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DOES ECONOMIC REDISTRIBUTION AFFECT VOTING FOR POPULIST RADICAL  
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CONOR CRAIG  
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DOES ECONOMIC REDISTRIBUTION AFFECT VOTING FOR POPULIST RADICAL  
RIGHT PARTIES IN EUROPE?

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BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

Dr. Michael Givel, Chair

Dr. Natalite Lesta

Dr. Amiee L. Franklin

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## Abstract

This thesis adds to our understanding of what contributes to populist radical right voting by looking at the role of redistribution in relation to populist radical right voting. Additionally, the empirical testing in this thesis utilized European regional level data to examine a closer connection between redistribution and voting data. To investigate this relationship, first the threat posed to liberal democracy by the populist radical right is examined and suggested as a reason to lower populist radical right voting. Classifications of the populist radical right are then considered, particularly clarifying how this party family differs from fascism. Arguments regarding the growth of the populist radical right are presented. These are categorized into cultural and economic arguments. The former considering identity and racism, as well as a clash of values between generations; while the latter considers economic insecurity, precarity of work, inequality, and social mobility as reasons for populist radical right growth. Ultimately though the section concludes that these reasons often do not need to be mutually exclusive.

The methodology to examine the relationship between populist radical right voting and redistribution is provided. OLS regressions were used with voting as the dependent variable and redistribution as the prime independent variable. Redistribution is measured by subtracting the post-tax and transfers Gini coefficient of a region from the pre-taxes and transfers coefficient from that region. The main finding of this testing is that redistribution appears to have no effect on populist radical right voting, but poverty has a positive, statistically significant relationship with it. Accordingly, a discussion of the connection between poverty and populist radical right voting is offered, as well as a consideration of whether inequality should be considered unimportant on populist radical right voting since redistribution is. This latter discussion is left as an open question with a call for more research into the psychological impacts of redistribution.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

For many, the realization of a global rise of the far-right was solidified with the election of Donald Trump, and the success of the Brexit campaign. Accordingly, scholarship concerning the far-right has proliferated since then. (Art. 2022) Miller-Idriss discusses how the term “far-right” can represent a multitude of different psychological or political orientations. For instance, she notes that white supremacy, male supremacy, anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and anti-Semitic ideologies, anti-government extremism, militias, involuntary celibates and more can all be considered part of the far-right. (Miller-Idriss. 2021) While there are some clear connections between these groups, such as the rejection of out-groups or illiberal / anti-democratic beliefs (discussed below), using such an inclusive definition has the obvious potential downside of imprecision.

Mudde offers additional clarity by separating the far-right into two groups; the extreme right and the radical right. The dividing line between the two is their acceptance of democracy. Mudde writes that the extreme right rejects democracy altogether (opposing majority rule) while the radical right “opposes fundamental elements of *liberal* democracy, most notably minority rights, rule of law, and separation of powers”. (Mudde. 2019. P. 7. Emphasis in original) Mudde also comments that, while both groups hold anti-political system beliefs, the “extreme right is revolutionary, [while] the radical right is more reformist”. (Mudde. 2019. P. 7)

In addition to the radical right’s rejection of liberal democracy, Mudde also defines this group as nativist and authoritarian. Nativism is the mixture of nationalism and xenophobia and Mudde notes that, among radical right parties, this belief frequently plays out as a call for ethnopluralism. (Mudde. 2019) Ethnopluralism is the concept of dividing societies into separate and homogeneous ethnicities. (Mudde. 2019) Some have defined this concept as a separate but equal relationship among ethnicities (Rydgern. 2008) (Betz and Johnson. 2004), but this is hotly contested as others have argued this is clearly based on racism and White supremacy. (Taylor. 2019) (Taguieff. 2001) This debate is discussed more in chapter 4. Ultimately though, Mudde notes that ethnocracy (a democracy based on one ethnic group) is the goal of the radical right. (Mudde. 2019)

Regarding authoritarianism, Mudde offers a slightly different definition of it when defining the radical right. Here, he uses authoritarianism to denote “the belief in a strictly

ordered society, in which infringements on authority are to be punished severely”. (Mudde. 2019. P. 29) Within the definition, an inability to express dissent against laws and authority is present (infringements are punished severely), but it lacks an anti-democratic component that exists in some other definitions. For instance, one of the definitions from Merriam Webster highlights the concentration of power within authoritarian regimes, (Merriam Webster) and the Oxford Reference (provided by Oxford University Press) highlights the ability to repress political opposition. (Allison) (Mudde. 2019)

This may seem at odds with some actions associated with the radical right; for instance, the 2021 January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection at the U.S. capital; but MacWilliams provides a justification here by noting that the authority for authoritarians often resides outside of institutional authority, and instead revolves around an authority that is given higher value. This can be otherworldly (for instance, the authority of God), based on a concept (the defense of democracy; which was important in the insurrection) or written in text; here MacWilliams cites the constitution as one such example. (MacWilliam. 2016) So, while the insurrection itself is an anti-democratic action, under the belief that democracy has been attacked, corrupted, or “stolen”, this could be viewed as a defense of democracy for the insurrectionists that did believe in democracy. This belief in defense is clearly the case for some as a recent poll found that 52% of Republicans believe the insurrection was to protect democracy. (Shepherd. 2022) Ultimately though, authoritarianism should be considered a spectrum (Allison) with Mudde highlighting that the populist radical right falls within a democratic oriented part of the spectrum, but still with a strong orientation toward law and order.

Finally, Mudde notes that the vast majority of current radical right parties are populist. Again, drawing from Mudde’s definitions, populism is defined as two homogenous and antagonistic groups, the pure people versus the corrupt elite, and that the will of the pure people should be enacted into law. (Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017) This populist orientation helps to create in and out-groups where either benefits or punishment can be directed.

Narrowing this group even more, the focus of this thesis is on understanding factors that have led to the increased electoral success of European radical right populist parties (for instance, between the 1960’s and early 2010’s the populist radical right vote share increased by 8.1%) (Inglehart and Norris. 2016). Specifically, since economic inequality, insecurity, and



precarity have been argued to contribute to populist radical right voting, the guiding research question for this thesis is whether economic redistribution, specifically income redistribution, has the reverse effect by lowering populist radical right voting?

Additionally, since countries who had high levels of redistribution (even relative to European levels) also have populist radical right parties of varying success, it is hypothesized that income redistribution will be unimpactful on populist radical right voting. For instance, from the early 1980's to the early 2000's Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Poland all had high levels of redistribution (Immervoll and Richardson. 2011) and all had populist radical right parties (Sweden Democrats, Danish People's Party, Finn's Party and Law and Justice respectively). More recent data, from 2014, also found that countries with high levels of redistribution have had successful populist radical right parties. In this case, Finland, Belgium, Denmark, Austria and France all rank within the top 8 of redistribution within European countries and, again, all have had populist radical right parties; (Causa et al. 2019) some even highly successful such as the True Finns, Freedom of Austria Party, and France's National Front. Finally, data from 2018 indicates the same lack of effect from redistribution with Finland, France and Belgium all having high levels of redistribution as well as variously successful populist radical right parties. (Kuypers et al. 2021)

The testing is conducted using OLS regressions of regional European data of the populist radical right vote percentage and the difference between the pre and post-taxes and transfers Gini coefficients to get just the redistribution within that region. This same methodology to determine redistribution was used by Bozio et al. when considering the differing impacts of redistribution on inequality between the U.S. and France. (Bozio et al. 2020) Other independent variables include tertiary education, immigration and poverty. Additionally, a number of control variables are used to specify the relationship between populist radical right voting and redistribution as well.

Europe was chosen as the focus of this paper both because of the success of populist radical right parties across the region (Norris and Inglehart. 2019), and due to a spatially and temporally limited redistribution dataset to match voting data to. Redistribution data was unfortunately only available for a single year for each region (limitations of this are addressed in Chapter 5) but the effects of redistribution can still be ascertained for the given election of the

specific year of each region (election year per region in Appendix 1) due to the number of observations, and the variation of redistribution and populist radical right voting across regions. Understanding the effects of redistributions on populist radical right electoral outcomes holds obvious policy implications for the welfare state regarding rolling back the populist radical right wave.

To build our understanding of electoral populist radical right success, this thesis will engage with why we should study the populist radical right through an examination of the threat of democratic backsliding posed by the populist radical right and their use of conspiracy theories (Chapter 2), build a further understanding of the classification of the populist radical right party family (Chapter 3), consider arguments regarding the growing success of the populist radical right (Chapter 4), discuss the methodology of this thesis and the results of the OLS tests (Chapter 5), and finally close with a discussion of implications from the results as well as concluding remarks (Chapter 6). Ultimately, this study contributes to the political economy understanding of the populist radical right rise by investigating whether redistribution is impactful in the electoral success of the populist radical right.

## **Chapter 2: Democratic Backsliding and the Promotion of Conspiracy Theories**

This chapter examines why the populist radical right deserves attention. Not only has the populist radical right done increasingly well throughout Europe (which is reason enough to understand this shift in popularity), but they also represent a threat to liberal democracy by deteriorating equality among individuals, as well as threaten the cohesion of society through their use of conspiracy theories. The chapter will look at the electoral success that the populist radical right has had throughout Europe, examine the threat to liberal democracy by the populist radical right with a discussion on post-liberalism generally, examine the use of conspiracy theories, and concluding with a discussion of how the populist radical right has become increasingly mainstream.

As stated, the populist radical right has proliferated throughout Europe. Norris and Inglehart have noted that, since the 1960s to the early 2010s, the European populist radical right vote share more than doubled, from 5.1% to 13.2%. (Inglehart and Norris. 2016) Countries like Poland, Sweden, Finland, Italy, France, Germany and many more have all seen increases in populist radical right voting in their countries. Poland and Hungary are particularly stark

examples due to the populist radical right claiming a parliamentary majority, and thus the prime minister position, over a prolonged period in both of these countries. The Hungarian populist radical right party, Fidesz, dominated by Viktor Orban has been in power since 2010 and the Polish populist radical right party, Law and Justice (PiS), has claimed an outright majority since 2015. (Thorpe. 2021) (Henley and Davies. 2019) Italy has recently joined this group of countries dominated by the populist radical right as well. In their 2022 general election, the center-right coalition, which holds two populist radical right parties (Brothers of Italy and Lega Nord), won a majority. Additionally, one of these parties, Brothers of Italy, leads the coalition having won 26% of the vote. (Giuffrida. 2022) Due to the use of the PopuList 2.0 to categorize parties (which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5) which does categorize the Brothers of Italy as a populist radical right party, this thesis views the Brothers of Italy as a populist radical right party but it should be noted other have argued that this is a neo-fascist party. For instance, Lazaridis and Campani refer to Brothers of Italy as a parliamentary oriented neo-fascist party. (Lazaridis and Campani. 2017)

Austria and Finland have also had populist radical right leadership in the past in the form of junior coalition members. The Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) was a junior partner of the coalition governments from 2000 – 2005 and from 2017 – 2019. The True Finns (PS) were also a junior partner through 2015 – 2017 and, having won second place in the 2023 election, are currently in talks to form a new coalitional government, possibly becoming a junior partner again. (Camut. 2023) Also recently, due to winning second place in the 2022 election, the Swedish Democrats were able to negotiate a role to coordination government policy in exchange for their legislative support in the Riksdag (the Swedish parliament). (Ritter. 2022)

During this same period of the populist radical right rise, two democratic indices, Freedom House and V-Dem, have commented on the global democratic recession currently occurring. Freedom House notes that democracy has been in decline for 17 years (noting this is the lowest point for democracy since the start of the *Nations in Transit* publication) (Csaky. 2021), while V-Dem writes that “advances in global levels of democracy made over the last 35 years have been wiped out”, (Evie. 2023. P. 6) and that the level of democracy for the average citizen is at 1986 levels. (Evie. 2023)

While the vast majority of European countries are still coded as liberal democracies, the ability of consolidated democracies to experience democratic backsliding due to populist radical right parties has become a much greater concern. (Evie. 2023) For instance, between 2013 – 2021, the United States dropped 10 points on Freedom House’s 100-point democracy scale. (Freedom House) Journalists have raised concerns about the same possibility in European countries as populist radical right parties gain more electoral support. (Wolf. 2022) (Ashby. 2021)

Bichay captures the specific concerns arising from the populist radical right party family well. He comments that democratic loss can occur from these parties either through reduced institutional constraints on power, or restricting civil liberties. (Bichay. 2022) Wilkin and Bichay each note that prime minister Viktor Orban of Hungary has demonstrated both of these illiberal democratic trends. Through control of the Fidesz party, Orban has altered the constitution to consolidate power in Hungary, as well as reduced civil liberties such as freedom of speech and association (Bichay. 2022). Additionally, Väliverronen and Saikkonen have pointed out the decree by Orban to ban gender studies at all universities is another example of a reduction of liberty in the country. (Väliverronen and Saikkonen. 2021) Orban has clearly accepted this shift away from liberalism, now even referring to Hungary as an “illiberal democracy” (Wilkin. 2018) (Bichay. 2022), which scholars such as Francis Fukuyama have suggested cannot truly exist. (i.e. there is no true democracy without liberty). (democracyparadoxblog. 2023)

Mudde has also commented generally on this trend; writing that populist radical right parties gain power in liberal democracies and then push society to become increasingly illiberal. (Mudde. 2019) While Bichay certainly seems to agree with this point, he does find interesting evidence from Europe that the reduction of both institutional constraints and civil liberties from populist radical right parties only occurs when the populist radical right has taken a majority in government, and thus the prime minister position. When they are junior coalition partners though, which he notes is more often the case, Bichay finds that the populist radical right are only able to restrict civil liberties. (Bichay. 2022) Using Pappas definition of civil liberties—equal protection under the law for everyone, and protection of minority rights—and V-Dem data, Bichay finds that, on average, when populist radical right parties are junior partners in the

governing coalition, freedom of expression and religion, access to justice, and equal liberties for out-groups all decrease. (Bichay. 2022)

Bichay offers a few examples of the reduction in civil liberties as well. He highlights specifically the loss of rights for immigrants and asylum seekers, noting this often manifests as Islamophobia. Here he cites multiple populist radical right parties as participating in this Islamophobia; for instance, the Party of Freedom in the Netherlands, the Alternative for Germany in Germany, and Lega Nord in Italy. Two specific examples are the Norwegian Progress Party, who campaigned on banning burqas, entered power and created a Ministry of Immigration and Integration and pushed “through tougher restrictions to immigration, asylum and social benefit”. (Bichay. 2022. P. 4) And, while the Austrian BZO controlled the Ministry of Justice, they changed asylum laws, “easing the deportation process, legalizing force-feeding, and easing the procedure of criminally prosecuting lawyers and NGOs who aimed to help asylum seekers”. (Bichay. 2022 P. 2)

Populist radical right parties also reduce civil liberties by shifting either mainstream parties, or society as a whole, away from specific liberties. For instance, Bichay notes that as the Alternative for Germany rose in popularity, the mainstream German parties became increasingly conservative on immigration. (Bichay. 2022) And Väliverronen and Saikkonen demonstrate that in Finland while the True Finns were part of the coalition government, experts in fields such as immigration, multiculturalism, and gender studies reported through surveys significantly more hostile responses from the public when they spoke about these issues or referenced their own research. (Väliverronen and Saikkonen. 2021)

## 2.1. Liberalism and Democracy

Since much of the democratic concern connected to the radical right is regarding an attack on liberalism, the relationship between liberalism and democracy should be understood. Marc Plattner provides succinct definitions for each component; democracy and liberalism. Democracy is rule by the people. He argues that due to the size of modern society, direct democracy has been “rendered impossible”, thus democracy now is equated to the free and fair elections of public officials. This is the majoritarian principle within liberal democracy. That the collective voice of the majority should be enacted into law. (Plattner. 1998) But liberalism provides a bulwark to prevent majoritarian tyranny. Plattner writes that liberalism refers to not

who has power, but how power is exercised. For instance, liberalism limits power through the equally applied rule of law, through fundamental or constitutional law, and through inalienable human rights. (Plattner. 1998) Examples of restrictions on the exercise of power include freedom of speech, expression, assembly, religion, etc.

While liberalism does offer protections from tyrannical majoritarianism, Sheri Berman writes that liberalism also needs democracy to prevent its own problems of allowing power to become concentrated. Berman uses the examples of early U.S. history and Britain after 1688, which both had a degree of liberalism but restricted democracy. She notes that in these cases liberalism led to oligarchies and plutocracies. (Berman. 2017) Berman is making the important point that the right to person and property can still leave an individual largely powerless if they are unable to actually acquire and use that property. Berman also puts these concepts in modern terms noting that a call for excessive liberalism can take a technocratic form, while a call for excessive democracy can take a populist form. Further, as either technocracy or populism become too dominant, the collective mood can shift to the other extreme. In this sense, Berman is suggesting that a balance between the two must be held. (Berman. 2017)

More than just acting as a counterweight though, Plattner argues that democracy and liberalism need each other to be fully realized. For instance, he notes that without freedom of speech, association and assembly, elections can hardly be argued to be truly fair and free; and since liberalism holds the principle of equality between people, it is only fully realized with the inclusion of democracy; that is, the equality of power. (Plattner. 1998)

## 2.2. Post-Liberalism and its Relation to the Populist Radical Right

There are proponents for this shift away from liberalism as well though; often referred to as post-liberals, or the movement generally as post-liberalism (Zerofsky. 2021). Patrick Deneen for instance has argued that liberalism has been a detriment to society. Roughly, Deneen defines liberalism as the continuous expansion of individual rights and argues that it breaks down social connections by creating excessive individualism. (Zerofsky. 2021) This is clear from a quote in his article *Moral Minority* where he writes “Over time, our political order would shape our culture, or more accurately, it would eliminate traditional culture in favor of a liberal anti-culture.” (Patrick Deneen. *Moral Minority*. 2017) He is making the case that, through liberal laws, our shared culture will break down to become incessantly about the individual. He sees this

as occurring due to the very logic of liberalism. That it will naturally separate society since its focus is on the individual over the collective group, or the relational aspect of human life. (Klein. 2022) To add credibility to his argument, he cites Charles Murry and Robert Putnam as both arguing that the social fabric (which he refers to as social norms and expectations within the *Moral Minority* article) has been eroding; as well as citing support from Tocqueville, stating that Tocqueville worried about the possibility of excessive individualism to occur due to complete liberalism. (Deneen. 2017)

For Deneen, it is clear that liberalism must be ushered out not just because of the loss of connection among citizens that occurs, but also due to a loss of morality as well since culture and morality are intimately connected. Culture is not just customs or traditions, but provides rules on how we ought to behave. This means that as liberalism destroys culture, creating individualistic anti-culture, it also destroys social morals as well, leaving the population to morally wander. (Klein. 2022)

In a speech given at the National Conservatism Conference, Deneen breaks down liberalism into component parts, economic liberalism and progressive liberalism. (Deneen. 2021) Economic liberalism is the ability to perform economic actions in accordance with individual perception, regardless of the social or societal good. As an example, Deneen notes that companies are able to offshore manufacturing without regard to national welfare; citing possible welfare implications as domestic job loss and strengthening a foreign country at the expense of the domestic country through greater productive capability. (Deneen. 2021) He comments that this complete individualism within the economy has allowed for the creation of a wide separation between rich and poor as there is no strong connection between the two to make sure resources are being used to uphold a common good. (Deneen. 2021)

For progressive liberalism, Deneen worries about perceived negative trends such as an increase in divorce, single parents, couples choosing to not have children and even separating from nature by “denying the fundamental, complementary and beautiful differences between men and women”. (Deneen.2021. 3:21 – 3:27) These are examples of both moral decay that occurs due to the loss of culture and of the logic of complete individualism (which includes gender identification) that occurs in liberalism. He adds to these social concerns a threat to the family unit itself. During an interview with Ezra Klein, he comments that the family unit has

been under attack and is increasingly viewed with suspicion or as a source of inequality and hierarchy. (Klein. 2022) This is troubling as he states that the family unit is part of the foundation of the necessary relational aspect that is increasing missing in society due to liberalism. This attack is, not surprisingly, also coming from liberalism. Deneen comments that the family is a final frontier for liberalism to conquer and shift society from having space for a relational aspect to becoming complete autonomous individuals. (Klein. 2022)

While Deneen highlights these separate components of liberalism, it should be understood that these pieces are intimately connected. That is, economic and progressive liberalism bleed into, and influence each other; creating either vicious or virtuous circles. “Aristotle understood that law and culture, like ethics and politics, must be mutually reinforcing”. (Deneen. Moral Minority. 2017) For this reason, one aspect of liberalism can’t be addressed without also addressing the other.

Currently though, Deneen appears to argue that economic liberalism has the upper hand. With the power and resources of big business, the economic sector can attack and eliminate local or state level culture. For instance, Deneen cites Indiana’s 2015 Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) as an example. (Deneen. 2021) The RFRA law had been argued by many to encourage discrimination against LBGTQ+ individuals by allowing for-profit businesses to discriminate based on religious preferences, and to be able to use religious expression as a justifiable reason within legal disputes. (Sato. 2015) Deneen argues that this law received such heavy backlash from large corporations (Deneen states that Amazon, Apple, and the NCAA among others threatened to boycott the state), that these firms could effectively determine local policy, thus manipulating local culture. (Deneen. 2021) While the law did pass and remains in effect, it was quickly revised to ban the type of discrimination listed above. While it could be argued that the potential boycott was ineffective since Mike Pence, then governor of Indiana, stated that the law was never supposed to allow discrimination, (Kaplan. 2015) why Deneen has this concern of the loss cultural power for localities due to the excessive power of large firms is still quite clear.

Hazoni adds to this post-liberal conversation through a reconsideration of the place for numeric minorities in society. Under liberalism (particularly due to the equality principle within liberalism referenced by Plattner), minority groups have as much right as the majority group to



public space. Since no individual, and thus no group, can claim to be above any other, the public space should be inviting and hold room for all individuals. Because of this, Hazony essentially argues that the current consensus is to have neutral or even sanitized public space. (Hazony. 2021) That is, public space that is not inherently oriented to any group or identity.

Hazony also see this as a major loss of culture and public values. He asserts that the public space must belong to the majority group. (Hazony. 2021) That is, if the majority is Christian, public space should reflect Christian traditions, customs, teaching, and values. Hazony takes this even further when discussing the formation of morality through the control of the public sphere by the majority. He advocates for the use of the state to support the majority's identity, including the passage of morality laws. (Hazony. 2021) Meaning this extends further than just Christian imagery in public spaces and includes laws constructed based on Christian values or ideas.

Hazony does comment that some liberal protections are needed to protect minority groups in the private sphere. For instance, within the private sphere, minority groups can determine their own choices such as choice of religion and whether to send their children to a religious school that conforms with that religion. Additionally, Hazony argues that freedom of speech must be protected, even against big business along the same lines as Deneen's argument above. (Hazony. 2021) But, even according to Hazony's own logic, these protections seem tenuous. Like Deneen, Hazony sees a strong connection between his two defined concepts relating to liberalism, public and private spheres, arguing that each influences the other. (Hazony. 2021) Accordingly, there seems to be a hole in the logic of public majority rule, but private identity protection. For instance, creating laws based on Christian morality may attack LGBTQ+ identities (again, evident in the Deneen example above), which can easily bleed over into discrimination in the private sphere; thus, resulting in a loss of ability to identify as one chooses, even in private. Other examples can easily be shown (for instance a return of anti-sodomy laws has a clear impact on private life), but the concern is fairly apparent without them; how will protections in private life be guaranteed without public liberalism?

Deneen on the other hand, makes interesting points due to the identification of the concentration of economic power and social separation as issues within society. But Deneen is not attacking the correct source of these issues when he includes things like divorce, chosen

childlessness and a perceived attack on families. This is pointed out by Ezra Klein during their interview as well; that these factors are likely not the true cause of social disconnection. Further, Klein points out that the attack on families is hard to find. (Klein. 2022)

It's fairly clear how these post-liberal viewpoints relate to the populist radical right parties examined in this thesis. There is a strong sense of a need for a shared, collective identity within both. With the populist radical right, this manifests as the nativism and ethnopluralism referenced by Mudde above, and particularly anti-immigrant policies. Many populist radical right parties have encouraged significantly reduced immigration in part due to a worry that immigrants will alter the national identity. (Bergmann. 2018) (Stockemer. et al. 2018)

Additionally, there are strong majoritarian aspects to both as well. Both see the public sphere as belonging to the dominate group. Deneen, is quite clear that he believes in regaining a shared identity and common set of values; even pushing for people to be more active in doing so. "To revive this possibility of a virtuous circle, certain authoritative acts will need to be taken, considered and advanced at the national as well as the state and local levels". (Deneen. 2021. 17:58) Related to the majoritarian aspect, there is a strong but nebulous notion of the "common good"; that actions need to be taken to advance the "common good". This conforms with the populist aspect of the populist radical right as well, who often argue to speak for the people. (Norris and Inglehart. 2019)

A final connection between post-liberalism and the populist radical right lies in why they choose to attack liberalism. Both ideologies see morality and a peaceful society strongly connected to how homogeneous a society is. This is clear in the post-liberal arguments presented above, but this idea should be connected to the ethnopluralism of the populist radical right as well. For instance, Rydgren notes that many populist radical right voters are motivated by the notion that multiculturalism is dangerous or deleterious to a society. (Rydgren. 2008) Due to these similarities, post-liberal should be considered part of the ideological backbone of the populist radical right.

### 2.3. Populist Radical Right Conspiracy Theories and Far-right Terrorism

Interestingly, a second way that radical right populist parties threaten democracy is through the use of and perpetuation of conspiracy theories. Bergmann provides a general definition of conspiracy theories.

“They [conspiracy theories] denounce official accounts of events and, instead, unite in a common quest of explaining incidents and a state of affairs as products of covert plots of evil elites who, in secret, are systematically working to advancing their own narrow and often personal interests while harming the innocent and generally unknowing ordinary public.” (Bergmann. 2018. P. 49)

Conspiracy theories can erode trust and connection throughout society and can lead to far-right terrorism. For instance, belief in the Great Replacement, also called White Replacement, (Garcia-Navarro and Belew. 2021) the claim that White people or White culture is being replaced by demographic change, globalization, immigration, or other means (ADL. 2023), was influential in the mass shootings at El Paso Texas, Christchurch New Zealand, and Utøya Norway. (ADL. 2023) This conspiracy theory has been tied to fascism (Stanley and Finchelstein. 2022) but has been referenced by populist radical right parties as well such as the Brothers of Italy (which again, has been categorized as a neo-fascist party as well), the Dutch Freedom Party and France’s National Front. (Dona. 2022) (Bergmann. 2018)

Bergmann highlights that conspiracy theories “tend to justify violence as a defense against external evil”. (Bergmann. 2018. P. 105) Conspiracy theories can do this by creating extremely dangerous “Others”. For instance, the 2016 murder of the British Labour Parliament member Jo Cox also revolved around White Replacement. The attacker, Thomas Mair, believe that Cox was a contributor to the attack on the White race due to her encouragement of immigration and for Britain to remain an EU member. (Bergmann. 2018) Bergmann also notes how belief in conspiracy theories can change the perception of violence to justify it. (Bergmann. 2018) This is fairly clear in the White Replacement examples above, but the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection at Washington D.C. is another example of this. As mentioned, 52% of Republicans now believing the insurrection was to protect democracy. (Shepherd. 2022)

While populist radical right parties typically do not participate in these violent acts, their use of conspiracy theories creates a hospitable environment for beliefs that can promote violence. Bergmann also notes that conspiratorial thinking can spread within an individual as well, becoming an encompassing world view (that is, as an individual begins to accept conspiracy theories, they become more prone to accepting conspiracy theories in the future). (Bergmann. 2018) This means that, even if populist radical right parties are not pushing specific conspiracy theories that have led to far-right violence, the frequent use of conspiracy theories still creates fertile ground for other conspiracy theories that can encourage violence.

Bergmann discusses a number of examples of populist radical right parties or politicians using conspiracy theories. For instance, historically, France's National Front decried covert communist control of international organizations such as the UN, EU and NATO. (Bergmann. 2018) Additionally, after an electoral defeat, Maire Le Pen "blamed the regime"...which had 'conspired to block her rise'; arguing this marginalized the will of the people. (Bergmann 2018. P. 111) More recently, Bergmann finds a number of conspiracy theories occurring in the UK during the Brexit campaign. For instance, that funding for the National Health Service was directly tied to funds given to the EU (the value of these funds also exaggerated), that greater Muslim migration into the UK would occur due to Turkey being an EU member (Nigel Farage also insinuated this would increase sexual assaults due to "some very big cultural issues") (Elgot and Mason. 2016), and, since U.S. President Barack Obama was going to give a speech against leaving the EU, Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage argued that, due to Obama's Kenyan ancestry, he held a grudge against the UK. (Bergmann 2018. P. 119)

Silva et al. note other examples as well. For instance, Polish radical right populists argued that a 2010 plane crash was the result of a "Masonic conspiracy against the PiS" and that populist radical right parties in Italy portrayed immigrants as "unholy coalitions to ruin law-abiding citizens" (Silva et al. 2017. P. 424) This anti-immigrant rhetoric has been used by other populist radical right parties across Europe as well. For instance, the National Rally of France (Bergman. 2018), AfD of Germany (Schultheis. 2021), and Lega Nord of Italy. (Bichay. 2022) In the U.S., Donald Trump frequently used anti-immigration rhetoric, even evoking the White Replacement theory in a speech in Poland by connecting the survival of Western Civilization with protection of borders. (Legum. 2022)

Possibly more fundamental though, Bergmann notes a shared orientation between conspiratorialism and populism. Both orientations determine in and out-groups to either direct protection or blame, and both suggest that simple solutions to complex issues exist. (Bergmann. 2018) Bergmann also cites Steven Van Hauwaert as referring to this separation of groups as the shared duality of both conspiracy theories and populist thinking, and cites Michael Barkun as arguing that the dualism in both conspiracy theories and populism creates an “ideal vehicle for apocalyptic anxieties”. (Bergmann. 2018. P. 101)

Additionally, the acceptance of conspiracy theories decreases trust in society. Specifically, the scapegoating and Othering of groups done through conspiracy theories erodes broad trust by narrowing who the “in-group” is. (Bergmann 2018) (Radnitz 2022) Norris and Inglehart have also noted that this creates a rising “cult of fear” which can break down civic society by eroding social connections. (Norris and Inglehart. 2019) Sawyer has demonstrated that populist figures are able to use this decreased trust to position themselves as the true defenders of the people. Using evidence from the 2016 election, Sawyer found that the birther conspiracy theory increased votes for Trump by persuading more moderate conservative voters of the theory. (Sawyer. 2021)

In summation, the use of conspiracy theories by the populist radical right that erodes democracy by breaking down trust in elites, institutions and immigrants, benefits the populist radical right by positioning themselves as defenders of democracy or a shared culture. As mentioned, since defense is being evoked as a needed, some have seen this as a call to violence as well.

#### 2.4. Growth of the Far-Right in Society

As stated, populist radical right parties have been doing increasingly well throughout Europe for the past two decades. This has been due to the mainstreaming of populist radical right ideas throughout countries like those in Europe listed in this study, as well as the United States. While the scholars cited below have addressed the mainstreaming of the far-right generally, this should be understood to be intimately tied to the populist radical right as well. Being classified as part of the far-right, the populist radical right unsurprisingly benefits from the frequent anti-immigrant and ethnocentric messages within the far-right broadly.

Part of the proliferation of these ideologies is due to growth in communication technology. The internet has acted as a powerful tool for far-right growth. Harassment used to restrict the ability to espouse far-right ideologies in person, while distance or hidden identities made in-person far-right meetings difficult to coordinate. The internet has altered both of these boundaries, allowing for greater security and anonymity in investigating or propagating far-right ideologies; as well as the ability to create groups of like-minded people across large geographic spaces. (Mudde. 2019)

Cynthia Miller-Idriss has also documented how the far-right has slipped into popular culture, becoming significantly more accessible to the average person. Throughout *Hate in the Homeland*, Miller-Idriss demonstrates how, particularly youths, can become indoctrinated to far-right ideology through a wide variety of avenues; such as music (which has expanded from just the punk and hardcore music scenes to pop, country and rap music as well), clothing with far-right symbols or brands, and even seemingly innocuous online spaces such as far-right cooking shows. (Miller-Idriss. 2020)

Stern has pointed out this same phenomenon of the far-right in mainstream culture; noting in *Proud Boys and the White Ethnostate* the use of meta-politics by the far-right. Meta politics is used to restructure public opinion or public preferences creating fertile ground for specific ideas (in this case, far-right ideas) within civil society, before acting inside the political arena. Stern uses examples of the normalcy of words like *snowflake* and *cuck* to highlight a building connection between mainstream society and the far-right. (Stern. 2019)

Attention has also been drawn to the attempts to create large, overarching far-right movements as well. Most of these have been unsuccessful (Miller-Idriss for instance notes that the far-right is typically fragmented and prone to infighting), but events such as the “Unite the Right” rally or the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection show such possibilities can occur. (Miller-Idriss. 2021) Others within the movement have expressed more ambitious goals. Steve Bannon for instance attempted to create an international far-right organization. (Feffer. 2021) Again, international far-right organizations have thus far been unsuccessful (some even wondering if an international nationalist movement can exist) (Feffer. 2021), but the recognition of attempts at it should be noted.

## 2.5. Summary

There clearly appears to be a threat to liberal democracy linked to the populist radical right. Regarding policy proposals, this is represented as an attack on liberalism which undermines the equality among individuals. Bichay highlights that this often takes on an anti-immigrant form (reducing the liberties of immigrants) (Bichay. 2022), but Väliverronen and Saikkonen have also shown that experts can receive significantly more hostility to their input under a populist radical right government. This threat to liberal democracy ultimately reflects the illiberal or post-liberal movements that have been occurring in practice (such as in Hungary) and in academia with the scholars cited above.

The use of conspiracy theories by the populist radical right should also be understood as being able to undermine and deteriorate society. Conspiracy theories can drive citizens apart as differing accounts of events are believed, assist in the creation and rejection of out-groups, and can even promote violence. Finally, we should connect the cultural normalcy the populist radical right has achieved as perpetuating these threats to liberal democracy. While populist radical right ideas are mainstream, the attack on liberalism and the propagation of conspiracy theories should be expected to continue. Understanding the threat presented by the populist radical right party family is important for understanding why to study the party family to begin with. The next section will examine classifications of this party family; highlighting the four waves of the far-right since WWII, examining different terminology for the far-right, considering the components of Mudde's classification of the populist radical right more closely, and differentiating the populist radical right from fascism.

### **Chapter 3: Understanding the Populist Radical Right**

#### **3.1. Classifying the Populist Radical Right**

The post-WWII far-right has been categorized into four historical waves; roughly separated by ideology and popularity. The first wave (from 1945 – 1955) is typified by small neo-fascist groups, particularly in Germany and Italy. (Von Beyme. 1988) (Mudde. 2020) This is of course an anti-democratic ideology, but it should be noted that neo-fascists may compete in elections to shift the system internally to become undemocratic. From this period, Mudde notes that only the Italian Social Movement (MSI) received electoral success, though they did rebrand to the National Alliance in 1995. (Mudde. 2020) And, as a modern example, Stanley argues that Donald Trump also represents a fascist competing in democratic elections seeking to shift the

system to become more undemocratic. (Stanley. 2021) The second wave (1955 – 1980) is classified by far-right flash parties that would appear in one or two elections before disappearing. Mudde provides the French Poujadists and the Danish Progress Party as examples here. (Mudde. 2022)

The third wave (1980 – 2001) is denoted by the growing success of the far-right as legitimate competitors in elections as well as the growth of the specific populist radical right party family discussed in this thesis. (Mudde. 2022) Mudde notes that most of these parties were new organizations that were “untainted by the second world war”, (Mudde. 2020. P. 300) but there was still a general agreement to exclude these parties from governing coalitions.

Finally, Mudde argues that we are in the midst of a fourth wave. Mudde places this fourth wave right after the 9/11 attacks and argues its existence is both quantitatively and qualitatively different from the third wave. (Mudde. 2020) Quantitatively, the far-right is much more successful. For instance, in this wave, Mudde comments that between 2019 and 2020, roughly 2 billion people lived under far-right governments. (Mudde. 2022) Qualitatively, this wave is distinguished by the growing acceptance of the far-right. Some of this has already been highlighted above (for instance, by Miller-Idriss and Stern) but Mudde also notes that the business community has embraced the far-right to a much greater degree during this wave. For instance, he notes examples of the Wall Street Journal endorsing Jair Bolsonaro for president of Brazil, as well as the stock market’s resounding positive response to Donald Trump’s reelection bid. (Mudde. 2020)

While there has been a rising consensus around Cas Mudde’s definition of populism, the specific contours of the far-right aspect within the populist radical right have been, and still is, contested by other scholars. Historically, Mudde has written about this in his article *War of Words Defining the Extreme Right Party*. He notes that defining the extreme right itself has been up to debate; noting that some scholars have used just a few terms in their definition, for instance, Macridis classifies the extreme right as “an ‘ideology [that] revolves around the same old staples: racism, xenophobia and nationalism’”, while other provide up to 10 terms. Here Mudde cites Falter and Schumann definition for the extreme right as “extreme nationalism, ethnocentrism, anti-communism, anti-parliamentarianism, anti-pluralism, militarism, law-and-



order thinking, a demand for a strong political leader and/or executive, anti-Americanism and cultural pessimism”. (Mudde. 1996)

Since the shift to populism in the third historical wave among radical right parties, there has still been a variety of terms to denote this party family. Again, looking first at Mudde, he notes that populist nativism has been suggested (and at one point used by him as well) to denote the populist radical right. (Mudde. 2009) He writes that he shifted away from this term for two reasons. First, "Right" has been used throughout the literature so adding the word to the terminology of the party family brings it closer in line with the literature. Second, he argues that populist nativism is misleading as the term denotes authoritarianism as well, but it's not explicitly stated in the terminology. (Mudde. 2009) Other authors have used terms such as populist right, right populist or far-right populist, though these have often been used with Mudde's definition as the theoretical backing. For instance, both Bichay and the PopuList 2.0 do this. (Bochay. 2022) (Rooduijn et al. 2019)

Norris and Inglehart provide a stronger justification for the use, and creation of, a new term. Arguing that existing terms take the traditional Left-Right scale to measure parties and simply tack on the term "populist", Norris and Inglehart add a new term "authoritarian populism" by measuring parties on two dimensions; Populism – Pluralism and Libertarianism – Authoritarianism. These measure the difference of "*who* should govern and *how* legitimate power should be exercised" (Norris and Inglehart. 2019. P. 217) That is, the former measures a party's preference for strict majoritarian rule versus diversity in decision making and retaining liberal constraints on majoritarian power, while the latter measures preferences for strengthening collective security against perceived threats and deference for tradition and leadership versus a preference for "individualism, free-spiritedness, and personal liberation". (Norris and Inglehart. 2019. P. 217)

While authoritarian populism is certainly a useful concept, this study adopts Mudde's populist radical right terminology due to: the clarity with which he has defined the term, the capturing of the same ideas within the definition of the populist radical right (that is, the populism within this term still captures *who* should govern and the authoritarianism and nativism captures *how* power should be exercised), and the multitude of scholars either using the term itself such as Sawyer, Muis and Immerzeel and Ammassari, (Sawyer. 2021) (Muis and

Immerzeel. 2017) (Ammassari. 2023) or using the theoretical make-up of the populist radical right term by citing Mudde's definition, even if not using the term "populist radical right" itself (such as Bichay and the PopuList have done).

### 3.2. The Components of the Populist Radical Right

To understand the populist radical right party family discussed in this thesis better, this section breaks down the components of the populist radical right; examining populism, authoritarianism and nativism.

#### 3.2.1. Populism

Populism is argued to be a thin ideology (discuss more below), that rests on top of other thick ideologies, so a review of populism first will frame how the authoritarianism and nativism appear in populist radical right parties. As mentioned, Mudde has defined populism as two homogenous and antagonistic groups, the pure people versus the corrupt elite, and that the will of the pure people should be enacted into law. (Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017) This has largely become a consensus in the field now. (Inglehart and Norris. 2016) (Schroeder. 2020) Populism can either be from the political left or right (Norris and Inglehart. 2019), but importantly, it should be understood from this definition that populists create in and out-groups to often either doll out rewards or punishment.

Rhodes-Purdy et al. and Mudde highlight the notion of Manichaeism within populism; that is, the world is separated into good and evil. (Rhodes-Purdy et al. 2021) (Kaltwasser. et al. 2017) Mudde notes that separating groups by morality is a core attribute of populism and contrasts this to other ideologies such as socialism or nationalism which divides people by class and nation respectively. (Kaltwasser. et al. 2017) Interestingly, all three (populism, socialism and nationalism) can be used to make superior and inferior judgements (i.e. the rich are exploitative, or X nation is better than Y nation), but socialism and nationalism can also define equal relationships. Through dividing by morality, there is no equality offered; good is superior to evil. (Kaltwasser. et al. 2017)

Populists specifically segment elites into the out-group. (Norris and Inglehart. 2019) The political and / or economic elites are painted as corrupt; often stealing from the people and preventing their will from becoming law. (Mudde. 2019) (Bergman. 2018) Because of this

association, Norris and Inglehart add to this populist definition that, while not a necessary factor, populists are often authoritarian due to a belief that the will of the people must be pushed through, regardless of institutional constraints. Norris and Inglehart note that strong leaders can claim to speak for the people with no such mandate and push through specific policies or agendas. (Norris and Inglehart. 2019)

The division by morality appears to hold strongly for the elite, (Mudde. 2019) (Norris and Inglehart. 2019) but can become muddled when considering the populist radical right's view of immigrants from their xenophobic orientation. For instance, Rydgren argues that populist radical right voters are more concerned about the ethnic or cultural mixing of society as opposed to other ethnic groups in and of themselves. (Rydgren. 2008) For this reason, Rydgren's analysis may indicate that populist radical right voters may categorize immigrants as being immoral due to immigrating and a perceived incongruence of cultures, and not because of intrinsic immorality.

Populism is also argued to be a thin ideology; (Kaltwasser. et al. 2017) (Norris and Inglehart. 2019) that is, populism holds no universal principles by itself, instead clinging to other "thick" ideologies (such as conservatism or liberalism) to take form. (Kaltwasser. et al. 2017) For instance, apart from how populism divides the world, it holds no implications as to how economic or political institutions should be structured, or how power and resources should be allocated to the in-group. This notion of thinness is seconded by Bergmann and Norris and Inglehart as well. Bergmann comments that populism taps into nation specific characteristics avoiding universal principles, (Bergmann. 2018) while Norris and Inglehart discuss populism as a rhetorical style (as opposed to a world view) that espouses first-order principles, but is silent on second-order principles "concerning what should be done". (Norris and Inglehart. 2019. P. 4)

This is not without disagreement though. Ralph Schroeder has argued that the categorization of populism as a thin ideology underestimates the importance or strength of populism. Schroeder argues this categorization implies that populism is merely transitory with the underlying "thick" ideology being what will remain over time. (Schroeder. 2020) This is quite clearly the case for Norris and Inglehart who argue that "what matters for public policy is the rock [the thick ideology] not the lizard [the thin ideology that rests on top]". (Norris and Inglehart. 2019. P. 65)

While highlighting the importance of populism is important, one of Schroeder's arguments for it being an open question as to whether populism is a thin ideology is precisely that populism does define groups to allocate power and resources to. Without a theoretical form of distribution though (for instance universal ownership or private property), it seems necessary that populism would require an additional theory to actually organize life for the in-group. This same issue occurs when using Jan Kubik's definition of thick populism (given by Miller-Idriss), which is defined by extending the out-group past just elites, to immigrants and foreigners as well (a shift from vertical to horizontal comparisons). (Miller-Idriss. 2020) For these reasons, this study agrees with the notion of populism as a thin ideology. Again, this also conforms with the current consensus in the field as well. (Bergmann. 2018) (Schroeder 2020)

Finally, an even deeper disagreement about using the populist framework at all comes from David Art. (Art. 2022) Art argues that the populist frame has been overused, and nativism, not populism, has been on the rise. He makes this argument by largely describing that many of the parties that are claimed to be populist can be described in other ways; for instance, nativist, competitive authoritarian, or anti-austerity (for leftwing populists). Additionally, he notes that leftwing populism had a brief rise and then quickly fell. This is another sign that general populism is not on the rise, but nativism instead. (Art. 2022) But Art does not seem to give much space to the anti-elite rhetoric within the populist framework. In his conclusion of *The Myth of Global Populism*, Art does cite Urbanati who argued that one of the primary attributes of populism, the separation of good in-groups and bad out-groups, is true of "all forms of partisan aggregation" as a reason for questioning the existence of populism. (Art. 2022) That is, separation is inherent in politics and thus populism is an all-inclusive, duplicate term for the same phenomenon. But, at least concerning the elites, due to the division by morality within populism, this seems to ignore a purposeful component of the populist divide. That is, the out-group shouldn't be out of power just because they would be inapt with power, but instead that they would be purposefully harmful with power. This can create a significantly different mindset and contribute to the eroding loss of trust in society, and the cult of fear referenced by Bergmann and Norris and Inglehart. (Bergmann. 2018) (Norris and Inglehart. 2019)

### 3.2.2. Authoritarianism

As stated, Mudde defines authoritarianism as a strictly ordered society in which infringement must be punished severely. He goes on to note that the populist radical right is obsessed with security and order. He writes that “almost every political issue is perceived through the lens of a ‘threat to the national security’”. (Mudde. 2019 P. 33) This includes issues such as drugs, immigration and unemployment. Additionally, crime—which the populist radical right argues is rampant—is not related to socio-economics and thus deserves ruthless law enforcement. (Mudde. 2019)

This orientation of course takes particularly, almost exclusive, focus on non-natives (which is related to the nativist orientation discussed below); to the point that Mudde notes that, in the third wave, populist radical right parties were often considered single issue parties. (Mudde. 2019) (Some examples of this attack against immigrants and immigration have been provided above by Bichary above). When the law and order orientation is targeted primarily at the native population, it is in the accusation of corruption. As noted, this is targeted at both political and economic elites, but is also used against the political left generally. Here, the argument runs that the left is corrupting society. Examples of this are teaching youths to be “anti-national”, or corrupting the values of youth by opening space to question traditional gender identities. (Mudde. 2019) Finally, the division by morality by populism referenced above should be seen as justification for harsh punishment as well.

### 3.2.3. Nativism

Finally, as mentioned above, the nativist orientation (the combination of nationalism and xenophobia) has played out as a call for ethnopluralism among populist radical right parties. (Mudde. 2019) This is the belief that the state should be ethnically and culturally homogenous. When the concept of the nation is constructed on ethnic or cultural lines (for instance, the populist radical right often defining the nation on ethnically white or religiously Christian lines), Gellner’s definition of nationalism provides a general reasoning for ethnopluralism; that the “political and national unit should be congruent”. (Bergmann. 2018. P. 77)

Miller-Idriss builds upon this nativist idea by describing the strong connection between the far-right and specific geographic territory that they infuse with meaning; using phrases like homeland and blood and soil to denote this connection. By doing this, collective identity is not just formed by a shared culture but through a shared connection to land itself. (Miller-Idriss.

2020) When identity is at stake, as scholars have argued it is for radical right populists (Jay et al. 2019), then through this connection to the land, it is easier to see how xenophobia can arise. The sharing of land takes on greater significance as it can become an attack on identity itself. (Miller-Idriss. 2020) The fear of White Replacement is clearly tied to this nativist orientation. There is an implicit argument that there must be predominately White spaces, and that loss of “White” lands is a loss of White identity. As mentioned, populist radical right parties have evoked the Great Replacement, or White Replacement theory before but, even when it is not explicit, the general nativist orientation should be understood as pandering to the belief. (Schultheis. 2021) (Montanaro. 2022) (Legum. 2022)

### 3.3 Contrasting Radical Right Populism and Fascism

There are large overlaps between fascism and our definition of the populist radical right. (Norris and Inglehart, 2019) There are some basic differences between the two, such as fascism seeking a “third way” between capitalism and communism, while radical right populism seems fairly content with capitalism (though some have shown interesting in a more localized form of capitalism as opposed to globalized capitalism). (Bergmann. 2018) But to properly distinguish between the two concepts, ten features of fascism described by Jason Stanley’s *How Fascism Works* will be compared with our definition of the populist radical right.

Stanley notes that fascists construct a pure, mythic past. That is a past where the nation was one homogeneous group and held national glory that has since been lost. Fascists also uses propaganda to attack the elites as corrupt before taking power and to portray their own actions as protecting freedoms and individual liberties as they do the opposite. Fascists attacks the intelligentsia who can discredit the fascist telling of both current reality and history; which informs fascism’s fourth feature, the creation of a non-reality. Stanley notes that fascism breaks down reality and replaces truth with power; meaning the powerful become the source of true information regardless of actual reality. (Stanley. 2018) Fascists do this in part through the use of conspiracy theories. (Stanley also notes that conspiracies do not have to act like normal information. Instead, social trust can be broken simply through the claim of a conspiracy without evidence to support that claim). (Stanley. 2018)

Fascism is also inherently hierarchal; relying on the “natural” inequalities between groups to structure society. There is a strong sense of victimhood within fascism. As out-groups

try to push back against oppression, this is perceived as oppressing the in-group by fascists. For instance, Stanley offers a modern example of distorting the phrase “Black Lives Matter” to mean only Black lives matters, and thus White lives don’t. (Stanley. 2018) Fascism has a strong law and order orientation as well, and fascism uses the “politics of sexual anxiety” (Stanley. 2018. P. 127) as a fear tactic against out-groups. That is, out-groups are argued to engage in sexual assault or break down traditional gender roles. The concept of hard work is also weaponized against out-groups. Fascists often portray out-groups as lazy and failing due to their own lack of efforts. Finally, Stanley argues that fascists create a strong separation between city and country. The country-side is pure while the city is where the immoralities that fascists deplore goes to fester. Additionally, cities have been related to the mixing of superior and inferior groups and racial defilement. (Stanley. 2018)

There are obviously many overlaps between Stanley’s definition of fascism and the populist radical right (though this is at least in part due to Stanley referencing to parties that many others have considered populist radical right parties such as France’s National Front, Poland’s Law and Justice party and Germany’s Alternative for Germany). (Stanley. 2018) (Rooduijn et al. 2019) The strong separation between in and out-groups is a clear connection between both the populist radical right and fascism, and is foundational for other beliefs in each ideology. For instance, the populist radical right clearly desires homogeneity of the in-group within society when arguing against immigration (part of its nativist orientation) as well as referencing a purer past. Among the post-liberals (which acts as part of the ideologic backbone of the populist radical right), Deneen does this by arguing that Americans used to have strong social bonds and more decorum; for instance, citing that even Vietnam protestors wore suits. (Deneen. 2021) Additionally, there appears to be some evidence that the separation of good country and bad city remains as commenters have argued that Marie Le Pen had positioned herself as the defender of the countryside in the 2017 and 2022 French presidential elections. (Stanley. 2018) (Donadio. 2022)

The nativist orientation of the populist radical right also relates to the victimhood, sexual anxiety, and weaponization of the concept of hard work against out-groups. For instance, Stockemer et al. note that some studies have found worry among populist radical right voters that immigrants will leech off the country’s welfare system; (Stockemer et al. 2018) as mentioned

above, Nigel Farage has insinuated sexual assault will increase due to allowing in Muslim immigrants; (Elgot and Mason. 2016) and Donald Trump has repeatedly referred immigration as an invasion. (Wong. 2019) Additionally, the populist radical right and fascism are connected by the creation of a non-reality and use of propaganda. As mentioned, radical right populists also engage extensively with conspiracies, and there is evidence (from Väliverronen and Saikkonen above) that populist radical right parties in government reduce trust in experts (connecting to the anti-intelligentsia feature of fascism). (Väliverronen and Saikkonen. 2021)

Interestingly though, radical right populism has an important difference here compared to fascism. Stanley notes that fascism's strong notion of hierarchy and traditional gender roles casts the leader of the country as the father of the nation. (Stanley. 2018) Information is then disseminated down to the public through this patriarchal leader. Due to the populist orientation within the populist radical right though, an in-group majority, as opposed to an individual, is supposed to be the arbiter of truth. This highlights another important difference between fascism and the populist radical right. Fascism has a much stronger notion of hierarchy which is used to create perceptions of superior and inferior groups. This creates two differences between fascism and the populist radical right (though the second is contested). First, fascism's stricter notion of hierarchy applies not just to external groups, but internal groups as well (for instance, the "Father of the nation" is above ordinary citizens). This creates vastly different orientations toward democracy. While the populist radical right may ultimately seek an ethnocracy (as argued by Mudde) (Mudde. 2019), this is still democratic for the in-group. Fascists do not believe in democracy even for the in-group. Second, some have argued that ethnopluralism represents the possibility of a separate but equal relationship between ethnicities. This would again differ from fascism's strict notion of hierarchy which offers no equality among outside groups. It should be noted again though, this is contested as other scholars have argued ethnopluralism is based in White supremacy.

Who should have power is also wider in radical right populism; it is the homogenistic majority, (Mudde. 2019) not just the paternalistic leader which occurs in fascism. (Stanley. 2018) Bergmann has partially highlighted this difference by noting that fascism sought to remove individually and create a cohesive collective identity. (Bergmann. 2018) This differs from the populist radical right, which does narrow identity through the separation of in and out-groups



(Mudde. 2019), but doesn't require the sacrificing of individual identity entirely to adopt a collective identity.

Finally, the populist radical right and fascism have a primary difference in their view of democracy. As noted by Mudde, the extreme right is anti-democratic while the radical right beliefs in democracy for the in-group. Because of this, populist radical right parties compete in elections and participate in democratic governments with the intension to keep the society democratic (even if less liberal) while the extreme right does not.

### 3.4. Summary

The far-right has been categorized in multiple ways. Including both in temporal terms denoted by the multiple waves of the far-right, and through the contested terminology of the far-right generally. As stated, this thesis will continue to utilize Mudde's populist radical right terminology, which has been broken down in more depth by considering populism, authoritarianism and nativism individually. Finally, clear connections between fascism and the populist radical right should be recognized, but there are important separations to note as well, such as the belief in hierarchy, respect to democracy, and the degree of acceptable individualism. We now turn to consider arguments as to why the populist radical right has been increasing. These will be categorized under either cultural or economic arguments, though other categorizations have been used (for instance, Golder references modernization arguments as well). (Golder. 2016)

## **Chapter 4: The Economic and Cultural Arguments**

### 4.1. Cultural Arguments

Three main forms of cultural arguments will be presented below: the perception of immigrants among populist radical right voters, whether multiculturalism can exist, and a clash of values between older and younger generations. Golder writes that cultural arguments are often based in social identity theory, which argues that people desire to be around others they perceive as similar and that they elevate the status of their group relative to other groups for positive self-esteem. (Golder. 2016) Golder then connects this argument to immigration, particularly noting that populist radical right parties always seem to utilize "the (alleged) incompatibility of immigrant behavioral norms and cultural values" to rally support. But Golder does note that

empirical testing on the effect of the presence of immigrants on populist radical right support has been mixed. (Golder. 2016. P. 485) Stockemer et al. confirm the inconclusive results through a meta-analysis of 36 quantitative studies; finding that only 51% of the studies had a statistically significant result in the expected direction (that immigration increased populist radical right voting). (Stockemer et al. 2018)

Connected to this separation between natives and immigrants, some have argued that the populist radical right displays racism as a prime ideology. (Rydgern. 2008) (Mulinari and Neergaard. 2013) This is typically tied to the anti-immigrant sentiment that is clear among the populist radical right. For instance, Mulinari and Neergaard argued that the Swedish populist radical right party, Sweden Democrats, are culturally racist. They do this by noting that there has been a shift away from biological racism to a focus on concepts like ethnicity, culture and religion, which are then used to account for perceived incompatibilities among cultures, or a superiority of one culture over another. (Mulinari and Neergaard. 2013) They also separate exclusionary racism from exploitative racism. Exclusionary racism is removing “Others” or keeping them out, which they argued is embedded in populist radical right parties, while exploitative racism is the creation of a cheap labor force based on racial lines. (Mulinari and Neergaard. 2013)

Using survey data from the European Social Survey, Rydgern found evidence to support exclusionary racism emanating from populist radical right parties based on culturally racist lines. Though Rydgern does not use the terminology of exclusionary racism, and in fact argues that xenophobia (which she defines as unwelcomed others) and racism (defined as “fundamental inequality and hierarchical order of different biologically defined races”) (Rydgern. 2008. P. 743) are not strong predictors of populist radical right voting, she does note the strong tendency for these voters to want immigrants kept out. Rydgern argues this comes from the ethnopluralist perception that ethnicities and cultures must be kept separate to maintain harmonious societies. For instance, regarding the Islamophobia within the populist radical right discussed above, Rydgern writes “immigrants from the Muslim countries are singled out as particularly threatening to European values, allegedly because they are the least compatible and the least inclined to assimilation” (Rydgern. 2008. P. 745) Bergmann notes that for some, this Islamophobia has become a fear of cultural displacement enshrined in the concept of “Eurabia”;

that is, a fear that Europe is experiencing “a hostile takeover by Muslims”, (Bergmann. 2018. P. 123) through mass migration and low native birth rates. (Bergmann. 2018)

Ultimately though, Rydgern is highlighting that there isn't a superior and inferior relationship being created by populist radical right voters, but instead a need for separation to maintain a cohesive society. (Rydgern. 2008) Accordingly, Rydgern did not find evidence of biological racism, but did find evidence of exclusionary racism based on culturally racist lines. Through a review of qualitative studies, Stockemer et al. finds more evidence of this point; noting that populist radical right voters consistently worry of a perceived incompatibility due to a lack of integration by immigrants as opposed to expressing superior or inferior views. (Stockemer et al. 2018)

As noted above though, this notion of a non-racist “separate but equal” mentality has been hotly contested. For instance, Taylor has stated that White supremacists have simply traded in the term “White supremacy” for “ethnopluralism” to distort their actual racist motivations underneath. (Taylor. 2019) Taguieff agrees with this, arguing that this type of racism is shield behind antiracist language. For instance, noting that some in the far-right have argued that ethnopluralism is the true multiculturalism since it allows different cultures to exist without mixing into a homogeneous culture. (Taguieff. 2001) But Taguieff also argues that this language is just used to hide racist motives; remarking that

“Cultural anthropology and/or ethnology are thus called on to legitimate the neoracist prescriptions of avoidance of intercultural contact, of separate development (in full "equality in difference," of course), of phobic rejection of any "crossing of cultures”. (Taguieff. 2001. P. 5)

A discussion throughout this debate on ethnopluralism is whether multiculturalism can successfully exist in society. Through the *Clash of Civilizations* thesis, Huntington argues no. His claim is that a civilizational identity is the highest form of identity an individual holds and, since these have developed over centuries, are relatively fixed and immobile. Additionally, since the world has been “becoming a smaller place” (Huntington. 1993. P. 25) due to globalization, the civilizational identities become more sharply defined and increasingly important. (Huntington. 1993) Huntington argues this will inevitably cause civilizational clashes as civilization are forced to compete with each other in an increasingly globalized world.

Linda Miller has already pointed out flaws within this argument (for instance, that Huntington over simplified complex heterogeneity within each defined civilization, that histories and traditions were combined to create greater uniformity within civilizations, that examples where countries had joined a conflict against their own “civilization” were ignored, etc.), but Gundelach adds to the issues of the clash of civilizations argument using survey data from Denmark. Examining the preferences for democracy among both native Danes and non-natives (Gundelach operationalizes preferences for democracy as preference for popular sovereignty, preference for the liberal rights of freedom of speech and religion, and the degree of democracy within the family unit which is argued to be determined using questions of how much control parents should have over their children regarding their choice of partner and their education) Gundelach finds that both Muslim and non-Muslim immigrants have similar preferences for democracy as native Danes. Their preference for popular sovereignty and democracy within the family are slightly lower than native Danes, but their preference for liberal protections is actually higher. (Gundelach. 2007) While this finding does not show complete cultural congruence (nor does it need to), it does indicate a shared perspective regarding a fundamental component of social organization of how power should be exercised.

Kapiszewski et al. expand on this, but approach from the opposite direction. That is, looking at the Latin American region, they found that democracy has encouraged multiculturalism. Noting that Latin American has been typified by high inequality and levels of poverty higher than similarly developed countries, they argue that this has created an environment for politicians to leverage the votes of the excluded by offering greater economic and social inclusion. They highlight this was done not because of the high inequality or poverty itself (those conditions were already historically present), but instead the sustained presence of democracy in the region. (Kapiszewski et al. 2021) Previous attempts to reverse these inequalities led to harsh conservative crackdowns. But, since the 1990’s, an inclusionary turn which has opened economic and political space for Afro-Latinos and Indigenous groups has occurred in the region due to the presence of sustained democracy. (Kapiszewski et al. 2021) This also shows a strong positive connection between democracy and multiculturalism.

Finally, considering changing values between generations, Inglehart has suggested an internal model of cultural grievances. Through the *Silent Revolution* thesis, Inglehart argues that

due to increased physical and economic security after WWII, younger generations in advanced industrial-democratic societies are adopting post-material values over material values. This is a shift away from increased economic production to desiring greater self-fulfillment, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, etc. (Inglehart and Norris. 2017) Musa and Trump both note the connection of the Silent Revolution to Maslow's hierarchy of needs; that is, the revolution represents a societal move up the hierarchy. (Musa. 2006) (Trump. 1991) Norris and Inglehart later argue that this shift in values among the younger generation creates friction with older generations that retain material values, creating a cultural backlash which leads to populist radical right voting. (Inglehart and Norris. 2017) Golder has understandably referred to this as a modernization theory (Golder. 2016) but, due to the focus on cultural values, the theory also slots in well with other cultural theories.

The Silent Revolution has an obvious connection to identity as well. The reduction in shared values across cohorts can lead a segment of older generations to feel their own values are under attack. Populist radical right parties express these ideas by arguing for a stronger, sharper form of identity. This is most clearly seen through anti-immigration rhetoric which clashes with the post-material values of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism, but the notion that the country must care for the native population more than non-natives, or that traditional institutions (often Christianity) must be protected from attacks are other examples. As support for this claim, Inglehart notes that populist radical right voters are typically older, male, less educated, and religious. (Inglehart and Norris. 2016) (Inglehart and Norris. 2017)

Some authors have argued this thesis may be somewhat overstated though. Trump tested the silent revolution thesis using survey data from secondary students in the U.S. and West Germany, finding evidence for the Revolution in the German data, but not in the U.S causing him to question the overall thesis. (Trump. 1991) Unfortunately, as Trump noted, the sampling experienced a number of issues. For instance, Trump notes that, at the time, Germany separated students into academic or vocational programs and he was only able to add students in the academic program into his sample. (Trump. 1991) Additionally, only two high schools were used in the U.S. (in two separate regions), while the German data was more disperse, utilizing multiple regions, but too disperse to capture the effect of wealth within a single region. (Trump.

1991) Because of these sampling issues and limited regional variation, the lack of evidence for the revolution is suspect.

Other authors have found more evidence for the Silent Revolution. Inglehart himself has continued to find evidence for the Revolution, most recently working with Norris to find positive evidence for the change in values among younger cohorts using survey data from the World Values Survey. (Norris and Inglehart. 2019) But other authors have found conforming evidence for the thesis as well. For instance, using 35 European party manifestos across 10 European countries, Musa found that economic prosperity of the country, and democratic levels increased post-material values; though no connection between security and material values were found. (Musa. 2006)

#### 4.2 Economic Arguments

While the cultural arguments focus on the perceived identity of populist radical right supporters, the economic arguments revolve around populist radical right supporters adversely responding to economic factors such as globalization, high inequality, economic insecurity, precarity of work, unemployment, and downward economic mobility. (Swank and Betz. 2003) (Inglehart and Norris. 2016) (Bergh and Kärnä. 2022) (Rhodes-Purdy et al. 2021) (Norris and Inglehart. 2019) (Jay et al. 2019) (Miller-Idriss. 2021) (Inglehart and Norris. 2017) (Reich. 2022) These factors are then often argued to trigger anti-establishment voting which has been called protest voting (Alvarez et al. 2018) or democratic rioting. (Favaretto and Masciandaro. 2022) Mudde notes that evidence has been found for both protest voting and actual ideological support for populist radical right parties among their voters, but argues that these are not mutually exclusive either. (Mudde. 2019)

Interestingly, immigration has also been argued to increase populist radical right voting through economics as well. Golder highlights that immigration can increase labor competition, driving down wages and making jobs scarcer. He goes on to note that perceptions of economic threat have been strongly linked to anti-immigrant sentiment, and anti-immigrant sentiment has been linked to far-right support. (Golder. 2016)

While some scholars have argued that cultural arguments have won the day, (Art. 2022) others (such as the authors listed below) are still making strong cases for the importance of

economic factors with respect to populist radical right growth. One such argument is that the perceived economic precarity and insecurity of workers leads to far-right voting and activity. This has been suggested by Robert Reich and Miller-Idriss who argued that precarity led to the electoral victory of Donald Trump and the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection. (Reich. 2022) (Miller-Idriss. 2021) Norris and Inglehart use a similar variable of perceived economic insecurity, finding it to be significant for both authoritarian and populist values. (Norris and Inglehart. 2019)

Andreas Bergh and Anders Kärnä also argued for feelings of worker precarity increasing populist radical right voting; first noting multiple studies that have found a strong, positive connection between unemployment and populist voting, and going on to find evidence that labor market tightness increases populist voting. The theory being that the tightness of the labor market acts as a proxy for how easy routine workers believe it will be to get another job if they got terminated. Interestingly, strengthening the idea that perceived precarity matters, they found that actual unemployment contributed to left populist voting, while routine employment in a tight labor market increased right populist voting. (Bergh and Kärnä. 2022)

Thomas Kurer and Briitta Van Staaldin created a model to test perceived downward mobility on populist voting, finding that, as an individual fell further from an expected status based on their father's occupation level, they were more likely to vote for populist parties. They also add a potential cultural finding by noting that as education increased, these voters were more likely to vote for populist Left parties, as opposed to populist radical right parties. (Kurer and Van Staaldin. 2022). This aligns with other scholarship that has found low education to be a driver of populist radical right voting. (Norris and Inglehart. 2019)

Finally, looking directly at inequality, Dorn et al. found inequality to increase extremist voting by using Germany county level data on wealth and voting. (Dorn et al. 2018) And Jay et al. found that inequality increased populist radical right voting through the mediating factors of lower social trust and cohesion, and a greater consolidation of identity. (Jay et al. 2019)

#### 4.3. Bridging Culture and Economics

Others have pointed out that cultural and economic theories do not need to be mutually exclusive. Rhodes-Purdy et al. for instance notes that, while survey research indicates that culture and identity are the primary factors in determining populist radical right voting, such

voting also tends to increase after economic crises. (Rhodes-Purdy et al. 2021) Inglehart and Norris's suggests a bridge between the two theories through the materialist and post-materialist value lens. They argue that, while the younger birth cohorts are more post-materialist, economic crises can create period effects that shift the whole society to be more materialist and thus vote for populist radical right parties. After economic crises, post-material values have been seen to return to the younger cohorts. (Norris and Inglehart. 2019) A core part of the argument is that on-going economic factors are creating crisis conditions that shift the whole society to be more materialist and thus vote for populist radical right parties. For instance, they cite 30 years of rising inequality and the increasing precarity of work as existing period effects that have increase the populist radical right. (Inglehart ad Norris. 2017) More specifically, in later work they've cited the 2008 – 2013 financial crisis in OECD countries as likely causing an authoritarian period effect. (Norris and Inglehart. 2019. P. 111)

Rhodes-Purdy et al. offers a somewhat similar interpretation by suggesting that poor economic conditions can increase populist radical right voting through the mediating emotions of anger and fear. (Rhodes-Purdy et al. 2021) By connecting emotions as mediating factors to populist radical right voting, an overarching image of factors that create these emotions can be created. For instance, Jost and Vasilopoulos et al. have also found that increased fear and anger contributes to populist radical right voting. (Jost. 2019) (Vasilopoulos et al. 2019) This emotional connection can also create a connection between the cultural and economic arguments; as Rhodes-Purdy et. al. put it "A threat is a threat regardless of its subtype" (referring to economic or cultural threats). (Rhodes-Purdy et al. 2021. P. 1563)

#### 4.4 Summary

This chapter considered multiple arguments for the growth of the populist radical right and categorized them into predominately cultural or economic arguments. Culturally, the arguments presented were the perception of racial or cultural threat by immigrants and a clash of material and post-material values. Regarding the former, evidence was found that supports both exclusionary and cultural racism as factors in the perception of immigrants. That is, immigration should be restricted due to a perceived incompatibility between cultures. This was followed by a consideration of whether multiculturalism and democracy can coexist. While authors like Huntington have argued that civilizations will necessarily clash as globalization continues, other



research indicates this is not the case. Specifically, that Muslim and non-Muslim immigrants in Denmark have shown similar preferences for democracy as the Danish themselves, and that democracy has encouraged multiculturalism in Latin America. Regarding the clash of values, evidence does appear to suggest that such a clash is occurring and leading to populist radical right voting. Norris and Inglehart certainly argue that this is the case (though note that crises can shift the whole population to be more materialist), but evidence from Musa backs up the notion the economic prosperity and democracy increased the importance of post-material values.

Moving to economic arguments, these have ranged from grievances with inequality, unemployment, globalization, social mobility, and the precarity of work. Many of these clearly should not be considered mutually exclusive either. For instance, it is easy to consider a scenario where globalization has increased inequality, driven down social mobility, and increased unemployment. Supporting evidence was found that these mechanisms contribute to populist radical right voting. Bergh and Kärnä found tight labor markets to be impactful, Kurer and Van Staaldunin highlight the importance of social mobility (though they do note that education appears to dictate the direction of populist support, being either radical right or progressive) and Dorn et al. and Jay et al. found inequality itself to be a connected factor to populist radical right voting.

Finally, two arguments are presented that bridge the gap between the two. Rhodes et al. do this by noting that either economic or cultural threats can trigger similar emotions that can promote populist radical right voting. And Norris and Inglehart do this by arguing that, while values of the population are an important component in populist radical right voting (a cultural argument), these values can shift depending on the threats at hand, such as the 2008 financial crash. While there are many compelling arguments presented here, this thesis now turns to the novel section of this study by examining the effects of income redistribution on populist radical right voting.

## **Chapter 5: Redistribution and Populist Radical Right Voting**

### **5.1. Explaining Redistribution**

The economic models above (for instance from Rhodes-Purdy et al., Norris and Inglehart, and Kurer and Van Staaldunin) have found compelling and seemingly intuitive implications

connecting populist radical right voting to economic conditions. Global economic inequality has been increasing since the 1980's (Piketty. 2014), during the same time populist radical right parties have gained more electoral support. Additionally, the notion that economic inequality or feelings of insecurity and precarity can trigger protest voting as argued by Mayer and Perrineau has an intuitive appeal. (Mayer and Perrineau. 1992) But, little work has been done on the reverse relationship thus far. (Rathgeb and Busemeyer. 2022) That is, if inequality and economic precarity increase populist radical right voting, does economic redistribution lower such voting?

Redistribution definitionally lowers inequality. (Immervoll and Richardson. 2011) Accordingly, since inequality has been argued to increase populist radical right voting, redistribution may lower populist radical right voting. Redistribution may reduce feelings of economic insecurity and precarity by creating an economic safety net, acting as another mechanism to lower populist radical right voting. The notion that redistribution may be an alternative to populist radical right voting has been suggested by Colatone and Stanig for instance. They argued that, due to the inability to raise redistribution because of the risk of capital flight, voters instead turn to the economic protectionism offered by populist radical right parties. (Dorn et al. 2018) Again, the theory holds intuitive appeal, but testing the relationship is necessary to understand if redistribution is a viable policy solution to reduce populist radical right orientations.

Economic redistribution is done through taxes and governmental transfers. Considering taxes first, a progressive tax system naturally redistributes wealth by drawing proportionally more from those with higher incomes; additionally, progressivity can be increased through a negative tax on low incomes (funds are given to the poorer individuals). Progressive tax systems have an advantage that they automatically redistribute more as inequality increases (the percentage of money that is affected by a higher tax rate increases) which has been occurring. (Immervoll and Richardson. 2011)

Other forms of redistribution include assistance transfers, “often subject to income or assets tests”, for instance, family and education assistance; insurance transfers, which “provide income support in the face of adverse events”, for example unemployment insurance; and universal transfers “covering the whole population or part of the population on the basis of criteria other than income or previous employment” such as disability payments). (Causa and

Hermansen. 2017. P. 19) It should be noted that while redistribution has risen over time with inequality (at least between 1975 and 2015) in developed countries, (Alemán and Woods. 2018) it has not kept up with inequality in these same countries. (Causa and Hermansen. 2017) But, through using the difference in pre and post-taxes and transfer Gini coefficients, independent effects apart from inequality can be measured. This same method was used by Bozio et al. to consider redistribution.

## 5.2. Redistribution in Relation to the Populist Radical Right

Previous work that has examined some of this relationship has been somewhat mixed. Bergh and Karna incorporated social spending into their model, finding it to be largely insignificant but in the correct direction of social spending lowering populist radical right voting. (Bergh and Kärnä. 2022) Much of the other research in this area has revolved around unemployment insurance or social benefits on the individual level but did find statistically significant results. Swank and Betz for instance, combined an index of universal coverage of welfare benefits with a measure of income replace for the average production worker from unemployment insurance within one year from the OECD. They found a statistically significant, negative relationship between this measure of welfare and populist radical right voting. (Swank and Betz. 2003) Norris and Inglehart also utilized unemployment insurance and other social benefits as the main source of income as an independent variable for authoritarian and populist values; finding a statistically significant and negative relationship from these variables with both sets of values. Adding to this, Norris and Inglehart also measured subjective economic insecurity in relation to authoritarian and populist values, finding a statistically significant, positive relationship. (Inglehart and Norris. 2019)

This study adds to this literature by looking at total economic redistribution within a region. This not only avoids any possible slippage between welfare spending and reductions in inequality (for instance, not capturing all taxes and transfers), but also incorporates a broader measure of redistribution by capturing the progressivity of the tax system as well. Additionally, by using sub-country level data, this study is able to make a stronger connection between receiving economic redistribution and populist radical right voting to properly test the relationship.

## 5.3. Methodology

As stated, the hypothesis of this paper is that redistribution has little to no effect on populist radical right voting due to countries with high redistributive levels (even within Europe) having varying levels of success for populist radical right parties. One study (ranging from the early 1980's to early 2000's) found Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Poland all had high levels of redistribution, (Immervoll and Richardson. 2011) and all of these countries also have relatively successful populist radical right parties (Sweden Democrats, Danish People's Party, Finn's Party and Law and Justice respectively). Data from 2014 (which matches closest with the voting data used in this thesis ranging from 2010 – 2014) also list countries with populist radical right parties as offering some of the highest redistribution within Europe. For instance, Finland, Belgium, Denmark, Austria and France all rank within the top 8 of redistribution within European countries and all have had populist radical right parties; (Causa et al. 2019) some even highly successful such as the True Finns, Freedom of Austria Party, and France's National Front. Finally, data from 2018 indicates the same lack of effect from redistribution with Finland, France and Belgium all having high levels of redistribution as well as variously successful populist radical right parties. (Kuypers et al. 2021)

### 5.3.1. Regionality of the Data

To properly connect populist radical right voting to economic redistribution, regional, sub-country level data was utilized for all variables discussed below. This approach has three advantages. First, the connection between populist radical right voting and economic redistribution is much stronger than using national data. Second, using regional data increases the sample size for empirical testing. Third, regional units can be dropped when necessary while still having useable data from a given country. The regions within this study were chosen first, because they are all European and Europe has experienced significant populist radical right growth (Inglehart and Norris. 2016), and second to match as closely as possible the available data to a limited OECD redistribution dataset.

Sub-country levels were determined by Eurostat's NUTS categorization. This categorization scheme includes NUTS 1 "major socio-economic regions", NUTS 2 "basic regions for the application of regional policies" and NUTS 3 "small regions for specific diagnoses". (Eurostat. 2021) Due to data limitations for the regional redistribution data, The NUTS 1 and NUTS 2 levels were used throughout the analysis (see appendix 1 for a breakdown

of countries used in the sample by NUTS level and regions). To use these regional levels, voting data often had to be aggregated up from lower regional levels (either NUTS level 2 or 3). This consisted of a summation of populist radical right votes in smaller regions, a summation of total votes within those regions, and then dividing populist radical right votes by total votes to get the percent of votes received by the populist radical right within the require regional level. To measure the relationship between populist radical right voting and redistribution, a logged OLS test was conducted with the standard OLS formula

$$\text{Ln}(Y) = bX + e$$

### 5.3.2. Dependent Variable

Y is the percent of votes received by populist radical right parties (determined by the PopuList 2.0) in a given region for that country's lower legislative body. This was determined using the aggregation method described above. All regions that could be matched with the redistribution dataset used in this thesis were included. Each observation of the dependent variable had .01 added to remove zero values which allowed the log transformation to be done on the dependent variable. The coefficients of the independent variables represent a percentage change of the dependent variable. Additionally, only valid votes were counted when determining vote share and, if a runoff election was present, only the first election results were used for uniformity. A total of 133 regions were used in this study.

Data for the percentage of populist radical right voting was collected from the Constituency-Level Elections Archive (CLEA). (Kollman et al. 2019) Voting data ranges from 2012 – 2017 and corresponds to the closest, pervious year that economic redistributive data was available (which ranged from 2010 – 2014). For instance, the redistribution data in this study for Denmark is from 2013, but the voting data is from 2014 because that is when the closest election was held. (For a list of populist radical right parties in this study and their respective voting and redistributive years, see Appendix 1).

Populist radical right parties were defined according to the PopuList 2.0 coding of parties throughout Europe. Using expert survey's, The PopuList 2.0 supplies a categorization of European parties since 1989 on the dimensions of populist, far-right, far-left, and Eurosceptic. This is supported by "Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, the Amsterdam Centre

for European Studies, The Guardian, and the ECPR Standing Group on Extremism and Democracy”, and has been reviewed by over 80 academics in the field. (Rooduijn et al. 2019) Parties were included in the study that were categorized as both populist and far-right.

This source was picked for two reasons. First, it also relies on Mudde for definitions of populist and the far-right. That is, populist parties are “parties that endorse the set of ideas that society is ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite,” and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people. (Mudde 2004)” (Rooduijn et al. 2019) And far-right parties are “parties that are nativist (which is an ideology that holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group and that nonnative elements are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state) and authoritarian (which is the belief in a strictly ordered society, in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely) (Mudde 2007)”. (Rooduijn et al. 2019) While this thesis instead uses the term radical right, the drawing from the exact same source should clarify the congruence between this study and the PopuList 2.0’s categorization of parties.

Second, other scholars cited in this thesis have also utilized this database. For instance, Bichay and Bell et al. uses the database directly to categorize populist radical right parties, (Bihcay. 2022) (Bell et al. 2023) and Bergh and Anders Kärnä uses it supplementary to verify the parties they use in their sample as populist far-left or far-right (Bergh and Kärnä. 2022)

Populist radical right voting was distributed close to an exponential decay distribution (a high number of observations at low populist radical right voting levels, which quickly fell as populist radical right voting increased). After adding .01 to each observation, this data was easily changed to a fairly normal distribution with a log transformation. This left a kurtosis of 2.11 and a skew of 0.36, close enough to the normal distribution of kurtosis 3 and skew 0 to utilize a linear OLS regression. (George. 2010) This was then multiplied by negative one to get positive values of populist radical right voting. This creates an easier interpretation of estimated coefficients while having no effect on either the logged distribution of populist radical right voting or the estimated coefficients themselves. (For the distribution, logged distribution and Cullen and Frey graph of populist radical right voting as a dependent variable, see Appendix 2)

### 5.3.3. Independent Variables

To understand the relationship between redistribution and populist radical right voting, multiple OLS tests are performed with a changing matrix of variables. Initially, just redistribution is utilized as the only independent variable, but more variables were added to specify the relationship between populist radical right voting and redistribution. If a variable showed a substantively and statistically significant relationship with populist radical right voting, it would be used in other tests to account for its role in such voting. The only variable that differed from this method was redistribution itself which, being the prime independent variable of interest, was used in all tests. Ultimately, 8 total OLS regressions were conducted.

As mentioned, regarding the independent variables in the equation above, X is a changing matrix of variables (changing depending on the test. This is presented in more detail below). Because the concept of interest is economic redistribution, the prime regressor was the difference between the pre-taxes and transfers Gini coefficient and post-taxes and transfers Gini coefficient. This captures just the economic redistribution that is built into the policy of a given region; as mentioned, this approach to examine economic redistribution was also used by Bozio et al. as well. (Bozio et al. 2020) Pre and post-taxes and transfers Gini coefficient data was given by the OECD's regional wellbeing database (OECD. 2014) The data ranges from .133 to .273 and ranges in years from 2010 – 2014. Unfortunately, only a single year was available per country from the OECD. Because of this data limitation, the OLS regression below captures a snapshot of each region as opposed to the effect of redistribution over time (limitations of this are addressed below). As mentioned above though, the sample size and variance of the redistribution data still allows for a discernable effect of redistribution within that region's election year.

Additional independent variables included tertiary education, poverty, population density, the number of foreign citizens and non-EU citizens living within the region, and the percent of men in the regions. Higher education has been argued to lower populist radical right voting. As mentioned, Kurer and Van Staalduinen found that higher education shifts voting from the populist radical right to the populist radical left. (Kurer and Van Staalduinen. 2022) Additionally, Norris and Inglehart have found that college education lowers authoritarian and populist values. (Norris and Inglehart. 2019) Due to the importance of college education, this study also uses tertiary education as its educational cut off point. Specifically, the variable is coded as the percent of the population between 25-65 within the region that has completed any level between short-cycle

tertiary training (which is between post-secondary training and a bachelor's degree, but is defined as at least two years of education) up to a doctoral degree. (UNESCO. 2012)

Poverty was added to the model to distinguish between the effects of absolute economic deprivation and redistribution. Specifically, regardless of redistributive levels, poverty may drive populist radical right voting as would be predicted by the economic "losers" theory suggested by Swank and Betz. (Swank and Betz. 2003) Poverty also deserves special attention due to its possible relationship with economic redistribution. Since redistribution is designed to assist during financial hardship (or potential hardship), the presence of poverty in the model could either explain all the effects of redistribution, or be colinear with redistribution, thus making statistical significance unreliable. Considering the first issue of distinguishing between poverty and redistribution, two measures of poverty are used; poverty before pre-taxes and transfers, and poverty after post-taxes and transfers. Both measures consist of the percent of the population within the region with incomes of 60% of the median regional income or less. (OECD. 2014)

Since the difference between these two poverty measures is entirely due to redistribution, adding the after taxes and transfers poverty measure will largely eclipse the redistribution variable. Because of this, the pre-taxes and transfers poverty rate is the primary poverty variable used. After-taxes and transfers poverty levels are still incorporated in one test because, while the correlation between redistribution and the difference between these poverty measures is high at almost .6, redistribution does more than just poverty alleviation (that is, the difference between the poverty measures is a subset of total redistribution). For instance, consider a terminated worker kept out of poverty through unemployment insurance. This would register in the redistribution data but not in the poverty data. Thus, testing the effect of redistribution with after-taxes and transfers poverty is still fruitful to determine if redistribution matters outside of poverty reduction.

Concerning the second issue of collinearity, using a Generalized Variance Inflation Factor (GVIF) test, no tests show significant collinearity issues. (James. et al. 2013) The GVIF for redistribution does peak at 6 when including the interaction variables (which can be considered high, (Frost. 2020) but others have argued that GVIF scores under 10 are reliable) (James. et al. 2013), but the consistence of the redistribution results across all regressions increases the confidence of these results. (For GVIF results, see Appendix 4). Additionally, the



interaction variables between pre-taxes and transfers poverty and redistribution, and pre-taxes and transfers poverty and education were only included in one model due to finding a relationship between the variables using simple OLS models. (For correlations and OLS results of the components of the interaction variables see Appendix 3)

As listed above, immigration has had mixed results regarding populist radical right voting. (Golder. 2016) (Stockemer et al. 2018) Accordingly, the potential exists for immigration to alter populist radical right voting regardless of redistribution. To account for this, two measures of immigration were used, both from 2011 census data. The first was the number of foreign citizens within the region. That is, any citizen of another country that is living in the region during the time of the 2011 census. The second is a subset of the first; that is, the number of non-EU citizens within the region. This was used as well to capture a potential “Otherness” that may be displayed to non-EU citizens that can increase populist radical right voting. Due to both substantive and statistical insignificance of the foreign citizens variable, and the theoretical greater importance on non-EU citizens (due to a perceived incompatibility discussed above), only the non-EU citizen variable is shown below. Importantly though, regional data for asylum seekers was not available, and thus not incorporated into the model. This could miss a potential combination of Otherness and perceived neediness that could increase populist radical right voting.

Population density was added as a proxy for ruralness. This was measured as the number of people per square kilometer. Population density was added due to Norris and Inglehart finding that greater ruralness correlates with populist radical right voting. (Norris and Inglehart. 2019) The percent of the population that is male was also added due to significant scholarship arguing that men are more likely to join or vote for the populist radical right. For instance, Norris and Inglehart note this, (Norris and Inglehart. 2019) as well as Mulinari and Neergaard (Mulinari and Neergaard. 2013); though out of 41 quantitative studies, Stockemer et al. found that the variable “male” was only positive (driving up populist radical right voting) and statistically significant in 55% of the studies. (Stockemer et al. 2018)

Regional data for poverty was given by the OECD and data for tertiary education, population density, both immigration measures, and the percentage of men in the region were given by Eurostat. (Eurostat. 2022. A) (Eurostat. 2022. B) (Eurostat. 2022. C) (Eurostat. 2011)

(OECD. 2014) Data for all variables within a region were matched by year according to their redistribution year. This was done to capture the effect of one year on the closest election. Only the two variables for immigration differed as both measures came from 2011 census data.

Finally, country dummy variables were used to capture additional in-country effects as well; particularly differing tastes for economic redistribution. A dummy variable of former communist countries was also tested to determine if a communist history created differing reactions to economic redistribution as suggested by Trevor Allen, (Allen. 2017) but no discernable difference was detected in this analysis and thus dropped. Finally, it should be noted that, while EU membership has been found to have a statistically significant relationship with populist radical right voting, (Bergh and Kärnä. 2022) the use of an EU dummy would be moot due to all countries in the analysis being part of the EU during the time of interest (2012 – 2017).

Again, redistribution is measured as the difference between pre-taxes and transfers Gini coefficient and the post-tax and transfers Gini coefficient. Since the difference between these two measures is only taxes and transfers, this captures the degree of redistribution within a region. This approach to examining redistribution also used by Bozio et. al. as well. (Bozio et. al. 2020)

#### 5.3.4. Limitations

the following are limitations to the methodology. First, as mentioned, the data is limited to one year per region due to the restrictions of using a dataset that contains both pre and post-taxes and transfers inequality data, as well as being at the regional level. This misses potential changes in preference for redistribution over time.

Additionally, since all the data is from Europe, inferences from this analysis are limited to Europe as well. For these reasons, this study is only able to state whether redistribution was impactful for one election within each region in Europe within the sample.

Furthermore, the method used here is unable to remove reverse causality as a possibility. That is, redistribution may have an affect on voting patterns, but voting could also be affecting the level of redistribution within a region. For instance, if there is a negative relationship between redistribution and populist radical right voting, mainstream parties may elect to increase redistribution due to increasing electoral success of the populist radical right within their country to undermine their support.



Density	(0.00)							
Percent Male	-0.57 (10.81)							
Austria	-0.32 (0.17)	-0.16 (0.19)	0.03 (0.19)	0.02 (0.19)	-0.15 (0.18)	0.02 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.20)	0.03 (0.19)
Belgium	1.01*** (0.28)	1.16*** (0.28)	0.89** (0.28)	0.92** (0.29)	0.61* (0.29)	0.88** (0.28)	0.82** (0.30)	0.90** (0.32)
Czechia	0.63*** (0.19)	0.79*** (0.19)	0.98*** (0.20)	0.97*** (0.20)	0.82*** (0.19)	0.94*** (0.20)	0.95*** (0.20)	0.99*** (0.20)
Denmark	-0.43 (0.23)	-0.21 (0.24)	-0.3 (0.23)	-0.32 (0.24)	-0.54* (0.22)	-0.39 (0.23)	-0.30 (0.23)	-0.28 (0.28)
Germany	1.86*** (0.16)	1.88*** (0.15)	1.82*** (0.15)	1.83*** (0.16)	1.72*** (0.16)	1.87*** (1.50)	1.81*** (0.15)	1.82*** (0.16)
Hungary	-1.5*** (0.28)	-1.4*** (0.28)	-1.3*** (0.27)	-1.3*** (0.27)	-1.4*** (0.27)	-1.3*** (0.26)	-1.3*** (0.27)	-1.3*** (0.29)
Italy	0.99*** (0.15)	0.97*** (0.14)	1.21*** (0.16)	1.2*** (0.16)	1.09*** (0.17)	1.23*** (0.16)	1.21*** (0.16)	1.21*** (0.18)
Poland	-1.2*** (0.22)	-1.2*** (0.22)	-1.0*** (0.22)	-1.0*** (0.22)	-1.2*** (0.22)	-1.2*** (0.22)	-1.0*** (0.22)	-1.0*** (0.26)
Spain	2.53*** (0.16)	2.34*** (0.18)	2.23*** (0.18)	2.26*** (0.19)	2.24*** (0.18)	2.19*** (0.17)	2.25*** (0.18)	2.23*** (0.20)
Sweden	0.12 (0.20)	0.13 (0.20)	-0.02 (0.20)	-0.02 (0.20)	-0.14 (0.21)	-0.15 (0.20)	0.00 (0.20)	-0.01 (0.27)
UK	0.21 (0.16)	0.41* (0.18)	0.2 (0.18)	0.19 (0.19)	-0.09 (0.18)	0.20 (1.81)	0.17 (0.19)	0.21 (0.24)
Norway	-0.07 (0.22)	-0.01 (0.21)	-0.25 (0.22)	-0.27 (0.22)	-0.40 (0.23)	-0.41 (0.23)	-0.21 (0.22)	-0.23 (0.33)
Residual	0.45	0.44	0.42	0.43	0.43	0.42	0.43	0.43
Standard Error								
Degrees of	119	118	117	115	117	116	116	114

Freedom								
R <sup>2</sup>	0.86	0.87	0.88	0.88	0.87	0.88	0.88	0.88

\*\*\* = 0.001, \*\* = 0.01, \* = 0.05. Two-sided test

After running multiple regressions, redistribution does not appear to have an independent effect on populist radical right voting. While a substantive effect is reported, statistical significance was not reached at the 95% confidence level (though in multiple tests it did pass the 90% confidence level). Interestingly, poverty within the region was a strong predictor of populist radical right voting, driving up such voting by 2% – 3%. This finding does conform with some of the literature addressed above—for instance, Norris and Inglehart’s finding that perceived economic insecurity has a positive impact on authoritarian and populist values (Norris and Inglehart. 2019)—and may also be explained by their argument of period effects occurring from economic threats. (Norris and Inglehart. 2017) That is, greater poverty within a region may increase the importance of material values over post-material values, driving up populist radical right voting (though more research would be needed to determine this connection). Due to the significance of poverty, it should be noted though that this method may undervalue the connection between populist radical right voting and redistribution as the data used captures poverty reduction, but not poverty prevention.

Surprisingly, higher levels of regional tertiary education was associated with higher populist radical right voting; the tests consistently reporting that tertiary education was associated with a 2% increase in populist radical right voting. This does confirm with some scholarship, particularly Stockemer et al.’s finding that, out of 41 studies, only 33% found education to have a negative, statistically significant relationship with populist radical right voting, but the result still came as a surprise to the author. (Stockemer et al. 2018) The lack of a substantive effect from immigration was also surprising. While statistical significance was reached, the effect reported was minuscule. Similar to the education result, while surprising, this also conforms with some scholarship. For instance, as mentioned above, both Golder and Stockemer et al. note that immigration has been found to have mixed results regarding populist radical right voting. (Golder. 2016) (Stockemer et al. 2018)

Ultimately, this study has found evidence that economic security does matter when considering the factors that contribute to populist radical right voting. As a region experiences more poverty, the likelihood of a more successful populist radical right party increases. Interestingly, redistribution appears to not mitigate this effect, though more data would illuminate this relationship more.

## **Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion**

### 6.1 The Relationship Between Poverty and Populist Radical Right Voting

The results within the study strongly indicate that poverty increases populist radical right voting, but a question remains of why. Since this thesis uses aggregate data as opposed to individual data, it is unable to determine if those in poverty are more likely to vote for the populist radical right or if the presence of poverty in the region are affecting those in poverty to vote more for the populist radical right.

There is some evidence offered by Bergh and Kärnä that the perceived possibility of falling into poverty may influence those relatively close to it (this is from extrapolating from their finding the those working routine jobs that may face termination are more likely to vote for the populist radical right), (Bergh and Kärnä. 2022) but there is some significant evidence that suggests feelings of economic threat generally contribute to populist radical right voting. (Norris and Inglehart. 2019) (Rhodes-Purdy et al. 2021) (Kros and Coenders. 2019) Feelings of economic threat are likely high among those directly experiencing poverty, indicating that experiencing poverty may drive up populist radical right voting on the individual level. Ford et al. found some evidence supporting this as well, noting that people experiencing poverty made up the core of UKIP voters, a UK populist radical right party. (Ford et al. 2012)

Accordingly, while this thesis does not disagree that the presence of poverty can drive up populist radical right even for individuals not experiencing it, this section will offer four possible reasons why experiencing poverty may drive up populist radical right voting for those actually in poverty. These are: that lower socioeconomic individuals are more likely to hold authoritarian values, (Lipset. 1959) (Napier and Jost. 2008) (Norris and Inglehart. 2019) that those in poverty are responding to a negative economic situation with anti-establishment voting, (Alvarez et al. 2018) that the political incorrectness among the populist radical right is a strong positive symbol

to those in poverty, (Rosenblum. et al. 2020) (Garrido. 2017) and finally, that the welfare chauvinism that is proposed by the populist radical right is appealing to those in poverty. (Kros and Coenders. 2019) (Careja and Harris. 2022)

#### 6.1.1. Are Those in Poverty Naturally Authoritarian?

Academic connections between the poor or working class and authoritarian values is at least over 60 years old. In Lipset's 1959 article *Democracy and Working-Class Authoritarianism*, Lipset uses survey data to demonstrate that the lower economic strata are more intolerant of civil liberties of unpopular or minority groups, and more favorable to the concentration of political power. He goes on to argue that this authoritarian orientation is related to harsh social upbringings based on obedience, lower education and cultural homogeneity among the poor; ultimately arguing (in a rather dismissive manner) that these factors limit their judgement and reasoning capabilities. (Lipset. 1959)

Napier and Jost dissect this relationship between socioeconomic status and authoritarian values further but do find a relationship between the two. By breaking down authoritarianism into four psychological components—conventionalism, moral absolutism, obedience to authority, and cynicism— and using World Values Survey data from 19 democracies, they find only the last two components (obedience to authority and cynicism) are related to low socioeconomic status. To operationalize obedience the question of the importance of teaching children obedience was used and for cynicism, a question measuring willingness to trust others was used. (Napier and Jost. 2008)

Norris and Inglehart have addressed this conversation as well. They first state that, due to the increased success of populist radical right parties during the 2000's, the examination of the relationship between socioeconomic status and authoritarian values has been renewed, while also noting that the relationship appears to be somewhat inconsistent. For instance, citing that in the 2016 U.S. election the majority of households with incomes of \$50,000 or less went to Hillary, not Trump who was the more authoritarian candidate. But, using European Social Survey data, they too found a positive relationship between poor socioeconomics and authoritarian values, as well as poor socioeconomics and populist values.

“Authoritarian values and populist attitudes are strongest among the working class, low-income households, those employed in the manufacturing sectors, people reporting subjective income insecurity (finding it difficult to live on their current household income), and those dissatisfied with the present state of the national economy.” (Norris and Inglehart. 2019. P. 140)

Interestingly, populism (mistrust of politicians, parliaments, and parties) (Norris and Inglehart. 2019. P. 143) was predicted even more strongly than authoritarianism by perceived economic insecurity and perception of the national economy; indicating that poor economic conditions can increase cynicism of particularly politicians or political parties. Additionally, these findings were robust even when controlling for sex, education, and religiosity. This finding is also used by Norris and Inglehart as an indicate that material values do matter more for those experiencing economic precarity and that material values are themselves predictive of voting for populist radical right parties (as discussed in the chapter 4).

#### 6.1.2. Protest Voting

It is important to highlight, unlike Lipset’s original argument would content, poor voters may be voting for the populist radical right due to responding to poor economic conditions. That is, they are not just authoritarian oriented (or maybe not oriented toward authoritarianism at all), but are driven to anti-establishment parties due to a feeling of being left behind or forgotten by the mainstream parties; thus causing a form of protest voting. Alvarez et al. noted that protest voting has been defined as multiple concepts and instead suggest the term of insurgent party protest voting when voting for “candidates or parties that are antiestablishment, unorthodox, ideologically extreme, or some combination of these characteristics”. (Alvarez et al. 2018. P. 138) They go on to cite a number of authors who have found that insurgent party protest voting is often not a form of protest at all, but instead genuine ideological congruence between the voter and a non-mainstream party or candidate. For instance, they note that both Van der Brug et al. and Ivarsflaten set out to determine the presence of protest voting among European anti-immigrant parties and found supporters of these parties were equally worried about their chosen party’s ideological position as a voter of a mainstream party. Ford et al. on the other hand, did find evidence for protest voting for UKIP in Britian, but not among the poor. They found that Conservative voters switched to UKIP temporarily for the 2009 European Parliamentary election



but continued to vote Conservative in the general elections, but the working-class and those more likely to “report difficulty living comfortably on their current income” instead made up the core of UKIP; that is, voters that continued to vote for UKIP both in the European election and in the general election. (Ford et al. 2012) Ultimately, where protest voting does exist as a reason for the increase in the populist radical right, it appears unlikely that those in poverty participate in protest voting.

### 6.1.3. Rhetorical Appeal and Political Incorrectness

Another reason those in poverty may vote for the populist radical right is due to the informal language used by the populist radical right. Though not described as part of the radical right, Garrido demonstrates a connection of identity between the Filipino populist Joseph Estrada and the urban poor due to Estrada’s use of a populist rhetorical style. Garrido defines this as “a manner of acting or speaking that serves to cultivate popular identification” (Garrido. 2017. P. 648) and includes tactics such as anti-elite rhetoric and shirking social norms. He goes on to note that this form of identification, which was perceived as sincerity from Estrada, was durable for the urban poor even though Estrada’s policies were actually harmful to the poor. (Garrido. 2017)

The use of political incorrectness by the populist radical right could also point to a form of identity connection between the poorer classes and the populist radical right. Rosenblum et al. defines political correctness as “using language (or behavior) to seem sensitive to others’ feelings, especially those others who seem socially disadvantaged” (Rosenblum et al. 2020. P. 76) They go on to empirically test the effects of political incorrectness (which should be understood as the opposed of the above definition) and find that depending on the group being targeted by the political incorrectness, it can increase the authenticity of the speaker for the listener. This is context dependent based on the perception the listener has of the targeted group. For instance, they found that referring to undocumented immigrants as “illegals” increased authenticity among conservatives, but referring to poor Whites as “White trash” decreased it. (Rosenblum. et al. 2020)

The ability to appear sincere or authentic could be quite powerful for lower economic classes due to the heightened cynicism and mistrust of politicians and political parties that has been found among the lower economic classes by both Napier and Jost and Norris and Inglehart.

Accordingly, populist style, or political incorrectness are likely drivers of the populist radical right voting from the poor.

#### 6.1.4. Welfare Chauvinism

Finally, we should note the possible appeal of welfare chauvinism offered by populist radical right parties. Careja and Harris state that an early definition of welfare chauvinism was a “preference that ‘welfare services should be restricted to ‘our own’” (Careja and Harris. 2022. P. 213) and that this was later expanded on by Kitschelt and McGann, writing that welfare chauvinism is a “system of social protection for those who belong to the ethnically defined community and who have contributed to it”. (Careja and Harris. 2022. P. 213) This orientation to provide welfare to only the native population could be quite appealing to those in poverty as it may act as a signal that either more help from the political system, or less resources will be “wasted” on non-natives and thus can be allocated to themselves.

Careja and Harris note that significant evidence has been found to indicate that subjective feelings of economic insecurity has been linked to a preference for welfare chauvinism. (Careja and Harris. 2022) Taking just one example, Kros and Coenders found that economic insecurity is linked to anti-immigrant attitudes (which would indicate welfare chauvinism), but also to a preference for greater economic egalitarianism (which would tend away from welfare chauvinism since this is a preference to redistribution to all). Importantly though, Kros and Coenders find that the anti-immigrant sentiment, which contributed to a preference for welfare chauvinism, outweighed the egalitarian effects. (Kros and Coenders. 2019)

This connection between economic precarity and a preference for welfare chauvinism is important since, as Ennser-Jedenastik has noted, welfare chauvinism has become an important aspect of populist radical right party platforms. (Ennser-Jedenastik. 2018) This indicates that welfare chauvinistic rhetoric may be successful at driving populist radical right up among the poor.

## 6.2. A Psychological Separation Between Inequality and Redistribution?

Redistribution clearly lowers economic inequality, but a question still remains as to whether redistribution reverses the psychological effects of pre-tax inequality. This is an important distinction. If there are reasons to believe that redistribution is ineffective at reversing

the psychological effects of pre-tax inequality, then pre-tax inequality may still be relevant to populist radical right voting though redistribution is not.

There is evidence that redistribution does reverse the psychological effects of pre-tax inequality. For instance, Wienk et al. found that inequality decreased happiness and, importantly for this analysis, decreased trust and perceptions of fairness for particularly the lower economic classes. They proceed to find that redistribution, by decreasing inequality, does appear to increase trust and perceptions of fairness. (Wienk et al. 2021) They even test a specific form of redistribution, the progressivity of the tax code, finding that greater progressivity increased happiness, trust and perceptions of fairness. (Wienk et al. 2021) This is important for this analysis since increased feelings of trust and perception of fairness may decrease anti-elite sentiments and the perceptions of corruption which drive up populist radical right voting. Kros and Coenders find further evidence that redistribution does not just reverse economic effects of inequality, but also psychological effects. As noted above, they found that economic insecurity increased anti-immigration attitudes, but also note that receiving redistribution lowers the perception of ethnic threat and increases the belief in economic egalitarianism. (Kros and Coenders. 2019)

But there are still some reasons to hold doubt. Residential segregation by socioeconomic status has risen as inequality has grown. (Hu and Liang. 2022) Meaning, households of similar wealth are showing a stronger tendency to spatially group together. This can be concerning as evidence has shown negative outcomes for the neighborhoods of lower socioeconomic status; for instance, lower college attendance and lifetime earnings. This is suggested to be caused by a “less beneficial social network”. (Hu and Liang. 2022. P. 520) Additionally, using Swedish data, Hu and Liang find that redistribution does not reverse this trend. After accounting for both reverse causality (that existing neighborhood segregation accounts for the growing inequality between neighborhoods) and mechanical effects (that, due to redistribution being targeted at low- and middle-income households, higher redistribution will naturally make the neighborhood segregation by economic standing appear smaller), redistribution has no effect on wealth segregation. Instead, the authors suggested that policies that target pre-tax income, such as education, should be used to decrease this form of segregation instead of redistribution that alters post-tax income. (Hu and Liang. 2022) This spatial separation between economic classes may

still create feelings of separation or alienation which can drive feelings of mistrust or suspicion in a manner that may not be captured in the studies above.

Additionally, while Wienk et al. found that a form of redistribution, the progressivity of the tax code, increases trust and perceptions of fairness, other forms, such as receiving welfare, can cause shame (Mitchell and Vincent. 2021), which has been associated with feelings of rage as well. (Ray. 2014) This feeling of shame has also been connected to other forms of economic assistance as well, such as food banks (Garthwaite. 2016) and charity. (Parsell and Clarke. 2020) Feelings of shame and rage are likely not only context dependent on the form of redistribution (for instance, the progressive tax code is universal while being a welfare recipient is individual), but Mitchell and Vincent also point out that the acceptance of welfare is context specific to culture as well. (Mitchell and Vincent. 2021) For instance, use of Austrian public housing is considered highly acceptable as 80% - 90% of Austrians are eligible for public housing. (Cavaillé and Ferwerda. 2023)

Ultimately, while redistribution appears to have some strong positive effects that could indicate a reversal of emotions created by inequality that can contribute to populist radical right voting (for instance, rising trust and perceptions of justice and raising the importance of economic egalitarianism), more research is needed to understand the role of shame and rage regarding receiving specific types of redistribution and in specific contexts, as well as more investigation into the psychological effects of neighborhood segregation by pre-tax income, even if post-tax income is more equal.

### 6.3. Conclusion

Promoting the understanding of the threat posed to liberal democracy from the populist radical right is important for framing any policy recommendation that addresses the populist radical right. This thesis does this by describing the post-liberal thought that acts as an ideologic backbone to the populist radical right, as well as provide examples of the reduction of liberalism due to the populist radical right. The classifications of the populist radical right are investigated, with a more in-depth look at the components of the term used throughout this thesis (populist radical right) as well as a justification for differentiating the populist radical right from fascism.

Arguments revolving around both culture and economics regarding the growth of the populist radical right are offered as well as noting that these concepts (culture and economics) don't have to be mutually exclusive. The novel contribution of this thesis is then presented. That is, an examination of the effect of redistribution on populist radical right voting throughout Europe that focuses on the regional level and includes all forms of redistribution. This analysis ultimately finds that poverty is an important factor in the growth of the populist radical right, but redistribution is unimpactful. Accordingly, a discussion is provided regarding the connection between poverty and populist radical right voting, and whether redistribution is also the psychological opposite of inequality. The first discussion regarding the effects of poverty also constitutes a contribution to the literature by compiling possible connections between poverty and populist radical right voting. In this regard, this thesis explored the avenues of: authoritarian values being held more widely among those in poverty, the use of protest voting by those in poverty, the appeal of politically incorrect language by populist radical right figures to those in poverty, and the appeal of welfare chauvinism to those in poverty. Scholarship indicates that all but protest voting are possible reasons why those in poverty may be more likely to vote for the populist radical right. Additionally, it should be recognized the below explanations are not mutually exclusive reasons either.

Due to the importance of poverty regarding populist radical right voting, this thesis recommends policies that promote pre-tax equality as opposed to relying solely on redistribution. A focus on equalizing pre-tax income as opposed to post-tax income is important for at least two reasons. First, using French data, Bozio et al. found that altering pre-tax income (which they call predistribution) is significantly more impactful on inequality than post-tax income. Specifically, that predistribution is roughly three times more impactful over their period of examination (1900 – 2018) and completely accounts for the difference of inequality levels between the U.S. and France. (Bozio. et al. 2020) Like Hu and Liang, they also highlight education as a policy area to target to adjust pre-tax income, but also note the legal structure between firms and workers, the legal structure of the labor market, and health care policies as other examples.

Second, altering pre-tax income will likely reduce feelings of shame or rage that may be associated with some forms of redistribution discussed above. While focused on receiving charity Parsell and Clarke note that, only being able to receive and unable to reciprocate has

negative psychological effects. (Parsell and Clarke. 2020) For instance, feelings of vulnerability and asymmetric power relationships are created. In this context, some forms of redistribution may also induce feelings of vulnerability and conceptions of asymmetric power. Accordingly, altering pre-tax income as opposed to post-tax income would not just be more efficient (as argued by Bozio et al.) but also offer more psychological benefits that may direct voters away from the populist radical right. Ultimately, more research is needed to understand the most impactful forms of redistribution, and whether pre-distribution is a preferable policy solution.

## Notes

One:

While this paper does not explicitly investigate why some regions are not prone to populist radical right voting, presumably it should be due to lower levels of environmental factors listed throughout this thesis. For instance, lower economic insecurity or precarity, lower levels of immigration, lower levels of education, etc. But, interestingly, Norris and Inglehart note that neither Ireland nor Iceland have had a successful populist radical right party, but both were hit by at least one similar factor as other European countries in the form of the 2008 financial crash. (Norris and Inglehart. 2019) O'Malley does offer a possible reason for this regarding the Irish case. He argues that the Irish party Sinn Féin fills the space of the populist radical right without actually being a populist radical right party.

This seems like an odd argument. Sinn Féin is a populist, nationalist party, but they lack the radical right aspects of the other parties described in this thesis as they are instead a democratic socialist party. (Fadel and Marx 2022) Instead of focusing on the party though, O'Malley argues that Sinn Féin voters are more representative of populist radical right voters. That is, predominately male, working class, and low educated relative to other party constituencies, as well as holding greater anti-immigration and nationalist preference (the latter as a demand for uniting the North and Republic of Ireland). (O'Malley. 2008) While Sinn Féin has certainly represented the nationalist aspect by strongly favoring a united Ireland, they have also been quite clear that they are not anti-immigration and in fact, pro-multiculturalism. (Murphy. 2020)

While Sinn Féin's voter profile at the time may have fit the populist radical right voting profile, Murphy highlights that the draw for these voters isn't anti-immigration, as is common among populist radical right parties, but instead Sinn Féin's ability to offer a true economic alternative to the mainstream parties. Murphy first notes that Sinn Féin has done increasingly well electorally over time. As part of the IRA, Sinn Féin had been a party to the violent clashes regarding Irish independence. During the 80's the party began distancing itself from the IRA and focused more on politics. Since then, Sinn Féin has seen a significant increase in electoral success, even coming in first in the 2020 Republic election, and first in the 2022 North Irish election. Murphy argues that Sinn Féin was able to utilize populist rhetoric like populist radical right parties (for instance, claiming that other parties were only concerned with elite wellbeing while they, Sinn Féin, represented the common person), but were able to use this constructively as opposed to destructively. (Murphy. 2020) Additionally, Murphy argues that Sinn Fein was able to benefit from the appearance of an ethnically focused party, without actually expressing such an ethnic concern.

“This emphasis on nationalist Ireland's highest aspiration coupled with the party's claim to be the vanguard of the fight for Irish freedom lends Sinn Fein an ethno-nationalist character similar to that of several other European populists” (Murphy. 2020)

Ultimately though, Murphy is arguing that Sinn Féin's main draw is due to their populist economics which centers around “ordinary” people. For instance, she argues that part of Sinn Féin's success is a delayed reaction to the 2008 financial crash; citing an exit poll from the 2020 Republic election, where 63% of voters stated that felt they had not benefited from the economic recovery. Murphy notes that due to these particularities, Sinn Féin will not provide insights into other populist radical right parties.

“The normalization of Sinn Fein in Irish politics offers few lessons for the future of populism in other countries. People voted for Sinn Fein because they want genuine, sweeping reform of the political and social system, but they want the basic confines of that system to remain relatively the same.” (Murphy. 2020)

But the draw from a populist Left party may provide a general insight in and of itself. For instance, research above (Bergh and Kärnä. 2022) (Kurer and Van Staaldunin. 2022) has already indicated that, for some voters, the choice is between either the populist Left or the

populist Right, skipping over mainstream parties. This was also partially seen in the 2016 U.S. presidential election when 1 in 10 voters for Bernie Sanders switched to Donald Trump after Sanders lost the Democratic primary. (Kurtzleben. 2017) This may indicate that the success of Sinn Féin has helped to avoid the rise of a populist radical right party in Ireland. Ultimately though, more information than what is provided in this thesis is needed to examine and expand on the ability of the populist Left to act as an alternative to the populist radical right.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

Country. Gini difference year and election data year. NUTS Region

**Austria.** 2013 and 2013. NUTS 2

#### Regions

1. Burgenland
2. Lower Austria
3. Vienna
4. Carinthia
5. Styria
6. Upper Austria
7. Salzburg
8. Tyrol
9. Vorarlberg

#### Parties

1. Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)
2. Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ)

**Belgium.** 2013 and 2014. NUTS 1

#### Regions

1. Brussels capital region
2. Flemish Region
3. Wallonia

#### Parties

1. Flemish Interest (VB)
2. People's Party (PP)

#### **Czech Republic.** 2013 and 2013. NUTS 2

#### Regions

1. Prague
2. Central Bohemian Region
3. Southwest
4. Northwest
5. Northeast
6. Southeast
7. Central Moravia
8. Moravia-Silesia

#### Parties

1. Dawn (Usvit)

#### **Germany.** 2013 and 2013. NUTS 1

#### Regions

1. Baden-Württemberg
2. Bavaria
3. Berlin
4. Brandenburg
5. Hesse
6. Lower Saxony
7. North Rhine-Westphalia
8. Rhineland-Palatinate
9. Saxony-Anhalt
10. Schleswig-Holstein
11. Thuringia

#### Parties

1. Alternative for Germany (AfD)

#### **Denmark.** 2013 and 2015. NUTS 2

#### Regions

1. Capital
2. Zealand
3. Southern Denmark
4. Central Jutland
5. Northern Jutland

#### Parties

1. Danish People's Party (DF)

#### **Spain.** 2013 and 2015. NUTS 2

#### Regions

1. Galicia
2. Asturias
3. Cantabria
4. Aragon
5. Madrid
6. Castile and León
7. Castile-La Mancha
8. Extremadura
9. Catalonia
10. Valencia
11. Andalusia
12. Murcia
13. Canary Islands

#### Parties

1. Vox

#### **France.** 2010 and 2012. NUTS 2

#### Regions

1. Ile de France
2. Champagne-Ardenne
3. Picardy
4. Upper Normandy
5. Centre
6. Lower Normandy
7. Burgundy
8. Nord-Pas-de-Calais
9. Lorraine
10. Alsace
11. Franche-Comté
12. Pays de la Loire

13. Brittany
14. Poitou-Charentes
15. Aquitaine
16. Midi-Pyrénées
17. Limousin
18. Rhône-Alpes
19. Auvergne
20. Languedoc-Roussillon
21. Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur
22. Corsica

#### Parties

1. National Front

#### **Hungary.** 2013 and 2014. NUTS 1

#### Regions

1. Central Hungary
2. Transdanubia
3. Great Plain and North

#### Parties

1. Fidesz-Kdnp
2. Movement For a Better Hungary (Jobbik)

#### **Italy.** 2013 and 2013. NUTS 2

#### Regions

1. Piedmont
2. Liguria
3. Lombardy
4. Abruzzo
5. Molise
6. Campania
7. Apulia
8. Basilicata
9. Calabria
10. Sicily
11. Sardinia
12. Veneto
13. Friuli-Venezia Giulia
14. Emilia-Romagna
15. Tuscany
16. Umbria

17. Marche

18. Lazio

#### Parties

1. Lega Nord (LN)
2. Brothers of Italy (FdI)

#### **Poland.** 2013 and 2015. NUTS 1

#### Regions

1. Central region
2. South region
3. East region
4. Northeast West region
5. South-West region
6. North region

#### Parties

1. Law and Justice (PiS)
2. Kukiz '15

#### **Sweden.** 2014 and 2014. NUTS 2

#### Regions

1. Stockholm
2. East Middle Sweden
3. Småland with Islands
4. South Sweden
5. West Sweden
6. North Middle Sweden
7. Central Norrland
8. Upper Norrland

#### Parties

1. Sweden Democrats (SD)

#### **United Kingdom.** 2011 and 2015. NUTS 1

#### Regions

1. North East England
2. North West England
3. Yorkshire and The Humber
4. East Midlands
5. West Midlands

6. East of England
7. South East England
8. South West England
9. Wales
10. Scotland
11. Northern Ireland

#### Parties

1. UK Independence Party (UKIP)

#### **Norway.** 2014 and 2017. NUTS 2

#### Regions

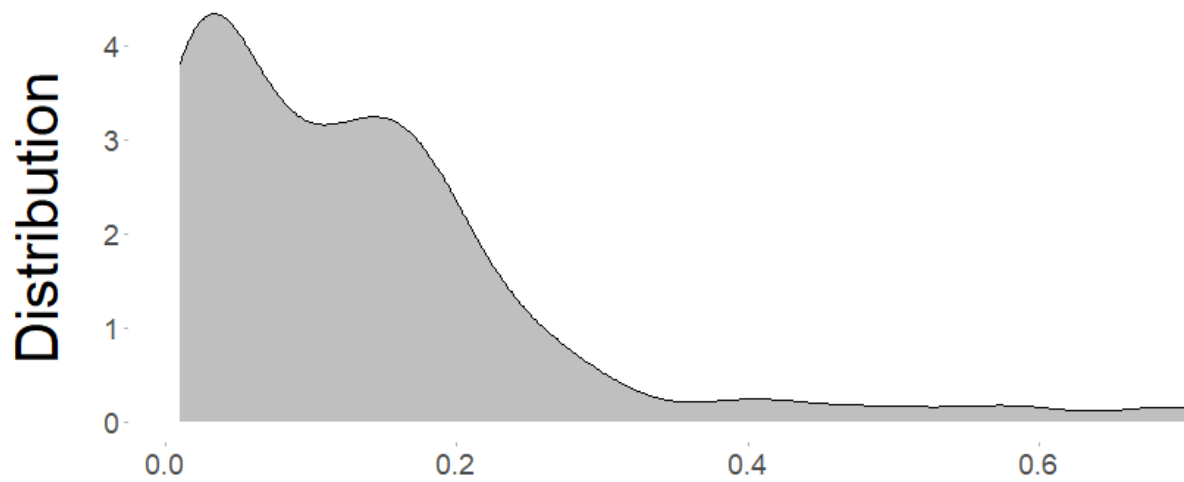
1. Oslo and Akershus
2. Hedmark and Oppland
3. South-Eastern Norway
4. Agder and Rogaland
5. Western Norway
6. Trøndelag
7. Northern Norway

#### Parties

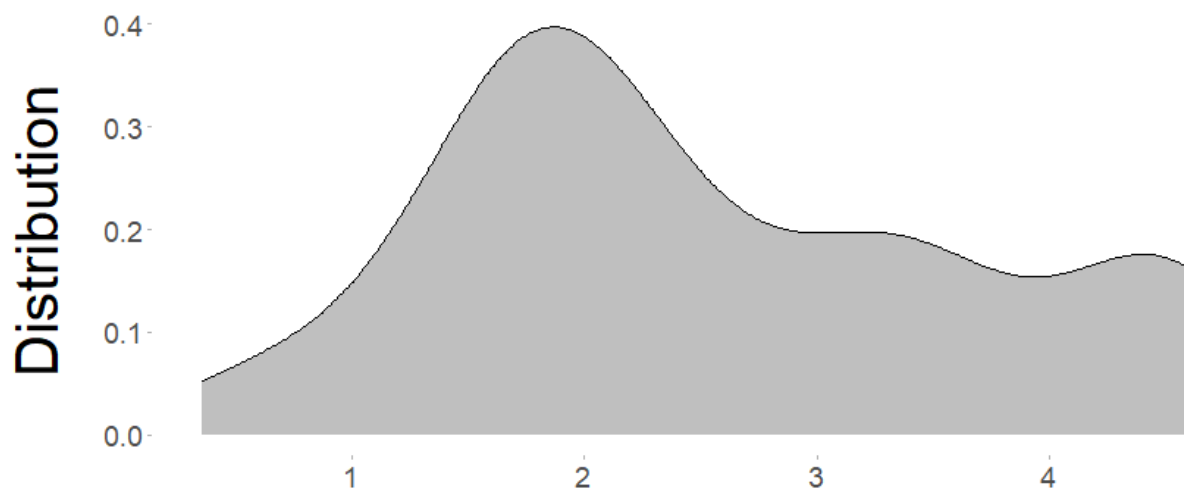
1. Progress Party (FrP)

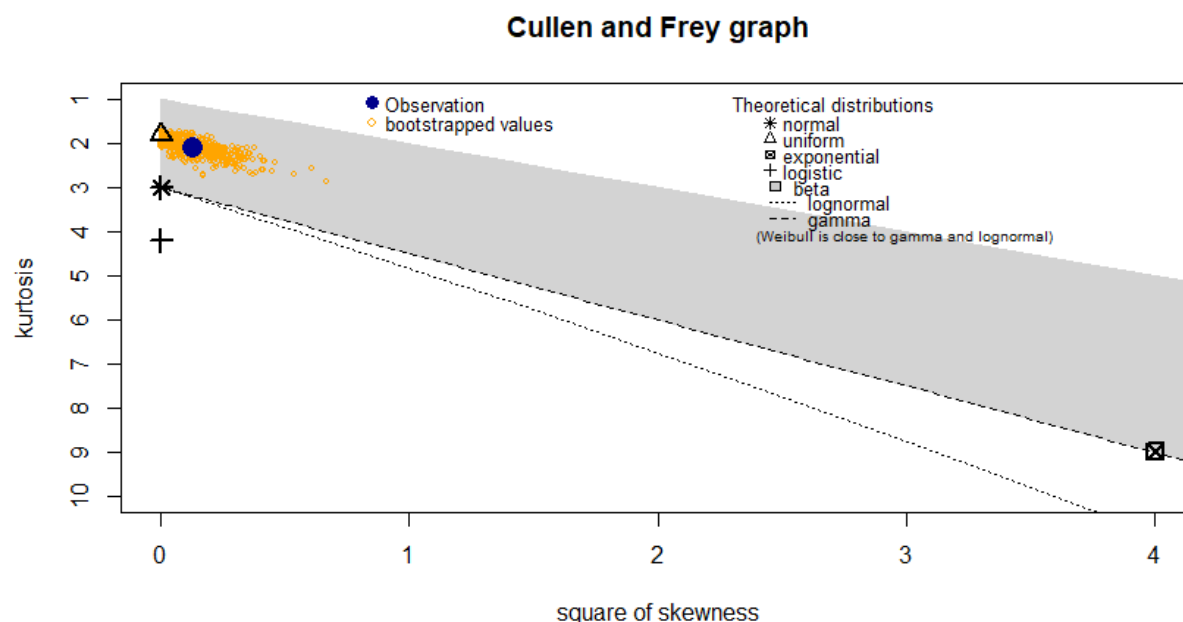
## Appendix 2. Distribution of the Dependent variable

## Populist Radical Right Vote Share



## Populist Radical Right Vote Share





Cullen and Frey graph of the logged populist radical right vote percentage variable.

### Appendix 3

Correlation between redistribution and pre-poverty = 0.584

Correlation between education and pre-poverty = -0.349

OLS results:

Dependent variable:	Redistribution	Tertiary Education
Pre-Poverty	0.26***	-0.42***
R-Squared	0.34	0.1

### Appendix 4

# of test	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Redistribution	1.98	4.67	4.74	5.62	2.63	4.93	5.38	5.92
Pre-tax Poverty		3.5	3.63	4.69		3.65	4.07	3.80
Tertiary Education			3.42	3.99	3.42	3.61	3.70	5.37
Redistribution * Pre-Poverty				1.42				



Education *	1.97			
Pre-Poverty				
Post-tax		1.72		
Poverty				
Non-EU			1.53	
Citizens				
Population			1.45	
Density				
Percent Male				4.90