-16) organized or inspired by the so-called Islamic State (Daesh) and its representatives; (5) the global economic recession that began in 2007-08; and (6) the Eurozone economic crisis that began in 2009.

**Pros and cons of demand side explanations.** Recent economic events appear to have had negative electoral impacts on incumbent parties across Europe. The main beneficiaries of this crisis have been parties of the populist radical right, and to a lesser extent the radical left. The populist right has also made much of the current refugee crisis and the recent surge of terrorism in Western Europe. This combination of factors may help to account for the electoral success of populist radical right parties in recent national elections that is evident in Figure 1. Some of the political and economic events listed above can also been seen as direct or indirect consequences of economic globalization. Others can be readily appended to the economic globalization theory and a demand-side explanation for the political shift to the right. But this would still not answer the objection that globalization theory is “too rough an instrument” to explain the electoral successes of the radical right, because “there are many more losers of globalization than voters of PRRPs [populist radical right parties],” as well as significant variations in their success between countries which have experienced globalization in very similar ways.

**The supply side: parties and politicians**

*Explanations that focus on the actions (and in some cases inaction) of parties and politicians on the right and left*

**The influence of populist right parties.** Whatever combination of demand side factors is adduced, they can only be one half of a comprehensive explanation. As

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54 C. Mudde (2015) op. cit., p. 299.
Cas Mudde says with reference the globalization theory, “[i]t completely ignores the supply-side of politics, i.e. what established and populist radical right parties offer the voters and the political context in which they operate.” In his overview of European data, Mudde notes that between 1980 and 2014 only 21 of more than 300 governments have included a populist radical right party: their influence on government is therefore much more likely to be from outside of it. He considers their wider impact under four headings:

- **people**: their effect on public attitudes to immigration, integration, Euroscepticism, crime, and political dissatisfaction;
- **parties**: their ability to push other parties further to the right, especially mainstream right-wing parties;
- **policies**: their influence on the development of more authoritarian government policies on immigration and other issues; and
- **polities**: their influence on the political systems of Europe.

He concludes that evidence for the impact of populist right parties on public attitudes is equivocal, that a general drift of mainstream right-wing parties further to the right has been happening anyway, and that the increasing authoritarianism of government policies is another symptom of this. Their influence on European polities has been correspondingly minimal: although the systems of proportional representation that are widespread in Europe are believed to favor the rise of new parties, the radical right has not had much success in undermining liberal democracy even when it has tried.

**The role of right-wing demagogues.** This analysis could also be extended to another supply-side factor that features in political commentary and some of the academic literature: the role played by charismatic political leaders and demagogues in furthering populist right-wing agendas and influencing public opinion. A number of parties on the radical right were founded by or are clearly identified with politicians perceived to be charismatic by their supporters. But charisma is double-edged, and populist politicians may be hated in equal measure by their political opponents. Charismatic power itself can be as much

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a creation and instrument of popular discourse as a function of the intentions and rhetoric of its ostensible possessors. Some of the observations made about Donald Trump’s support in the de-industrialized communities of the U.S. are consistent with such an interpretation.

**Impacts on the mainstream right.** The above critique underplays the role of the populist radical right parties and politicians without explaining where the shift of people, parties and polities to the right might otherwise have come from. Recent events in the U.K. show that populist right parties can impact very directly on parties, policies and polities. It was fear of losing support (and MPs) to the U.K. Independence Party (UKIP) that pushed the center-right Conservative Prime Minister, David Cameron, into making the rash promise of a referendum on EU membership that he believed he wouldn’t have to follow through on. Following the Brexit vote and Cameron’s exit, his successor has appointed a number of prominent ‘vote leave’ campaigners to the cabinet, giving them the responsibility for negotiating Brexit – a change in the composition of the Conservative government that many interpret as a lurch to the right. In the immediate aftermath of the Brexit vote commentators also suggested that it threatened the breakup of both the U.K. (should Scotland leave) and the EU, and the subsequent actions of leading politicians in Great Britain and across Europe have been designed to ensure that this does not happen. At the same time, right-wing populist politicians in the EU have been active in forging links between their parties, and some have also been seeking to associate themselves with Trump – as have top Republican politicians, albeit reluctantly.

**Failures on the left as well as the right.** As well as considering parties and politicians on the radical right, the roles played by political actors across the political spectrum should be taken into account. Some commentators have criticized the left for its failure to stand up against globalization and its effects. According to Dani Rodrik, economists and technocrats on the left “abdicated too easily to market fundamentalism and bought in to its central tenets. Worse still,

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they led the hyper-globalization movement at crucial junctures.\textsuperscript{62} Other accusations have been more specific and personal. Following the Brexit vote, Jeremy Corbyn was castigated by colleagues for his lackluster campaigning and lukewarm support for the EU: the parliamentary Labour party is still in open revolt against him.\textsuperscript{63} In the immediate aftermath of the vote, David Cameron was blamed by politicians across the EU for promising a referendum in the first place, as a sop to the Eurosceptics in his own party. He accused them in turn for not granting more significant concessions to the U.K.

**Political disillusionment and polarization.** Political disputes such as these can be viewed as aspects of a trend that has already been noted: the increasing polarization of electoral politics that has seen social democratic parties in the center losing support to populist parties on both their left and right. Commentators sometimes characterize widespread disillusionment with politics-as-usual as ‘democracy fatigue.’ And that such fatigue is driving voters towards ‘anti-politics’ and radical politicians at either end of the political spectrum. Academics otherwise often explain the rise of left-wing populism as a reaction to the shift of many mainstream left-wing parties in Europe to the political center in the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century. Although this brought them electoral victories, it left many traditional left-wing constituencies feeling abandoned, especially in countries in which center-left governments were forced to implement unpopular EU anti-crisis economic policies. A similar backlash is just beginning in Latin America, in response to the de-radicalization of leftist governments’ discourse, and a series of corruption scandals involving prominent government representatives. This is best understood in the context of economic globalization and its differential effects.

**Comparative strength of the populist right.** In Europe the political space that had been occupied by the traditional left was in many cases readily colonized by the populist right, promising to defend the interests of the crisis-hit lower and lower middle classes against the economic and cultural impacts of globalization and other external shocks. The populist left is flourishing in some countries, but is struggling to compete with the populist right in most of Europe. One reason for this is that in many countries the radical left is having a hard time reinventing itself, offering policies and prescriptions from the past that are no longer seen as progressive but have long been discredited in the eyes of a large proportion of the electorate. The radical right, by contrast, can more readily offer disgruntled voters a return to the economic and cultural securities that they enjoyed in the past. Moreover, it has a longer list of contemporary scapegoats which it can blame for the problems that people face, as the next section will show.


\textsuperscript{63} ‘Labour MPs Pass No-Confidence Motion in Jeremy Corbyn’, BBC online, 28 June 2016, \url{http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-36647458}.
III. THE DISCOURSES OF RIGHT-WING POPULISM

The role played by negative narratives in fostering moral panic and increasing support for the radical right

Narratives of the populist right

A lot has been written about the discourses of right-wing populism. The presence of particular narratives and clichés are used to define both right- and left-wing populism, and to differentiate between them. Populist radical right parties are often identified as such by their shared use of a core set of narratives, though each party may give priority to different combinations of them and not necessarily employ them all. The emphasis they give to different narratives can also change over time, as parties and their policies evolve. The narratives themselves have also evolved: some are comparatively new, and reflect changing circumstances, others have much older genealogies. The following is a summary of the principal narratives that are currently in use by parties and politicians on the right:

- **anti-elitism narratives.** These are a feature of populism on both the left and right, and are the flip-side of the populist axiom that politics should express the will of the people rather than the partisan interests and machinations of the ruling political class and the establishment behind them. Economic and social shortcomings are typically blamed on central government and associated elites (e.g. Westminster, Brussels, Washington): hence the wide appeal of Boris Johnson’s “Take Back Control” message in the U.K. referendum. A similar mistrust of authority may also extend to ‘experts’ and other purveyors of official knowledge, as it did during the same campaign. Anti-intellectualism has also been noted elsewhere as a characteristic of right-wing populism, as has cultural conservatism and antipathy to political correctness. In the

64 See for examples the chapters in R. Wodak et al. (eds.) (2013), op. cit., which is subtitled ‘Politics and Discourse’.
69 J. Abromeit et al. (2015) op. cit., p. xvi.
U.S. presidential election misogyny also raised its ugly head, and LGBT rights have likewise been attacked by the alt-right and Trump administration.

- **anti-globalization narratives.** These are also used on both the left and right, and can be linked to the previous category of narratives. On the left they are often embedded in broader anti-capitalist narratives. Euroscepticism in the U.K. and elsewhere in Europe marries both anti-elite and anti-globalization narratives, and is attractive to some on the left as well as the right. The anti-globalization narrative of the populist right in the U.S. is woven together with anti-immigration narratives. It is also imbued with nationalism, as are other narratives that are anti-internationalist. The slogan of the Trump campaign, “Make America Great Again!” is a potent expression of these sentiments, calculated to resonate with many different constituencies.

- **anti-immigration and anti-refugee narratives.** These narratives are much discussed in the literature, as are the xenophobia and racism that more often than not lie behind them. Anti-immigration played a central role in the Trump campaign, and there is ample evidence to show that some of his supporters elide their dislike for illegal immigrants from the south with racist attitudes and a continuing discrimination of African-Americans. In the U.K. referendum, some Brexit campaigners deliberately conflated economic migrants and asylum seekers, a distinction that is frequently muddled in the media and the minds of members of the public. These negative attitudes are further compounded by widespread Islamophobia and the deployment of anti-Islamic narratives by the radical right when talking about the refugee crisis in Europe and the terrorist acts on different continents carried out by extremists affiliated to or inspired by Islamic State (Daesh) and other radical groups.70

### The Relevance of Narratives

**The power of narratives.** The above is not a complete list: other narratives and sub-narratives might be added, their characterization revised, and their clustering and implicit hierarchy reshuffled. The importance of such narratives and the values they express cannot, however, be overstated. They are clearly reflected in

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the cultural attitudes highlighted in the cultural backlash thesis, and go a long way toward explaining Inglehart and Norris’ results.71 Some narratives are shared by populist discourses on both the left and right, and are not as obviously negative from a human rights perspective as others. It can be argued that the allure of right-wing populism resides in the combination of the seemingly reasonable with the radical, the promise of a quick fix for political, economic, and social problems that are experienced more widely.

**The politics of blame.** All of these narratives, both benign and toxic, can be readily mapped onto oppositions of ‘us and them’, and translated into a politics of difference and blame. This is exactly what happens when they are combined in the discourses of the radical right and their supporters. It also helps to explain their appeal to people’s emotions, and why populist right-wing politicians so often use language which plays upon these. Discourses of discrimination and exclusion have a deep history and resonance, as do some of the negative values and narrative frames listed above. Of the many approaches to their study by social psychologists and others that might be cited here, sociological theories of ‘moral panic’ are among the most relevant to understanding contemporary developments, with their focus on the role of officialdom and the media in generating ‘folk devils’ or scapegoats that become the subject of public fear and opprobrium.72 There are indeed a number of published studies that deal with specific racist and other narratives that are related to those listed above.73

**Narratives and ‘invisible power’.** The historical depth of some of these negative narratives indicates that they have long been embedded in popular discourse, and cannot all be blamed on media manipulation by the current crop of right-wing populists. Others, however, are clearly linked to recent events, and their development can be traced in contemporary media reports. The 24-hour news cycle and the right-wing domination of print media in some countries have evidently been factors in accelerating the propagation of negative narratives and have probably also facilitated their bundling together. These processes are not necessarily dependent on the intervention of radical right parties and politicians, but help explain how public attitudes evolve in both the long and short term, and can impact on parties and politicians in turn. The ‘invisible power’ that is manifested in people’s ideas and beliefs has no single source, and cannot be

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71 See the list of variables used in their multivariate analysis: R.F. Inglehart and P. Norris (2016) op. cit., pp. 45-46.


accounted for just by the exercise of ‘visible’ and ‘hidden power’ by politicians, charismatic or otherwise.\textsuperscript{74}

\textbf{Measuring the effects of political narratives.} Our examination of populist narratives shifts analysis away from the discussion of parties and politicians that has dominated media commentary and the academic literature. Political narratives are not necessarily bound to particular parties and constituencies, but can have much more general effects. Importantly, some of these effects can be measured. The European Agency for Fundamental Rights and Europol, for example, both monitor racist and xenophobic attacks in EU States,\textsuperscript{75} while a number of other agencies conduct surveys and opinion polls on a range of related behaviors and attitudes, including perceptions of Muslims, refugees, and other issues of concern.\textsuperscript{76} The resulting data are a potentially rich resource for analyzing social and cultural trends and their connection to the political and economic trends discussed here.

\textbf{The increase in negative narratives and impacts.} What is both interesting and worrying is that the data indicate that ideas typical of populist right narratives (such as fear of the refugees, racism, and Islamophobia) are beginning to be accepted by the majority of the population in many western democracies. They are currently accepted by many more people than vote for the populist right. At the same time, in the last couple of years, an upsurge in racist and xenophobic incidents was noted in many EU member states, fuelled by fears over the migration situation and a spate of terrorist attacks.\textsuperscript{77} While the electoral results of the populist right have been mixed, we should wait to see whether the results of these public opinion surveys are reflected in future elections. 2015 and 2016 were disruptive years (the wave of refugees, terrorist attacks, BREXIT), and that is what these surveys are telling us. How will that translate into electoral choice?

\textbf{Other political contexts.} Political narratives of the kind outlined here are not confined to polities in which the labels ‘left’ and ‘right’ are in everyday use. They cross political boundaries and can be found in many different parts of the world, regardless of political systems and the various levels of national and local governance. In this regard they are of global relevance to the work of organizations like Oxfam, a point which will be picked up in the final part of this paper.


\textsuperscript{76} See, for example, the work of the Pew Research Center on perceptions of Muslims in Europe, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/19/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/; and data on European citizens’ concerns collected for the EU’s Standard Eurobarometer 85 survey: http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2130_85_2_STD85_ENG.

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT NGOS

The trends analysis raises several concerns for rights-based organizations, Oxfam included.

Considerations arising from analysis

*Dealing with the consequences of globalization.* The economic globalization theory, modified or otherwise, is going to be an important part of any explanation for the shift to the right, at least on the demand side. Addressing inequality is clearly central to tackling critical impacts of globalization. There is scope for greater emphasis on the interconnections between different factors at global, regional, and national scales. Questions for reflection include: Do the political, economic and cultural trends warrant further attention at global level? Should organizations focusing on the global south place additional emphasis on programs in Europe and North America? Should they invest more in exploring and supporting alternatives to neoliberalization and alternative models of globalization? Should current economic empowerment activities be reassessed to determine whether they challenge existing globalization trends or uncritically draw people living in poverty into neoliberal economic activity?

*Dealing with other demand side drivers of right wing populism.* Other factors such as the refugee crisis and terrorism exacerbate the impacts of globalization in Europe, North America, and Australasia. Organizations like Oxfam are already working on the drivers and consequences of some of these problems, for example humanitarian response in Syria, and work on climate change and conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa. Should they assess whether the current balance of efforts offers the best option for addressing the causes and consequences of right-wing populism? Would an emphasis on the interconnections between separate campaigns and programs offer a more strategic response to the larger crisis of globalization?

*Dealing with the visible and hidden power of the right.* Analysis on the supply side typically focuses on political systems, parties, and politicians. International NGOs like Oxfam with affiliates and country offices across the world cannot address some political matters directly, but do work on more general issues of governance, for example in fragile states. Should they have a sharper approach to power analysis? To what extent should rights-based organizations align themselves with the values and arguments of left-wing populists? Is this implicit in the ambition of some large NGOs to be social movements?

*Dealing with the invisible power expressed in negative narratives.* The dissemination and in sometimes emotional appeal of negative (and some
equivocal) narratives helps to explain shifts in people's attitudes and (not just voting) behavior. It also offers a frame of analysis and action that has much wider global relevance than the left-right dichotomy. What are the implications of this for development organizations? Do their programs pay enough attention to this kind of invisible power? Should they shift more attention to exposing and challenging 'invisible power' and entrenched attitudes and behaviors? Does their experience in areas such as women’s empowerment and in analyzing and tackling visible and hidden power, provide a foundation for this shift? What implications does this analysis have for the ways in which they address issues, how they speak in public, change beliefs and behavior? What lessons can they learn about the ways in which they frame counter-narratives, alternative visions, use research and evidence (including “killer facts”)?

**Key issues for international NGOs**

The following builds upon the questions asked above and the experience of organizations like Oxfam.

**Overall positioning**

**Collective action**: Given growing political nationalism and the evident challenge to internationalism, is it time for NGOs to come out in support of collective action versus individual nation-state approaches in order to address global challenges such as migration/displacement, climate change, and tax justice? Our analysis suggests that the answer should be a qualified ‘yes’, providing organizations continue to work at national and other levels, given that the causes and consequences of economic globalization and other drivers of right-wing populism operate at different scales. One challenge in this context is whether or not – and if so how, and how explicitly – organizations should align with the values of left-wing populism. There are obvious political risks, as well as that of adopting similar campaign strategies, such as anti-elite narratives. Two considerations here for collective action are: (1) examining campaigners’ own use of the politics of blame, and (2) focusing more on developing positive visions for the future, including alternative economic and social paradigms.

**Civil society space and the role of evidence**: The politics and discourses of right-wing populism threaten not only the funding and support given to organizations like Oxfam, but also civil society space and their freedom to speak out on behalf of vulnerable people – including refugees and other minority groups – whose own rights are under attack. The character and tone of populist discourses on the right – the politics of ‘post-truth’ with its blatant disregard for evidential standards, and the widespread distrust of ‘experts’ and their knowledge – pose a further challenge to the ethos of many rights-based organizations and their use of well-researched evidence to support their public positions, campaigns, and other programs. The new political environment and
responses to it effectively provide a litmus test of whether NGOs are prepared to speak up for those they seek to support and represent. In the face of this and other challenges, they should stand firm and work together with their partners in different sectors (government, private, voluntary) to defend civil society space in different arenas and disseminate the values that they share and believe essential to achieving their common mission. How they do this, whether openly and aggressively or otherwise, must depend on the context and their own knowledge and (power) analysis of it.

**Programs**

**Domestic programs:** Our analysis underlines the importance of domestic programs, as well as the importance of connecting them together (see below). It suggests that international NGOs based in western democracies should consider increasing investment in domestic programs, with, at the very least, a focus on strategic research and campaigning linked to the questions discussed in this paper. During our research we found that in-country research on these issues was not always available.

**Global and multi-country programs:** The global and cross-regional causes and consequences of current political events suggest a need to develop global and multi-country programs to tackle them. This should also include work in those countries with quite different political cultures, but that share discourses similar to the negative narratives outlined in this paper. It might include (1) further investigation and action on those causes and consequences (e.g. on the root causes of migration, migrant flows, their impacts, and the appropriate program responses, including coordination), linking and coordinating relevant stakeholders in different countries and regions; (2) a global communication and public engagement strategy which has a single narrative that is adaptable to different audiences (e.g. considering how to talk about migration and refugee issues to decision makers, while also addressing broader public opinion, and especially the ‘losers’ of globalization; and (3) building global, regional and multi-country CSO alliances around shared approaches to the causes and consequences of globalization, promoting common global responses while working on the same issues in different countries through local CSOs.

**Advocacy, campaigning and public engagement**

**Where and what should organizations campaign on?** Our analysis emphasizes the interconnectedness of political, economic, social and cultural change at global, regional and other scales. Some of the implications of this have already been outlined above. This suggests that there is both a need and opportunity for some of the most important campaigns, development programs, and humanitarian responses to be forced from their silos and brought closer
together. As well as working in more joined-up ways and exploring new initiatives and synergies within and between existing campaigns, NGOs should perhaps also consider more radical changes, including the development of new campaigns and/or combinations of them. Some further reflections along these lines follow.

**Globalization and the inequality narrative:** Campaigns against inequality are already tackling some of the key impacts of globalization, and organizations should redouble their efforts in this regard. Oxfam’s campaign, for example, engages with public responses to some of the drivers of inequality, for example corporate tax avoidance. People whose incomes are squeezed, and who are worrying about healthcare, education, and the future of their children, feel the unfairness of tax avoidance even more acutely in times of austerity. At the same time it should also be recognized that the ‘losers’ of globalization in rich countries and disenfranchised migrants from elsewhere may be victims of the same global phenomenon. Against the negative impacts of globalization, there is a need for global action. International NGOs are in a position to promote global alliances that respond to problems at this scale. Important lessons can be learned from the experiences of organizations like Oxfam, in order to design initiatives and promote engagement with global mandates. There are no doubt other opportunities for NGOs to sharpen their narratives around inequality, in order to connect more effectively with their supporters and wider audiences, including partners in government and the private sector.

**Migration and global displacement:** There is a tangible fear and opposition to immigration across Europe. Getting the balance right between campaigning and public messaging focused on refugees, especially those fleeing conflict, and wider migration issues is difficult. Hardening of political and public attitudes and responses across the EU is likely to make the environment around displacement issues very challenging for a long while to come. Some kinds of campaigning on these issues may make NGOs look ‘elitist’ and out of touch with the concerns of economically squeezed communities. Growing differences in public opinion between and within countries suggest the need for more nuanced and locally relevant ways to engage diverse audiences rather than a global, one-size-fits-all approach. Understanding different attitudes to migration and the narratives

78 National trade unions, for example, instead of being protectionist, might be better served by building global alliances based on global common minimal standards (relating to wages, labor rights, and so on). The trend today is the opposite, driving wages down and disregarding rights.

around this is essential. In some contexts it may be appropriate to build strong evidence-based counter-narratives to tackle the negative narratives about migration and its economic and social impacts that are fostered by the populist right. There is also a need to de-associate migration and refugees from terrorism, perhaps in partnership with national and other organizations that are already working on these issues and striving to shift the terms of debate. Similar work might also be considered in the U.S. and other countries, possibly as part of global campaigns on migration and refugees (see above).

**How should organizations campaign?** Our analysis highlighted the negative narratives that are appealing to growing numbers of people, and in some cases have become embedded in public opinion. Using well-researched evidence to debunk the myths and assumptions that underlie such narratives must be a priority if rights-based organizations are to develop their work on issues like migration. More generally they need to up their game when challenging ‘invisible power’ and entrenched attitudes and behaviors, building on the experience that they have in some areas (such as women’s empowerment), and combining this effectively with their skills in analyzing and tackling visible and hidden power. In addition to developing counter-narratives underpinned by robust data and evidence, NGOs should also explore the parallel use of non-adversarial strategies that are propositional and embody positive visions, like those represented in work on alternative economic paradigms. In order to change beliefs and behavior, it is also important that these and other narratives are communicated smartly to different audiences, for example by making more effective use of social media. This means working proactively with different communities, including Muslims and other minority groups in parts of Europe and North America which some international NGOs have not traditionally worked in. Targeting young people is particularly important, not only because they are more likely to share the values of rights-based organizations, but because they represent the future.

**How should organizations talk about politics?** We have already noted that a focus on discourse and narratives provides a frame for analysis and action that has much wider global relevance than the politics and language of left and right. As well as touching on the core of the widespread discontent that is fuelling the rise of populism at both ends of the political spectrum in the west, it also provides a way to approach and talk about important political issues in the many contexts in which it is impolitic to do so directly. Given the sensitivity of some of these issues and the different threats to civil society space, it is important that NGO messaging is framed and nuanced in the different countries and other contexts in which they work. Careful consideration should be given to the language (including metaphors and visual images) that are used, working closely with local communities and constituencies to develop appropriate messaging as well as the broader narratives discussed above.
The future

In practice different organizations will respond differently to the challenges outlined above. It is important, however, that international NGOs continue to work together and build on their collective strength, in alliance with their publics and other constituencies sympathetic to their mission. The future trajectories of right-wing populism are impossible to predict, but the threat that it poses to international development is clear enough.
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