Rabble-Rousers: A Brief Treatise on Populism and Its Ascent in The West

Andrew Baechtel

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RABBLE-ROUSERS:
A BRIEF TREATISE ON POPULISM AND ITS ASCENT IN THE WEST

A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

History

by

Andrew John Baechtel Jr

May 2022
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Approved by:
Timothy Pytell, Committee Chair, History
Jeremy Murray, Committee Member
ABSTRACT

This project aims to examine the causes for the recent ascent of populism in the West during the last dozen or so years with a lens focused on the United States and France. The primary area under observation is both the historical and contemporary role that populism and its adherents have played within our cultures. I aim to address the following: What is populism, how has it been broadly understood and how do its adherents regard it and what causes populist movements to develop. Academics in the field have produced a rich historiography that reveals a divided discourse. Previously analysts have debated over foundational definitions, the broad tenets, its connections to existing ideologies and various other topics. The subject is of importance because populism plays a highly consequential role in modern political systems which seems unlikely to dissipate soon. My aim in this is to re-examine the historical role of populism and clarify if its presence reveals any inconvenient truths about our contemporary political systems. The analysis uses primarily a social and economic examination with an occasional cultural glance to keep it appropriately grounded to the topic. The document produces a series of sources ranging from cartoons, statistics, polling, film, songs, speeches and other matters to hopefully provide a comprehensive examination that leaves few stones unturned. My conclusion draws that populism is an inevitable result of the inequities produced by the historical liberal capitalist modes of economy and politics that it was formed in. They reveal that populism is an inescapable
component of modern democracy that affects the language and habits of even its opponents who humor it due to its essential efficacy. The dominant significance of this is to not consider populism merely a fringe inconvenience but rather fully regard it as perhaps the primary competing mode of political action both now and for the presentable future as its driving components only become starker if exceptional action is not taken.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This has been the longest and most challenging project I have ever been involved with but I have had the support of several people that I would like to address who have thankfully lessened the burden. I would first like to thank my mother Laura who has been a constant source of comfort during difficult times. I would like to thank my sister Tammy and her family for their ongoing support that has helped me make this project possible. I would also like to give a special thanks to my advisors Professor Timothy Pytell and Professor Jeremy Murray whose guidance during this has been essential. Finally I would like to thank my dogs Roxie and Laika who have been an ever present source of joy that I have needed during difficult days.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this project to the memory of my recently deceased father who passed away earlier this year who gave me his name. My father was a veteran, a writer, an engineer, and a self-described populist.

Through all difficulties he worked to let me go to school without other distractions and never once objected to my desire to pursue a degree in history over perhaps more traditionally lucrative pursuits. I can only aspire in this project and beyond to carry with me the same spark that he carried both into his work and his life.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Populism’s Roles and Shapes

Populism within the last decade has become a go to expression either for condemnation or approval for various movements across the political spectrum and those that seem to defy it at times. It has come to represent movements ranging from socialist adjacent economic rebellions to an array of right wing ethno-nationalist movements across the globe along with other movements that have proven more difficult to place. It has been used both sincerely in its applications while also often being co-opted for other purposes by the cynical. In a world largely dominated by neo-liberalism since the 1970s, it represents the nebulous territory of the varied forms of resistance and outrage to its ongoing hegemony though in some cases not necessarily for the better. Populism in this way is effectively a shibboleth that means whatever it needs to mean in laymen contexts but this does not mean that it has no essential elements that we might ascribe to it. It exists not merely as a dubious political ideology but also as a form of strategy, an aesthetic, a manner of appeal and most importantly as distinctly a form of reaction that represents a crisis of confidence in societal institutions.

While populism has had an extensive history throughout much of the world, I intend to examine it through an American and French lense in order to both narrow the scope of analysis while also allowing me to hone in on some of the larger currents that have swept between these two historically connected nations.
We can distinguish how both the language and rhetoric of populism permeated much of the founding documents and sentiments of both nations as we presently understand them for the past two hundred plus years or so that has led to continually repeating cycles of rise and decline of such notions within them that we still find as of this writing.

Overview of Populism in America and France

The pre-independence roots of populism within the United States go throughout the 18th century as men such as Thomas Paine first invoked the challenge against the alleged supremacy of ‘the elite’ that was argued for by earlier philosophers and the systems that preceded capitalism that we currently broadly describe as feudalism. Going into the 19th century we can find its presence within the presidency of Andrew Jackson who would demonstrate the common hypocrisies and limitations of some aspects of populist thought from a position of leadership as the nation would discover who ‘the people’ were in his eyes. Further into the century we encounter a more grassroots form of populism in the form of the Know Nothings and People’s Party of the United States respectively as we run into some of the dissonances and difficulties that come from attempting to place populism within the strict boundaries of left to right political constructs that we have today. This was only expanded upon as the country moved into the Progressive Era and the 20th century where it would encounter politicians such as presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan, Teddy Roosevelt and eventually Louisiana governor Huey Long. We would see
the rise of some of the biggest populist figures in American history that arose in an era where few could dispute the inequities between the common man and the privileged of the nation. A new measure of populism would arise with the dawn of the Cold War as a new enemy of ‘the people’ was discovered both domestically and abroad. Figures such as Douglas McArthur rose to become the new symbols of strong leadership among those with a reactionary bent as the ever present conspiratorial nature of populism became more prevalent. This would be continued as the white nationalist form of populism that has existed throughout the nation’s history would arise again through the Civil Rights era as various political figures like George Wallace preyed upon the prejudices of white racists in order to secure political careers. Further it is critical that we examine the ways in which films and other forms of media made within the United States reveal some of the fundamental populist themes that exist within the currents of American life. Movies such as Mr Smith Goes to Washington, It’s a Wonderful Life and Network demonstrate the ways in which media shape and are shaped by populism. Finally, it would return again in the previous decade with the formation of the Tea Party and the Occupy Wall Street Movements which again show the distinct contrasts as portions of society reacted to both the first Black president and the economic crash of 2008 respectively. This populist rhetoric would culminate at the highest ends of power as both Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders and former President Donald Trump would both make strong appeals to
‘the people’ though in utterly disparate ways thus demonstrating the difficulties in attempting to simplify matters.

On the French end of this consideration it is necessary to contrast the ways in which populism seemed to have arisen in comparison to the United States. The factor of some of its origins not arising from a foreign enemy such as the British Empire but an internal one in the form of the monarchy ruled by Louis XVI which was further supported by the aristocracy and the church. The ways in which it drove both the highs and lows of the French Revolution where ‘the people’ were elevated to nigh deific status before the consolidation of power under Robespierre and then Napoleon in the wars to follow. The embers of its return during the Revolutions of 1848 that saw much of Europe attempting to overthrow the hierarchies of the old world with what we might call a mixed result that would inspire greater developments in the future. It would see the creation of a new reactionary populism within France after the loss of the Franco-Prussian War which resulted in both the loss of Alsace-Lorraine along with the rise of Georges Ernest Boulanger and the Revanchists he inspired. In the 1890’s the will of ‘the people’ would be split by the controversy of the century in the form of the Dreyfus Affair which would call into question the foundations of French society and who was a loyal citizen. During the Post-War period after the German Occupation, it would see other movements arise based around figures such as Charles De Gaulle and Pierre Poujade that demonstrated that while France was reunified that it was not necessarily at consensus either as France attempted to
reckon with itself. Finally, we arrive to the near present with the arrival of the Yellow Vest movement that has gathered supporters from all over the political spectrum from the socialist supporters of Jean-Luc Melenchon to the fascistic followers of Marine Le-pen. Rather than extensively covering these movements in detail, it is the intention of this analysis to present them when relevant to the discussion of broader ideas when necessary in order to demonstrate the foundations of populism and its rising grasp upon the present.

**Populism As An Understood Phenomena**

Instead of acting as an occasional insurgent party or movement with limited successes that often occurs elsewhere, populism in the United States has been functionally present from the before inception of the nation. It has colored the way that even those ostensibly opposed to populism speak when they address audiences. Indeed, mainstream American politicians and parties have balanced between railing against populism versus courting it as it goes through the traditional ebbs and flows of American political relevance throughout the decades. This has been furthered by the ways in which populism is not always an entirely grass roots affair as we might commonly imagine. Throughout the annals of populist history we can find the ways in which it has been co-opted or even created wholecloth via astroturfing to create the illusion of mass popular support for various movements that are ultimately disproportionate to their actual popularity with the motives of involved becoming scrambled. These contradictions found within some of the strands of populism are represented
across the Western landscape in various forms as they battle with the present and past of the nation in determining what is the desired nature of democracy. What I intend to demonstrate with this is that populism, for good or for ill, is a bug of the modern democratic system with its roots deep into the psyche of democracies even in ways that are not even always consciously expressed. This is important to distinguish given the hope for a ‘return to normalcy’ which is understandable but also a fanciful goal that has become popular within parts of the national dialogue.¹ Populism is the varied popular reaction against the dissonance created by the illiberal nature of contemporary democratic institutions. Its rise is not coincidence but rather a continuous expression of dissatisfaction amongst parts of the populace based on the contradictions between the imagined democracies and the real ones that we have always inhabited. The existence of populism stands as both a critique of liberal democracy while also ironically contradicting some of the larger ideas of orthodox Marxism. Marx contended that such liberal capitalist democracies would eventually fold under the weight of their own contradictions which would create what he referred to as class consciousness. More often what populism has shown us is that while such developments do sometimes occur that response to this dissonance goes beyond lines of class into other collective social signifiers that people build identities around. Furthermore, these are complicated by the

social divisions that produce movements built more on the whims of the petite bourgeoisie or ‘middle class’ as we might imagine. These perceived contradictions are not necessarily shared amongst all segments within the larger populace but do seem to be readily increasing which can be demonstrated with polling from Monmouth University that presents the following:

Would you say things in the country are going in the right direction, or have they gotten off on the wrong track?

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Figure 1. Opinions On The Direction Of The Country

This poll of course could not account for any universal sentiments that those polled would believe would put the country on the right track but

nevertheless there seems to be mass discontent with present political structures. Another question that we must confront is why is populism viewed as a necessary response for so much of the populace if we exist within allegedly democratic systems, are ‘the people’ already not in power if that is the case? A 2014 study which in retrospect seems quite prescient declared that the United States was not truly a democracy but in fact an oligarchy due to the overwhelming influence that wealthy private entities have upon its political systems.\(^3\) Regardless of the virtue of populism it is necessary to take seriously that it is based on to some extent legitimate reactions to disenfranchisement that is the result of the ailing systems that pave the way for autocracy and the appearance of easy solutions to difficult problems.

If we look closely we can find that populism has been attached to nearly every sort of subjective virtue or vice that we can imagine in politics at one point or another. This includes topics relating to race, class, gender, nationalism, international relations, religion, and others with opinions varying wildly in ways that are not traditionally thought of when the term populism arises. It would also be inappropriate to consider and examine populism as a political styling of just frustrated white men when the truth is that historically women and people of color have had crucial and sometimes leading roles in populist movements throughout history as they are affected by issues both general and specific to them. This is

not to say necessarily though that broader populists movements have not been complicated spaces for those who are not considered the primary part of the allegedly majoritarian entity that is ‘the people’ whenever such movements arise with many of them often finding themselves marginalized within these spaces.

What is also crucial to examine is the ways in which academics and mass media have intertwined with populism either as an ardent critic or as a supporter at times. While most forms of populism have had relatively few advocates within these spaces within any period of time for various reasons including the often anti-intellectual nature of populism, There remain notable exceptions. While populism may sometimes seem utterly spontaneous at times, it by no means appears without warning or reason. The text will demonstrate some of the common factors that arise with each era of populism while some attention will be paid to not over generalize these details as they still stand in distinct contrasts to movements before and after them. Throughout the text we will see how within the United States that populism is largely an ideology that generally makes its way from the rural and suburban sections of the United States into the metropolitan areas though this has changed somewhat with the advent of mass media that has resulted in the increased speed of political polarization. Inversely, we shall see in France that populism has often surrounded itself primarily not in the countryside but rather in the capital of Paris and other urban centers throughout the country and moved outward often with some degree of resistance as we shall see during the French Revolution. Regardless of what any of us personally feel
about it, the era of populism seems to be here with us to stay for some time so it is proper to have a reckoning with what that has entailed and what it shall mean for us as we push further into the twenty-first century. Next we can push into the scholarship which remains highly contentious as populism remains a highly topical issue with extensive connotations abound that leave emotions high. Few topics in my research have been as utterly disagreeable among reputable sources as this with virtually no one agreeing on either the nature of populism nor whether it is a productive response to the inadequacies of modern systems. Academia remains as divided on this issue as the world at large but with a deft touch we might be able to piece together something resembling common sentiments that we can analyze, deconstruct, and clarify to better understand this spreading feeling of outrage.

I will note that while this work does contain analysis of the conditions that have created populism, it primarily concerns much of itself with how it operates within the western political sphere. For an impressive work that goes into better detail on this I fully recommend *Populism and Liberal Democracy: A Comparative and Theoretical Analysis* by Takis S. Pappas.\(^4\) For the purposes of this essay I will operate under the definition of populism as I see it which may be as troubled as any other but is necessary to clarify. Populism is a loose political ideology devoted to the mobilization of informally designated sections of the population against ‘elites’ that are allegedly conspiring against them. This term carries

different connotations and realities based on the contexts in which it has appeared in. Populism in relation to monarchical systems exists as a liberational struggle to create a society built on the will of the governed. In nationalist matters it exists as a way for privileged classes to attack marginalized groups such as migrants who they feel threaten their hegemony in some manner. Within the economic sphere it exists as a focal point from which movements can channel discontent generally aimed towards the consequences of modern capitalism though it is not necessarily acknowledged as such by said movements. These are all faces of populism but none of them alone can provide the whole picture nor are their motives necessarily any of these exclusively as the record should reveal.
CHAPTER TWO

SCHOLARSHIP REVIEW

The Nature of Populism and Its Virtues?

While no field that involves in depth academic discussion is without disagreement nor should it, it is difficult to find a topic more divisive amongst researchers. Some of this speaks to perceptions about populism broadly but there are also notable contentions relating to its role throughout American and French history specifically. There are significant disagreements on what populism is and sometimes more importantly, what it is not. Mudde and Kaltwasser in their contemporary text for Oxford’s piece on the matter contest that it does have a specific meaning that goes beyond its existence in the present as a political slur of sorts as some critics argue. Following this they declare that their position on populism is what they refer to as the ideational approach which in this instance means that they are taking it seriously as a definable ideology rather than a loosely applicable term. They put forth that populism is primarily abstract in nature while remaining universally bound by notions of ‘the people’ vs ‘the elite’ and that society should be molded by the will of the common masses. For them populism is not strictly a full ideology within itself but rather an appeal that might morph into more easily recognizable and perhaps structured forms of thought.\(^5\)

Another point of argument presented here is that populism is often defined by its opposition in some manner to what we understand to be liberal democracy. This opinion is shared by authors such as Pappas who suggest that populism often acts as the figurative canary in the coal mine for failing liberal democracies as the often capitalistic policies they put forth create stratification throughout society. The idea put forth is not that populism is inherently undemocratic but that it often falls into illiberal democracies such as Hungary. Indeed, for Pappas populism exists as a nebulous shifting entity that swings between liberal democracy and tyranny. A break in the consensus begins to present itself when debates concerning who is a populist and where are they placed within the understood political spectrums or if they in some ways transcend it. Much of the scholarship ultimately concludes that populism is a form of appeal that can theoretically manifest across the spectrum as it often resembles other ideologies as previously noted which can often complicate issues particularly in instances such as Argentina where the Justicialist Party carries both right and left factions that compete for power internally.\(^6\)

While several of the aforementioned authors are sympathetic to the causes that result in the formation of populists movements, they are still generally skeptical if not entirely hostile to them. The scholarly field concerning populism has largely been opposed to it as a political approach for some time but recent academics have begun to put forth that the connotations that we place

\(^6\) Pappas, 5, 39, 50.
upon all forms of populism may be intentionally or accidentally dishonest at
times. This can be observed in writers such as Nadia Urbinati who argues that
much of the discourse concerning populism is largely built around unjustified
assumptions. These can include contentions concerning if there really can be
such a thing as illiberal democracy or if the premise is fundamentally unsound.
This also includes skepticism about the approach that seems to underestimate
populism as a reflection of representative democracies within itself that is
ultimately a symptom and not the cause of the decline of allegedly
representational entities. Brought up into this discussion is populism's association
with despotism or at least the aforementioned illiberal democracies that it is often
accused of creating which again is a term of contention here. Urbinati contests
some of these assertions that place it as being synonymous with this sort of
quasi dictatorship but does note that while it sometimes exists in proximity to it
that it is not innately connected to authoritarianism as some critics will contend.
An example of this is the focus within fascism to the elevation of the state as the
dominant entity while also purposefully being fundamentally antidemocratic and
opposed to any such systems intrinsically as opposed to populism which purports
to be innately majoritarian. This is not to say as previously alluded to that
populism could not transition to such a system but neither is it a guarantee that it
ultimately will.7

7. Nadia Urbinati, Me the People How Populism Transforms Democracy
Another worth consideration within the literature is if populism is necessarily an idea as much it might be a form of appeal or argumentation. We can see this presented in authors such as Benjamin Moffitt who demonstrates that populism can also be regarded as a political strategy that attempts to cast the speaker as a purveyor of common wisdoms while also using language that is deemed more suitable to the masses. While ideology and rhetorical strategy are often linked this is not necessarily always the case. This sometimes expands beyond language to encompass slang, accents, clothes and various other forms of expression that are meant to indicate to the theoretical observer that said individual belongs to whatever ‘the people’ means in the context as compared to their opposition. This style of argumentation is furthered as Moffitt contends by how appeals are made which is an extension upon who we should ascribe virtue to. The primary division Moffitt argues is between the technocratic appeal towards credentials and experts while populists in this instance appeal to perceived collective experiences of the broader population. This is furthered by differences in presentation with technocrats valuing often detached clinical appeals that are deemed more objective in nature whereas the populist petitions the emotions of the audience whether it be their fears or other sentiments. Again, due to the common nature of populist appeals it becomes difficult to properly ascribe the title of populist when mainstream political figures that have operated
at the highest levels of power also attempt to make such appeals in fear that they will be viewed as among ‘the elite’ regardless of their ideology.  

Earlier Scholarship and the Nature of ‘The People’

Lest we run into the perils of recency bias in regard to the scholarship it is important that we glance back towards some of the earlier academic studies that became in vogue around the late 1960’s. The assortment of mass movements that occurred before and leading up to the various global uprisings of 1968 likely spurred this consideration. Perhaps one of the most established authors here is Lawrence Goodwyn whose work is more sympathetic than most in his coverage of the People’s Party of the United States. A repeated and not surprising tendency that arises in most circumstances where we find populism is a wide sense of a change that is not well received. As Goodwyn notes in his text, the transitions of the American economy and other economies for that matter during the mid 19th century resulted in revolutionary changes. No longer was the United States the imagined agrarian economy favored by Thomas Jefferson of citizen farmers but rather it developed with much of the rest of the world into industrial modernity where the factory would come to dominate production.

While today we might regularly find media stories where populism is synonymous with xenophobia, nationalism, and other detrimental concepts, Goodwyn provides a relatable counter example. He argues that populism acted

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as a necessary counterbalance to the worst excesses of industrial capitalism in an era of horrors such as child labor and being paid in company scrip. While these farmers and laborers were not necessarily identical to socialists in ideology, they carried similar ideas that would gain the ire of company and party bosses who would use every available opportunity whether it was the media, policy, or other methods in order to oppose them. The same pulse that eventually created the Occupy Wall Street movement and the support for Sanders would echo from here along with the labor movement in general that was gaining strength around this time. This same sort of radicalism is noted by David R. Berman who notes that these previous loose associations of ideas were not unwarranted or unnoted. Berman’s work illustrates that these sentiments were not exclusive to pockets of the country around farming communities but that they often spread more broadly throughout the Great Plains region among other places.

As illustrated by Moffitt, various groups that exist outside of populist movements and thus outside ‘the people’ are often subject to harassment and assault. What this further reveals is that while ‘the people’ are generally built upon a majoritarian idea in nature that this is not necessarily wholly inclusive. In the United States few right-populists would declare that undocumented immigrants are in anyway a part of ‘the elite’ but at the same time these same

11. Moffit, 149.
individuals would certainly not consider them to be a part of the proper ‘people’ of the United States of America. Benedict Anderson in his writings examines how we might understand the creation of conceptual communities such as ‘the people’ in this instance and the understood limitations that are often innate to the discussion. While his work concerns itself with nationalism it translates well into discussions of populism which could be understood to represent sub-national grouping within the nation. Populism understands ‘the people’ to use similar limitations in that it is both conceived as an entity that encompasses a limited group of people that will never be able to completely know each other but they still envision themselves as a part of a collective entity with shared values and goals.\(^\text{12}\) We can imagine this for a moment by considering ‘the people’ as largely envisioned by the two primary populist figures of our current era, Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders. For the former it is largely understood to represent primarily white rural and suburban voters spread throughout the south and midwest. For the latter it represents the lower 99% percent economic majority of the nation across all other divisions. It also briefly gives a glance into how left and right populists envision their respective versions of ‘the people’ as in-groups which makes broader statements about populism challenging.

Considerations on the Role of The Enemy

Much of the field also tackles an issue that is somewhat innate to any discussion involving the presence of ‘elites’ which is the role of the conspiracy. By definition ‘elites’ are understood to be an exclusive organization of individuals that are by some measure removed from the larger populace so it follows that their actions and motives would be received with some degree of suspicion. The nature and purpose of this conspiracy as with most matters involving populism is innately tied to time and place but the field does provide us with some generalities that we might examine. The conspiracy theory allows the simplification of complexities to better focus the outrage of ‘the people’ upon a specific individual, group, or institution as needed. Sometimes this can be an imagined threat or a designated scapegoat though at times it can also represent a real historical threat as invoked by figures in Latin America who have contended that they face imperialist foreign aggression from nations like the United States. The conspiracy theory also provides explanations within populism for the failings of various movements as noted by authors like Jan-Werner Muller. If populism is meant to represent ‘the people’ then how are we to explain the failure of their ascent in democratic systems? Muller contends that this is expressed by regarding the systems of governance or those who control them as corrupted and thus unable or unwilling to accept ‘the people’s’ will. If ‘the people’ always remain ‘the people’ then it

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logically follows that opposition even in victory must follow from an ‘other’ that still exerts some degree of control no matter how small or ethereal.\textsuperscript{14}

Given the often heavily loaded language that is involved with populism and its adjacent ideologies depending on the populist there is some recent contention about if we understand populism as the movement or the figure that often leads it. While populism is not intrinsically based around the presence of a leader it is also rare for it to rise or maintain itself without such a charismatic figure leading the way. Moffitt again expands upon this interesting paradigm that exists within populism as the leader must ultimately be the individual figure who performs the alleged will of ‘the people’ despite the ostensibly majoritarian nature of the populist project. Moffit further contends that the leader paradoxically must exhibit the aesthetic features of ‘the people’ while also expressing themself as a figure that is able to transcend this commonality to be deemed worthy of their position.\textsuperscript{15} We might also reconsider some earlier populist movements in the absence of a leader figure. Much has been written about the allegedly unfocused nature of Occupy Wall Street, which some claim is the reason that it petered out as soon as it did, only for it to transform and become bigger than ever with the arrival of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders. On the other hand he Tea Party movement from earlier in the decade was also seemingly leaderless though there


\textsuperscript{15} Moffitt, 59.
is room for contention that while it lacked a formal political leader that it was not necessarily without direction from various individuals.

In a new twist that demonstrates the growing role of media throughout much of the twentieth and twenty-first century we can find that the leaders of the Tea Party were effectively the pundits of the Fox News Network as illustrated within Skocpol and Williamson’s work. The various media personalities working for the network advocated and encouraged the movement as a response to the presidency of Barack Obama. In particular we can examine the role that Glenn Beck specifically had at this time as a media leader of this populist movement much in the same way that some might argue that Tucker Carlson on the same network acts as a sort of media leader of the modern populist right despite his privileged origins. While media has clearly previously played a role in populist movements it rarely acted in a sense as the primary director of such sentiment with such a direct link to the activities and thoughts of the participants that would only really be possible in the modern era of daily news personalities that are broadcasted across the country and sometimes the world.\(^{16}\) In previous eras such a role may have been placed in radio personalities like Rush Limbaugh or Father Charles Coughlin during the New Deal or in some sense perhaps William Randolph Hearst and his styling of Yellow Journalism that would help create the necessary sentiment to propel the United States into the Spanish-American War.

at the end of the 19th century. While any movement must eventually had some degree of political leadership in order to focus the wants and needs of its adherents, they can functionally survive on alternative forms of leadership until they happen to come along like how Sanders did for the populist left or how Trump would for the populist right or in the case of France Melenchon and Le Pen respectively.

William D. Irvine in his work on the rise of the far right in France examines the role that Georges Ernest Boulanger had as the populist visionary of revanchism. As previously mentioned, populism has many times been co-opted by traditional ‘elites’ to serve their purposes and Irvine contends that Boulanger at heart was serving the royalist causes of France who found him useful in appealing to audiences they never could. In Jeremiah Morelock’s work we can find further support for the ways in which the leader can control and ultimately subvert the mass will of ‘the people’ via authoritarian measures while still ostensibly acting as their nominated champion. His contention is that some of the earlier examinations of liberal democracies from the Frankfurt School demonstrate that they inevitably move towards fascism. His reasoning for this is that the conditions that are created by the economic realities that are created as result of liberal capitalist policies ultimately help lay the groundwork for the rise and return of these movements. He tracks the rise of neoliberalism from the end

of the 1970’s which would culminate in the elections of Ronald Regan and
Thatcher which would signify a major changing point that would result in crises of
capitalism . Furthermore, he contends that these possibilities are not necessarily
contradictory as many right populists movements are a mixture of legitimate
political movements often refocused by the same political ‘elites’ that they rage
against. This statement is tempered though noting that both the movements and
the sentiments that spawn them were not largely an outright creation of ‘elites’ as
much as they were later manipulated for their purposes. He invokes Theodor
Adorno in his contention that in authoritarian populism the leader becomes
effectively an idealized projection of both the self while also embodying a sort of
platonic ideal of ‘the people’. The appeal is only heightened furthermore by the
sentiment that the leader is a focused apparatus of the will of ‘the people’ that
cuts through the corruption of ‘the elite’ and their institutions.  

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The Primary Approach

In order to evaluate both populism’s historical position and the causes for its recent insurgency in France and The United States we must engage with a comprehensive yet straightforward approach. Again, my primary objective in this piece is to ascertain the reason for the recent rise of populism throughout the West with a focus on the United States and France. My general conclusion is that this is a recurring historical consequence of the contradictions created by liberal democracy that promised a society that never fully was realized. My choice to focus on the United States and France is due to both their storied histories as perhaps the first nations born into the democratic modern era along with their connections to each other. Furthermore at this point I contend that there is an essential element of populism that resides in what might be described as the national mythology which makes them the most clearly suitable. Populism as previously noted is largely a response based on lived experiences of the populace due perceived degradations in the economic, social, political, and cultural spheres so it falls that these are areas worthy of analysis in this examination.

This in turn requires a multilateral examination that combines quantitative and qualitative elements in order to best demonstrate the surprising complexities involved in the development and ongoings of populist thought. The quantitative
end requires an analysis that demonstrates the statistical realities present including immigration records, job reports, census data, and other measures that ground the approach in more than just conjecture. The qualitative matter is critical as well because populism is more than just charts, it is an idea that revolves around lived experiences that do not necessarily translate to data and in some cases actively contradict it. This is why it is necessary to include a record of speeches, songs, films and political cartoons among other things to demonstrate how populism manifests.

This information was largely collected over the course of several months as it became clearer to me what the evidence I saw invoked. An undeniable aspect of a vast majority of populist movements are related to economic concerns in one manner or another whether this is related to economic depressions or the perceived threats of migrants which mixes it with nativist elements. In turn this required examining the census information that would reveal what fueled the nativist animosity of the Know-Nothings or economic reports that would lay the groundwork for Occupy Wall Street and the Yellow Vest movement. Much of the quantitative data was gathered from government records for which this seemed the most reliable considering that several of these organizations were either loosely organized or in some cases quasi-clandestine. It was worthwhile to either corroborate or in some instances complicate some of the claims presented by the populists. The qualitative information required a greater deal of creativity but was largely intuitive considering the objective of
populism to organize and represent the frustrations of sections of the public. Qualitative populist sources by their nature often want to be found which made the task one more curation rather than deep diving through obscure texts. On this matter it became a task of understanding the purpose of the qualitative information as it meant to be conveyed and to whom for what intended effect. Given the often bombastic stylings of populism it became evident that audiences ranged from the faithful to ‘whomever this may concern’ with some implicitly understood limitations based on the subject.

One facet that was just as interesting when doing the research for this project was examining the ways in which writers spoke about populism. Much of this has already obviously been covered in my historiography but some broader notes about this might be helpful. As previously noted much of the field is led by a general disdain for populism with several authors providing some contrast that either humors or accepts some of its principles while fewer more endorse them. This can be demonstrated in various fashions both in books that speak directly about populism broadly and texts that concern themselves with specific people or movements. This sentiment has not gone unnoticed in this document when evaluating the various secondary sources.

Challenges Presented

‘A challenging matter when analyzing historical sources is that we are required to make some judgments concerning what constitutes a populist or populist movement. The term itself as noted more later was coined during the
late 19th century to primarily refer to the People’s Party in the United States.
Both before and after it is actually quite rare for notable political movements and leaders to broadly describe themselves as populist up until relatively recently. What can and has been done about this is I have largely to go by some measure of consensus based upon the broader scholarship which is generally more agreeable to the question of who is a populist rather than any other matter though not without some dissent. I have also attempted to distinguish between individuals and movements that are truly populist in nature and those who occasionally will invoke populist methods in order to increase their appeal. Again this distinction is more of an art than a science necessarily so I would quite credibly expect the same degree of disagreement that largely defines the present field in this matter.

Another aspect of my methodology that I chose was to as previously noted primarily focus on what we might call sources that wanted to be found. My reason for doing so in this project is to primarily examine the ways in which populists present and understand themselves which helps demonstrate the conscious ways they attempt to appeal to the public . An obvious issue with this is that it perhaps takes the matters that populists raise at their word and focuses the study around this rather than attempting to complicate it more by uncovering purposefully obfuscated information. A different and just as valid methodology might have gone on the quantitative end to uncover some data that would complicate the message more. Qualitatively someone might attempt to hunt more
often for ‘off the record’ statements or letters that contradict the message though this document does occasionally make note of those as to not take things upon face value exclusively.
CHAPTER FOUR
A BRIEF HISTORY OF PROTO-POPULISM, ITS CRITICS, AND THE
CREATION OF ‘THE PEOPLE’

Populism and Its Precedents

Clarifying what is generally meant when we talk about populism is inherently difficult but again the most basic statement is that it is a political orientation that advocates for the popular will against that of the designated privileged ‘elite’. From this it should be acknowledged first that even the phrasing of talking about ‘the people’ in this instance is a relatively recent phenomenon for much of the world. This is because for there to be a “people” to appeal to then it logically follows that there must be an idea of a common people who relate to a nation or some other similar collective entity. Authors such as Benedict Anderson have examined the creation of these informal and conceptual communities that have formed during the last several hundred years or so. Before the enlightenment such conceptions would have largely been limited to religious connection or various communities that lived as subjects to monarchs which limited their capacity to imagine themselves as a part of a broader cultural entity based on other factors. There exists some exception to this within some of the Greek city-states or perhaps the idea of being a Roman citizen amongst some other possible examples but largely these sentiments in their current iterations stretch back to around the 18th century where we would begin to see the weakening of power under the church and monarchies of the world and thus
room was created for new forms of identity. This new sentiment as Anderson notes is not merely limited to geographical spaces but newly attached to figures throughout time as there becomes perhaps an essential idea of what it is to be a part of this new conception of the nation. An example of this is the way in which someone might look back upon an event no matter its scale and feel a sort of kinship throughout time with the involved parties as they attempt to relate their experience. We might imagine in theory how a frenchman writing in the 1940’s during the occupation by Nazi Germany might relate to the experience of an individual living through the Hundred Years War even though said individual would not likely share the same ideas concerning what it is to be French.\textsuperscript{19} It is perhaps with the French Revolution that we shall examine further later in the text and be able to see the most significant growth into the conception of ‘the people’ as an understood potential political entity that could be organized. With the decline of the monarch and the aristocrats there has been the fall of the subject and the rise of the citizens of the state.

Population oddly as an ideology may have had its most foundational critics live and die long before its arrival upon the world stage. Plato, living within the relatively democratic society of Athens but also having lived as a friend of his mentor Socrates during his trial and subsequent death, opined about how democracy eventually leads to tyranny as a part of a cycle that Greek authors often referred to as a \textit{Kyklos} which contributed to his vision of the society of

\textsuperscript{19} Anderson, 4, 12, 26.
philosopher kings. Thomas Hobbes in his various works including *Leviathan* articulated a vision of society in which rule by elites was not only natural but the primary bulwark against terror and chaos in the world. Hobbes argues that without such rulership from the top that man is in his words in “The War of All Against All” where social darwinism would be the rule of the day as society collapsed under violence. Hobbes speaking during the 17th century likely was able to witness some measure of both democratization and the weakening power of the monarchy and church starting at the signing of the Magna Carta and going through the Protestant Reformation where christendom became divided regionally as protestant bases began arising in regions such as the German states. Peasant revolts were also not an unfamiliar concept at this time which may have also led the way to broader ideas about the collective identity of the masses of society in opposition to the nobility and royalty though at this time criticisms would more likely relate to the unjustness of specific individuals rather than systems.

The Introduction of Populism on The World’s Stage

Perhaps the dominant figure in introducing a true populist sentiment in a measurable way into the United States would be Thomas Paine. While Paine would become known for his many works such as the *Age of Reason* and the *Rights of Man* that would define the American ideological canon and that of the

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late Enlightenment. It was with Common Sense that he first had to tackle something that seems intuitive to us today but revolutionary in its prospects back then. He brought forth the question if ‘elites’ had any sort of rights to rule over the common man in the first place which had largely been at least tacitly accepted until that point with little argument otherwise. He put forth that such rulership was both undesirable in a secular sense and went further to cite biblical scripture to argue that it was unnatural before God. For there to be a ‘people’ and ‘elite’ for the sake of populism first requires that there would be a sense of animosity for the latter from the former. As mentioned previously this existed on an individual level or perhaps if there was a sense that the rulership was a foreign occupier but rarely before this was it as broadly critical as this. What Paine argued was that this sense of the ‘elite’ was a systemic issue and that kings and nobility are innately a destructive force upon the larger populace that they attempt to exploit and control. Paine would clarify this directly within Common Sense when he says.\(^{22}\)

> “But there is another and greater distinction for which no truly natural or religious reason can be assigned, and that is, the distinction of men into KINGS and SUBJECTS. Male and female are the distinctions of nature, good and bad the distinctions of heaven; but how a race of men came into the

world so exalted above the rest, and distinguished like some new species, is worth enquiring into, and whether they are the means of happiness or of misery to mankind. In the early ages of the world, according to the scripture chronology, there were no kings; the consequence of which was there were no wars; it is the pride of kings which throw mankind into confusion. Holland without a king hath enjoyed more peace for this last century than any of the monarchial governments in Europe.”

Paine follows later in the work with a specific proclamation that directly targets the enlightened despot that Plato and Hobbes advocated for by demonstrating that such an entity is largely imaginary and that the truth is more dour when he says.23

“In England a king hath little more to do than to make war and give away places; which in plain terms, is to impoverish the nation and set it together by the ears. A pretty business indeed for a man to be allowed eight hundred thousand sterling a year for, and worshipped into the bargain! Of more worth is one honest man to society, and in the sight of God, than all the crowned ruffians that ever lived.”

With this proclamation the torch would be lit that would inspire both the revolution at home while also laying the necessary groundwork for what was to come ranging from France to Russia.24

The French Revolution would take inspiration from the American Revolution in its desire to shed the dominion of kings and autocrats as a new consciousness was raised throughout the nation. While this new rebellion in similar fashion to the American Revolution was largely dominated by bourgeois lawyers, merchants, and other well to do individuals it did find its share of support among the larger populace, though much of this was relegated to the inhabitants of the cities comparatively. While the origins of the American Revolution revolve around the sense that Americans perceived they were not being treated properly by the British Parliament and eventually King George The Third, the French Revolution would prove even more daring in its goals. Whereas the 'elites' of the American colonies might be understood to be foreign aristocrats, in France the issue was an internal matter based on the restrictions it placed upon the autonomy of the larger populace. The Estates General in France was divided into three sections that represented the will of the clergy, the nobility, and the commoners. The first two were largely attached to each other with their support and were able to consistently outvote the commoners despite the commoners making up a significantly higher amount of the population than the first two. The other factor related to this is that the clergy and the nobility were largely

24. We have documentation that demonstrates that figures such as Jefferson were still supporters of staying attached to England as late as the end of 1775.
exempted from taxes on the grounds that they allegedly already did their share by interacting with God and fighting in the military respectively. From here it is not much of a stretch to think that ‘the elite’ of French society was openly conspiring and manipulating the political system against ‘the people’. Beyond the evident lack of power by the commoners they faced even more immediate issues such as the economic circumstances that were caused by France's support for the American Revolution along with earlier conflicts and issues concerning taxation upon an ironically unrepresented population that would culminate in a financial crisis in 1787. In 1789 at the Estates-General we would see the crowning of the French citizenry as the force that would drive the nation with the creation of the National Assembly with the Third Estate joining with elements from the church in order to effectively create a new government with others from the First and Second Estates joining in swiftly afterwards. The Assembly was threatened by a potential counter action by the military who due to desertion and other factors collapsed against the citizens of France with the storming of the Bastille. As noted in Doyle’s work the reaction even amongst some of France's elevated bourgeoisie who favored the National Assembly would soon find many of their greatest fears realized as the newly empowered people of France would soon deliver their retribution in swift order.25

While the French Revolution would ultimately be a dramatic turning point for the better for the world as feudalism and the rule of monarchs would be withered

away, it was not without its other consequences. During the Terror that would follow ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’ would become nebulous shifting categories that would change rapidly. In Edelstein’s work we can find some of the origins of the distinct phrase “enemies of the people” to describe the ascribed counter-revolutionaries who would allegedly sabotage the revolution. This sentiment is demonstrable in the case of how Georges Danton who had been the first President of the Committee of Public Safety and a major force in the defense of the revolution still managed to find himself on the other end of the guillotine in the end in 1794 after falling out of favor.26 As previously noted the peasantry located throughout the countryside were less inclined to go along with the new radicalism of the urban citizens which often resulted in planned mass drownings via loading people on boats and sinking them near cities like Nantes. ‘The people’ and ‘the elite’ would evolve past disputes against the nobility and clergy to become disputes between the Jacobins and the Girodins concerning what was the appropriate action to take for the new French State. Ironically Thomas Paine himself who helped inspire much of this new fervor for freedom would find himself imprisoned for years as his association with the Girodins would come to haunt him resulting in his near execution. This would then extend to inner party conflicts among the Jacobins themselves as individuals were elevated to and subsequently removed from power often quite violently.27 One of the most striking

examples that placed ‘the people’ to an elevated state of being as something to be worshiped was Robespierre’s Cult of the Supreme Being. He articulated his vision for this at the Festival of the Supreme being where he said.28

“The Author of Nature has bound all mortals by a boundless chain of love and happiness. Perish the tyrants who have dared to break it!

Republican Frenchmen, it is yours to purify the earth which they have soiled, and to recall to it the justice that they have banished! Liberty and virtue together came from the breast of Divinity. Neither can abide with mankind without the other.

O generous People, would you triumph over all your enemies? Practice justice, and render the Divinity the only worship worthy of Him. O People, let us deliver ourselves today, under His auspices, to the just transports of a pure festivity. Tomorrow we shall return to the combat with vice and tyrants. We shall give to the world the example of republican virtues. And that will be to honor Him still.”

We might note how in this speech he continually refers to the audience as ‘people’ in a sense as a larger entity rather than just denoting the plural which demonstrates the new sentiment from the heights of power during this regime. Robespierre and indeed much of the French Revolution would end with the rise of Napoleon who ironically became the emperor built on the promise of defending

these new populistic ideas of government. Napoleon would carry many of these new republican standards in his march throughout Europe as he lived the contradictory nature of the emperor of ‘the people’ effectively as nations across the continent united against a common enemy that was at the front of this new fervor. While Europe was no stranger to wars there existed a specific incentive for the rulers of nations to see this put down lest the sentiments from the French Revolution pass through their nation. The defeat of Napoleon and the ideals he allegedly represented would put populism on the backfoot for sometime but it would arise again and again as the genie could not be put back into the bottle for people knew that a collective autonomy was within their grasp if they dared to take it.  

29. Mayer, 538, 586.
CHAPTER FIVE

POPULISM, ECONOMIC ROOTS AND IMPLICATIONS

Capitalism, Industrialization, and The 19th Century

Populism as alluded to early can best be understood as a reactive ideology that arises to various forms of negative stimulus that are a result of the failure of larger structures or more immediate events. While it might be reductionist to declare economic matters to be the sole or even arguably the primary reason for its arrival throughout time, its continued presence through most populist movements is a near constant. Perhaps a relevant consideration for why this is the case should consider yet again the roots of populism as a historical entity in the late 18th century. During this period we not only see the roots of liberalism that denotes a particular form of democratic action and sentiment but also the rise of capitalism. Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* would see its first volume printed in 1776 which would expand further throughout the years with new volumes that would help shape the world to come.\(^{30}\) With the ascent of capitalism we would also see dramatic changes to concepts concerning labor, trade, finance, and industry among others. While this would prove to be a significant upgrade over the generational landed serfdom of feudal relations as even its critics like Marx argued, it would not be without its own significant problems that are still unresolved for the foreseeable future. The creation of capitalism would result in the development of new economic classes of

individuals based on either their financial successes or relationship to their labor depending on the analytical lens used in this instance. With these new systems eventually becoming both a material reality while also being internalized by the population as relevant to a new set of values it becomes likely that problems would abound as inequities increased. What some of the following examples demonstrate is the ways in which these new economic principles and practices would reveal the contradictory nature of the same new democratic principles that it was swept in with.

While we can acknowledge movements that are similar in principles and structure that precede the People’s Party of the United States, it is with them that we finally arrive at what would become the namesake that would define how American academics would broadly examine populist thought which can be located in Argersinger’s work. The People’s party arose during perhaps the height of economic and social changes in much of western society during the post Civil War era where industrial society was swiftly modernizing but not always in ways that were universally well received.\textsuperscript{31} A component of populism in this matter is that what is sometimes seen as the inevitable and desirable aspects of “progress” are usually more complicated in nature as noted by Appleby, Hunt, and Jacobs in their work.\textsuperscript{32} The People’s Party did not spring forth from the ether suddenly in an instant surge of popular fury but rather it was cultivated through


\textsuperscript{32} Joyce Oldham Appleby, Lynn Avery Hunt, and Margaret C. Jacob, \textit{Telling the Truth about History} (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995).
years of resentment at party bosses that dominated the political spheres of these areas. It is rarely a single election or other significant event that drives thousands to millions of people to decide that there is a coordinated effort to subvert the popular will by forces visible or unseen. The trigger is usually one that is primed years to decades ahead of time that is waiting for what will send it over the edge either in the form of an event or successful organization by the involved parties.  

While the People’s Party was broadly frustrated by the entrenched political interests of the region the dominant cause for their organization when they were known originally as the Farmers Alliance was in order to counteract the crop-lien system that put sharecroppers into a system of subservience to local merchants who often owned the land and necessary supplies. This system would lead to these farmers effectively becoming indentured servants tied to agrarian contracts that they would never be able to fulfill as their crops were sent off to the lenders. These demands would later be intertwined with others but the essential factor here is the sense that they were living in near feudal conditions as they worked the land to benefit merchants who were often attached to party bosses that acted as gatekeepers for any unwanted potential intrusions into their domain.  

This contributed to a distrust of the political system that can be found in this cartoon that was placed in the Washington state paper for the People’s Party, The

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33. Argersinger, 3, 8.  
34. Goodwyn, 44, 49.
People’s Advocate, that represents the broader frustrations felt by these populists.  

We might find a similar sentiment today in the discussion over whether members of congress should be able to trade stocks due to the capability for insider trading and the ability to influence the value of stocks via legislation. The

Figure 2. People’s Advocate Cartoon

reaction from this is demonstrable in polling from Morning Consult/Politico that provides us with the following reaction from across the American spectrum.\textsuperscript{36}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure3.png}
\caption{Congressional Stock Trading Poll}
\end{figure}

While modern Americans may not have the specific problems felt by the agrarian populists of the People’s Party, there clearly exists a sentiment that businesses interests and politicians are in collaboration in sometimes demonstrably illegal ways to support each other instead of the country.

The earlier efforts by the populists around the nation would culminate in the candidacy of Williams Jennings Bryan for the presidency of the United States.

running on the Democratic Party ticket. Fittingly, Bryan had the nickname of “The Great Commoner” due to his known populist beliefs that pushed him to the candidacy and which would keep him making further attempts after failing to secure the presidency in 1896. Bryan’s name would eventually become infamous shortly before he died as part of the Scopes trial in 1925 where he dueled with famed lawyer Clarence Darrow over the teaching of evolution but for a time he was the leading figure of populism within the United States. Bryan’s particularly specific brand of populism revolved around issues endemic to turn of the 20th century America that are can be found throughout his famed “Cross of Gold” speech that he delivered at the 1896 Democratic convention after securing the nomination from his party.37

“...The gentleman from Wisconsin has said he fears a Robespierre. My friend, in this land of the free you need fear no tyrant who will spring up from among ‘the people’. What we need is an Andrew Jackson to stand as Jackson stood, against the encroachments of aggregated wealth...

...Mr. Carlisle said in 1878 that this was a struggle between the idle holders of idle capital and the struggling masses who produce the wealth and pay the taxes of the country; and my friends, it is simply a question that we shall decide upon which side shall the Democratic Party fight. Upon the side of the idle holders of idle capital, or upon the side of the struggling masses? That is the

question that the party must answer first; and then it must be answered by each individual hereafter. The sympathies of the Democratic Party, as described by the platform, are on the side of the struggling masses, who have ever been the foundation of the Democratic Party...

...If they dare to come out in the open field and defend the gold standard as a good thing, we shall fight them to the uttermost, having behind us the producing masses of the nation and the world. Having behind us the commercial interests and the laboring interests and all the toiling masses, we shall answer their demands for a gold standard by saying to them, you shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."

A critical detail to note before moving on is Bryan’s invocation of Andrew Jackson in his speech. On a policy and personal level there is a limited amount of connection between the two men beyond the broad notion of entrenched wealth and yet we find it present here. What this reveals is an understood political legacy of populism among populists regardless of policy which will continue as we examine further on. Perhaps in the present we rarely pay much consideration to the historical impact and debate surrounding monetary policy but this was actually the founding issue of the Greenback Party following the Civil War who would serve as precursors to the People’s Party. The use of gold instead of fiat currency as the backbone of the economy was largely favored by financial ‘elites’ centered out of the American Northeast in the tradition of
Alexander Hamilton. Paper money comparatively was favored by these populist groups due to policies surrounding gold and silver that often led to deflation which affected these rural inhabitants. This difference as alluded to in Bryan’s speech at its core is still a dispute between the financial interests of ‘the people’ broadly versus ‘elite’ monied interests even if now this war seems to be over beyond the interests of a relative few.38

The Great Depression and its Ramifications

The Great Depression is perhaps the most obvious historical event that contributed both to the rise of various ideologies as the failures of the Gilded Age were laid bare. While communism and fascism had successes across the world within the United States we can primarily detect a trend toward populism. While often confused and sometimes intermingled with populism, there are some necessary qualifiers that distinguish them from populism that are worth briefly examining. Broadly, communism elevates the working class while fascism elevates the state to the position that populism nebulously attaches to ‘the people’. Though the lines begin to blur as previously mentioned, populism sometimes transcends traditional political understandings which is evident in the case of Huey Long and how the economic realities of his era paved the way for this style of politics. A quick glance at the unemployment rates provided by the United States Census going from the late 20’s throughout the 1930’s helps elaborate on the material conditions that people were responding to.

38. Goodwyn, 35, 42, 47.
In this labor data which expresses these numbers in 1/1000 ratio, the unemployment rate nearly tripled from 1929 going into 1930 before nearly doubling that following into 1931 then multiplying by one and half times itself before finally settling at its worst in 1933.\textsuperscript{39}

In circumstances such as these it is not unimaginable that a figure like Huey Long could come about who was both able and willing to provide relief and growth to an ailing population. While Long was perhaps better known for his showman-like nature that will be demonstrated further in this piece, the economic

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Year & Unemployed & Percent of civilian labor force & Year & Unemployed & Percent of civilian labor force \\
\hline
1933 & 12,880 & 24.9 & 1930 & 12,060 & 28.6 \\
1932 & 8,020 & 15.9 & 1929 & 4,340 & 8.7 \\
1931 & 1,550 & 3.2 & 1928 & 2,080 & 4.4 \\
1930 & 1,890 & 4.1 & 1927 & 1,890 & 4.1 \\
1929 & 9,480 & 17.2 & 1926 & 880 & 1.9 \\
1928 & 10,890 & 19.0 & 1925 & 1,800 & 4.0 \\
1927 & 9,080 & 16.9 & 1924 & 2,440 & 5.5 \\
1926 & 9,080 & 16.9 & 1924 & 2,440 & 5.5 \\
1925 & 880 & 1.9 & 1923 & 1,880 & 3.2 \\
1924 & 10,610 & 20.1 & 1923 & 1,880 & 3.2 \\
1923 & 11,840 & 21.7 & 1923 & 1,880 & 3.2 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Census Unemployment Rates}
\end{table}

realities of his time as governor help us establish his base of popularity that he was planning to use to eventually run for president in 1936 before he was assassinated. Long had a great success in a similar vein to what would happen in various New Deal programs with large scale construction programs throughout the state of Louisiana. This included the construction of over one hundred new bridges throughout the state and nearly two thousand more miles of highways which was nearly an eightfold increase in just four years as the governor. While slogans alone could put Long into office, it was projects like these that may have convinced the citizens of Louisiana that his nearly autocratic control of the entire state might have been worth it.\textsuperscript{40}

Long’s appeal given the context of the era is perhaps best summarized in the song he co-wrote which ostensibly explained his basic platform and appeal.\textsuperscript{41}

\begin{quote}
“Why weep or slumber America
Land of brave and true
With castles and clothing and food for all
All belongs to you
Ev'ry man a king ev'ry man a king
For you can be a millionaire
If there's something belonging to others
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{40} William Ivy Hair, \textit{The Kingfish and His Realm: The Life and Times of Huey P. Long} (Baton Rouge: LA, Louisiana State University Press, 1996). 227, 323-324.
\textsuperscript{41} Huey Long and Castro Carazo, “Every Man a King,” Every Man a King | Tulane University Digital Library, accessed March 15, 2022, https://digitallibrary.tulane.edu/islandora/object/tulane%3A19147.
There's enough for all people to share
When it's sunny June and December too
Or in the winter time or spring
There'll be peace without end
Ev'ry neighbor a friend
With ev'ry man a king"

While this piece is certainly catchy and the message at least somewhat admirable, it is relevant to understand that this was effectively propaganda produced by the state dictator at this point.

Long’s appeal did not go unnoticed outside of Louisiana where his great charisma and popular policies made him a leading figure to challenge FDR going into the election of 1936. The American writer Sinclair Lewis wrote one of his biggest works *It Can’t Happen Here* which follows the rise of a dangerous but charming political figure that intentionally resembles Long in many ways. In the text this demagogue becomes the president of the United States and imposes a fascistic totalitarian government. It remains up to debate the absolute specifics of Long’s policies on the political spectrum given how closely they seem to be tied to his own character which is perhaps one of the defining notions of populism broadly. When asked about his political ideology or affiliations all Long had to say about it was "Oh, hell, say that I'm *sui generis (Of his own kind)* and let it go at that" which above all else may be the defining statement in how we may

understand populism as a complicated and leader focused historical force. What Long also reveals to us is the appeal within these systems of a dictator that you agree with. Long might have acted like an autocrat but he was their autocrat. Long’s despotism was not a secret but given the circumstances it isn’t difficult to understand his appeal. High minded ideals about sacred institutions often ring hollow when they aren’t helping you obtain employment or feed your family.

We may contrast this with France during the same time period where some interesting details appear. While much of the world like the United States was defined by the dire impact that the Great Depression had, France stands in contrast due to the relative way in which it managed to avoid the worst of it and the ramifications of such. The data shows that France would feel the effects from the depression both later and with lesser intensity than many of its peers as it would peak several years later in 1936 compared to 1933 or so for the others. It would be inaccurate though to say that France was uninhibited by the Depression and that there was not some political response. The primary result would be the February 1934 crisis where fascist and fascist adjacent groups rioted in Paris over various causes which also included issues related to domestic agriculture and farmers who represented approximately one third of the French populace. Shortly after this the standing government collapsed and multiple resignations resulted in a temporary government that would last until later that year. While perhaps forgotten now this sort of fascist adjacent populist

riot resulted in a counter action from the left who would respond by making their own suitably called Popular Front. This division would foreshadow the divides and sympathies of some of the population of France during their the Nazi occupation.44

Post World War Two Until The Present

Following World War 2 there would be a return to the economic realities that often spawn populism with Pierre Poujade who was a French politician who combined various economic grievances based around taxation among the French populace and combined it with the usual suspects: xenophobia, anti-intellectualism, anti-semitism and distaste for the urban centers of the nation. Poujade began this with his time as a small store owner who organized other small business owners against what was perceived to be unfair actions by tax collectors. This would lead to the formation of the Union de Défense des Commerçants et Artisans or the Defense Union of Shopkeepers and Craftsmen which acted as his political arm and movement.45 The numbers involved in this matter were not insignificant either in that by 1955 his organization would amass approximately five hundred thousand members and obtain around twelve percent of the vote in the election of 1956 which granted them 56 seats in parliament. As with many populist movements though it proved an easier task to criticize rather

than to attempt to govern and thus they would eventually lose their momentum. While his movement was short lived it does again remind us that populism is never far away even coming out of a post-war victory if the fundamentals of liberal capitalism go unaddressed. It also demonstrates again that the momentum created by populist movements are often generally attached to their leadership which can be swept away much faster than we see in comparative more ideologically rugged political theories. It might also again indicate to us that while not necessarily the case we should note as with Poujade that “economic anxieties” are often not the exclusive reasons for this sort of populism which often hides more dangerous sentiments.

While the totality of the causes for the beginning of the return of the populist left within the United States are likely intricate beyond the purposes of this text, it can be said with some degree of confidence that the most likely contributor was the 2008 Financial Crisis. The events of the crisis had impacts across the United States and the world as millions of people lost their homes and jobs as the schemes that were maintained by Wall Street fell apart under the weight of their own pressure and lack of regulation. The individuals who were the most directly responsible for the collapse were rarely if ever meaningfully punished as the populace saw that they were deemed ‘Too big to fail’ and in turn they would be allowed to hold on even if their victims could not. With the signing of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 during the last months of

the Bush administration these institutions would revitalize out of a perceived sense of necessity that is still heavily disputed to this day. Regardless of the efficacy or worthiness of this, many Americans would broadly and perhaps correctly determine that they were not who the government was acting in the interests of and so determined to take matters into their own hands. While much of this outrage may have been quelled briefly by the historic rise to power via the election of President Barack Obama, this did not last long as it became evident that policy in this instance would often go across party lines. It is with this that we can understand this new and potent outrage that would arise in the early years of the 2010’s.47

While disdain for Wall Street has always been common with its origins perhaps in the early disputes between the Federalists and the Democratic Republicans, it is here that a generation began to lose hope in the systems that continue to operate the world economy and in turn the lives of working people everywhere across the planet. The data provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows the sudden and dramatic decline of the economy in the United States that completely disrupted the lives of many of its citizens.48

As noted previously, populism is heavily attached to the failures of the worst aspects of liberalism and modern capitalism where the populace of the nations around the world conclude that ideas like the “American Dream” are merely platitudes and that the emperor has no clothes when its institutions fail. Populism in this matter effectively rises quickest when there is the least left to lose.

The primary memorable reaction to this new feeling of economic resentment that would bubble up over the years would be the Occupy Wall Street movement that arose during September of 2011. While initially it was created by local activists, a call for action by the activist magazine Adbusters would help spread the message beyond the New York City area. It would soon come to
encompass the broader outrage concerning the inequities created by modern
capitalism as people from across North America would arrive to protest. This new
fervor was summed up in the fundamentally populist slogan of Occupy Wall
Street “We are the 99%” which refers to the comparative net worth and
subsequent political influence of ‘the elite’ that occupy the remaining 1%. What
this meant within context is a struggle for various reforms that we still see
pursued today including debt relief, money in politics, and improvements
concerning work. The movement itself, largely leaderless hoping to gain the
benefits of being decentralized also faced the negatives. Despite the broad
messaging of who the movement encompassed, like many populists movements
it was hindered by infighting and disagreement over exactly what course ‘the
people’ should take to rectify the situation. This would naturally follow given the
wide variety of political ideologies that would be present among the inhabitants
throughout the protests with some of them ranging from capitalist libertarians to
mainstream liberals to avowed communists. The lack of a figurehead in theory
made it more difficult to quickly subvert but at the same time it also would leave it
somewhat directionless due to the purposeful lack of structures present. It also
faced the difficulty of being able to work the mechanisms of power in any
meaningful way which is part of the reason for the protest but without plausible
results or movement towards them the result is not surprising. Occupy lacked the
access to methods that other organizations like unions might have been able to
turn to such as a sit-in strike which would threaten the economic processes of
their workplace thus creating incentive to meet their demands. Occupy would slowly peter out over the course of several months which was only accelerated by action from New York police against the protestors as they were removed from Liberty Square in November of the same year.\textsuperscript{49} We shall revisit this briefly mitigated but not lost sentiment later in the document with the arrival of its rebirth during the Sanders Campaign later in the decade.

With the stakes of the next French election still unknown at this point we may look at the last major point of French populism that we can find in the form of the Yellow Vest protests which began in November of 2018 and are ongoing in some form as of this writing. This was at least at its inception not a marginal movement that managed to have the approval of 75\% of the French public which demonstrates both its specific wide appeal and more broadly the appeal of economic populism across the political spectrum.\textsuperscript{50} The protests began as a reaction to a protest to carbon taxes that were put in place by France’s president Emmanuel Macron. The Yellow Vest movement arrived swiftly with the protestors defined by the yellow vests often worn by the protestors that are required in French vehicles by law opposing the increase of the price on gas among other reasons. The reason for the tax was primarily to combat climate change but much of the issue became the perception that this burden to alleviate it would be

\textsuperscript{49} Emily Welty et al., eds., \textit{Occupying Political Science: The Occupy Wall Street Movement from New York to the World} (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 5, 8, 17, 28, 45.

\textsuperscript{50} Didier Fassin and Anne-Claire Defossez · Published 2019 et al., “The Yellow Vests Movement, an Unidentified Political Object,” Institute for Advanced Study, February 14, 2022.
placed upon the average citizen rather than the wealthy corporations that largely produce the emissions.\textsuperscript{51} It resembles Occupy in some manners but in others it is distinctly French as both a result of a difference within French politics but also of the historical protest culture of France as opposed to the United States. The protests signify both the outrage against the specific conditions within France but also the broader outrage against the neo-liberal policies that have come to define much of western nations since the 1970’s with a mixture of individual grievances that has allowed for such a diversity of inhabitants amongst it. What the split reveals as noted is both the reach of economic populism but also the difficulty in producing fruitful changes due to the significant split amongst the movement about what to do about it and who should be leading these efforts.

Chapter SIX

POPULISM AND ‘THE ELITE’

‘The Elite’ and its Historical Implications

Populism as an ideology is as defined by its out groups as much as its in groups so it is critical to examine what the nature of ‘the elite’ means both in modern contexts and various historical ones. As previously denoted current conceptions are relatively recent but the general tropes involving ‘the elite’ are largely timeless in nature. We can locate texts going back to Ancient Greece at least denoting the opulence and arrogance of foreign figures such as Persian emperors which often carried orientalist notions of eastern decadence. We can see many of these same tropes furthered throughout Europe during the last millenia attached to local and foreign entities but most notably within anti-semetic screeds. This is demonstrable with the popularity of hoax texts such as The Protocols of the Elders of Zion which purports to demonstrate a mass global Jewish conspiracy which is not an unfamiliar claim in some of the more extremist populist movements that veer into fascism.\(^\text{52}\) This should not be construed that populism is innately anti-semetic in any sense necessarily just that we can recognize some of the attributes as having a degree of commonality and that some populist groups historically have notable anti-semetic beliefs. ‘The elite’ as a vague entity can and has been accused of virtually every crime real or imagined which are generally related to local social mores in order to establish

\(^{52}\text{William Brustein, Roots of Hate Anti-Semitism in Europe before the Holocaust (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 273.}\)
boundaries between what constitutes a member of ‘the people’ and in turn what it means to oppose them as we shall see.

As we have examined earlier in the text, there has been occasional association between populist and socialist lines of support throughout American history but this would be heavily tested following the end of World War Two. The origins pull back perhaps all the way to the First Red Scare during the late 1910’s as paranoia over the newly formed Soviet Union resulted in the Palmer Raids toward the end of the decade. This would re-emerge towards the end of World War 2 with the Soviet Union immediately becoming the obvious challenger to the potential hegemony in the United States following the end of the war.

Populism and Paranoia

Perhaps the first sign of this would arise with future president Richard Nixon himself who became a leading figure in the infamous Alger Hiss Case in 1948 which would eventually lead to a contested conviction in 1950 over espionage charges. While the details of these issues are more appropriate for another document their broad details reveal the mood of paranoia that had swiftly swept throughout the nation so quickly deflating the post-war optimism. Hiss himself was a peculiar figure whose manners and credentials as a Harvard Law School graduate would mark him as an ‘elite’ to enemies of Roosevelt’s New

Deal which would indicate some of the future signifying traits that would come to define some of the divides in the United States that are still present today.54

This relatively new form of right populism declared that instead of ‘the elite’ existing as a cabal of various party bosses and wealthy industrialists, they operated in secret to overthrow the government to create a Bolshevik inspired regime backed by the Soviet Union. While this idea on its face seems largely both ludicrous and irresponsible to us right now we are not necessarily that far away from it if we hone in on some of the rhetoric surrounding international politics and the loaded language of words like ‘globalist’.55 These again are not terribly different from previous often anti-semtic ideas such as international conspiracies and dual loyalties but they would take on a new form as the century dragged on.

Often lost to time in modern political discourses surrounding the post-war United States was the sentiment that the United States government was treating its new geo-political rivals in the form of the Soviet Union and China soon after too lightly which seems difficult given the strength of response and propaganda that did happen. We can specifically locate this in the public reaction at the time to the firing of General Douglas MacArthur by Truman in April of 1951 after he

went against the stated policies of Truman’s administration by writing letters both private and public that called for an escalation to all out war with China.\(^5\)

Table 1. Approval Of Firing MacArthur

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who’s Who”</th>
<th>“General Public”</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approve</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapprove</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We might extrapolate for a moment some of the perhaps assumed information that we can gather from this polling. If we are to understand that 66 percent of the general public disapproved of his firing then we might convey that to mean that the same amount were at least in some measure favorable to MacArthur as a public figure. This polling again from Gallup demonstrates that this would put him ahead of the average approval rating of every president since they started recording with Truman with Eisenhower topping out the chart at 65 percent. This among other issues likely contributed to Truman regularly polling under 30% approval rating throughout the last few years of his presidency, a number that has only been matched by the final days of the George W Bush

administration. The concern on the Truman administration's part is that MacArthur was effectively attempting to use the bully pulpit as the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers to convince the American people using his notable popularity. While it never went this far, we can think about earlier civilizations in which popular military leaders via coups or other means have attempted to subvert the standing government of the nation in which they represent with the most dramatic case found in the Roman Empire during the Third Century Crisis where generals regularly fought to become the new Emperor every few years.

The ‘Elite’ and the Enemy Within

This new era of paranoia amongst much of the populace during the early Cold War was brought about by this feeling either real or imagined that the government was either too weak to deal with the perceived enemies of the United States or were actively collaborating with them. It is not far from here that we would see the creation of groups like the John Birch Society who helped develop the conspiratorial culture of American politics that was solidified by Richard Nixon again of all people after Watergate. It would develop into the same paranoia that we might locate within the present delirious Q-Anon movement that believes that secret parts of the government are waging a hidden war against itself that often involves the presence of satanic rituals which call back to the old

anti-semitic conspiracy of blood libel.\textsuperscript{58} In an era where there was no sensible way to directly confront an enemy who also possessed nuclear weapons it follows that any sense of urgency would fall into the inner sphere of the nation. An important aspect that studying populism reveals is the way in which the often complicated and sometimes misdirected feelings it invokes are exploited by agendas that predate the present grievances.

Another issue of some significance in this analysis of the role of ‘the elite’ in populist visions is reconciling the fact that by definition ‘the elite’ are a limited crowd yet they often manage to defeat populists within democracies. Again, this concerns itself with the detail that ‘the people’ are a more limited group than the term suggests and that each movement informally understands the relevant limitations. What this in turn reveals is the influence of the ‘elites’ proxy in matters concerning democratic action. This term can broadly be understood by various concepts ranging from the dupe to the useful idiot which elaborates that there are groups that are separate from ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’ that nevertheless are considered to be the thralls of the ‘elites’. This is regularly found within fascist and fascist adjacent populist circles that declare that one group is manipulating another for insidious ends against the ‘people’. Alternatively we might look towards the concept of the lumpenproletariat within Marxism who operate as a reactionary segment of the populace that operate on behalf of entrenched power.

structures. Again we return to anti-semitic tropes distributed throughout much of the first half of the 20th century where we can derive the origins of the term ‘judeo-bolshevism’ or in modern circles ‘cultural Marxism’. Both overtly and subtly it was implied by these groups that Jewish ‘elites’ were conspiring to subvert ‘traditional western value’. One way this was articulated was the premise that Jewish people were promoting art created and performed by Black people such as jazz for this task thus making them the unknowing proxy in this example.⁵⁹ This can also be found in the modern day with arguments from right wing populists that declare that their opposition is using undocumented immigrants to win elections that they would otherwise lose.⁶⁰ This idea is required in populism because it manages the dissonance needed for when the ‘people’ are not in the majority or even the plurality and thus creates a system where this is not required and in fact reinforces their claim from their perspective.

Despite its nature as a supposedly majoritarian ideology that is skeptical of established political actors this has not prevented populism from arguably becoming one of the dominant political strategies for individuals attempting to enter the halls of power. On the surface this is both simultaneously contradictory but also immediately obvious why this would be an effective tactic within democratic or quasi-democratic systems. This chapter seeks to distinguish populism's use as a road for both new and pre-existing figures seeking to either create, re-establish, or bolster political careers both among traditional populists along with those who occasionally invoke it when deemed valuable.

The presidency of Theodore Roosevelt has stood as one of the defining aspects of what historians have traditionally called the Progressive Era. While this certainly is not an uncomplicated term given the often measures by which we define ‘progress’ for the sake of argument we may be able to at least contend that this was an era of broader enfranchisement and increased democratic action via various movements. Roosevelt would bow out of the election 1908 to allow for William Howard Taft to run but his dissatisfaction in Taft’s presidency would push him to attempt another run in 1912. Roosevelt who was born as functionally a New York aristocrat had ironically become perhaps the first president sympathetic to labor and the first to challenge the hegemony of American robber
barons who had become the kingmakers of the Gilded Age by attempting to implement his “Square Deal” agenda. This willingness to take a swing at these economic and political ‘elites’ during this run may have also been inspired by his opposition by Republican party bosses during his time as the Governor of New York and subsequent attempt to hinder him via the limited office of the Vice Presidency.

Roosevelt's “Bull Moose” party was led on a platform that would still be considered radical for American politics over one hundred years later with calls for policies such as universal health care.61 Much of the sentiment that Roosevelt would bring as their candidate would be delivered on October 14th 1912 where just before the speech an attempted assassin shot him in the chest. Undeterred by this, Roosevelt would lay forth his vision for the party where we would see some familiar rhetoric when speaking about his grievances with the party he formally represented as president.

“When the Republican party - not the Republican party - when the bosses in control of the Republican party, the Barneses and Penroses, last June stole the nomination and wrecked the Republican party for good and all - I want to point out to you that nominally they stole that nomination from me, but it was really from you. They did not like me, and the longer they live the less cause they will have to like me. But while they don't like me, they dread you. You are the

people that they dread. They dread the people themselves, and those bosses and the big special interests behind them made up their minds that they would rather see the Republican party wrecked than see it come under the control of the people themselves. So I am not dealing with the Republican party. There are only two ways you can vote this year. You can be progressive or reactionary. Whether you vote Republican or Democratic it does not make a difference, you are voting reactionary."

His ire was not reserved just for his party but also of the Democratic Party of the time and their candidate Woodrow Wilson where he stated.

"Now, the Democratic party in its platform and through the utterances of Mr. Wilson has distinctly committed itself to the old flintlock, muzzle-loaded doctrine of States' rights, and I have said distinctly we are for people's rights. We are for the rights of the people. If they can be obtained best through National Government, then we are for national rights. We are for people's rights however it is necessary to secure them."62

A critical aspect of this speech is how Roosevelt emphasizes how political bosses have conspired against him and subsequently the citizens of the United States. This statement is completely in line with modern attempts to invoke populism by figures such as Trump where we can again conflate attacks against

the populist leader with attacks against ‘the people’ themself. The difference in party platform also demonstrates again the ways in which populism is not strictly connected to the recognized political habits of where it arises which in turn paves the way for further movements down the line.

France and the French citizenry following World War 2 were in an era of reckoning with themselves and their capacity to collaborate with a foreign invader that had gone against virtually every supposed principle that they have ever espoused. This era would become famous for the plethora of French intellectuals and other figures that would seek to make some degree of sense of what had happened but ‘the people’ were not without individuals that they believed would help provide direction again. Perhaps the most prominent of these figures during this era was the French statesman Charles de Gaulle who had been the leader of the government in exile known as Free France. Despite his prominence during the occupation and shortly afterward, he would disappear in a sense from the highest echelons of French politics and adopt a more subtle role in the nation. Perhaps his most populist inclination would be put forth in what he would call the Rassemblement de Peuple Francais or Rally of the French People in English. The stated purpose for the creation of the Rally of the French People was to create an institution that was supposed to allegedly be above the various conflicts that had made much of French politics in an effort to provide a common banner that French citizens could gather under to unify after years of foreign occupation though given its strong anti-communist purpose, it would be hard to
say that was particularly truthful. Charles de Gaulle’s motives for doing so are ultimately questionable considering that there is significant evidence suggesting that he was not truly done with French politics at this point but rather in a resting spot so that he may swoop in to save the day once again with the French Rally acting as a holding point for him. The French Rally found some degree of success and managed to obtain some support across the political spectrum with the majority of it coming from the right wing of France. The party would not ultimately last long due to various reasons but the stage had been set for his return later. France during the 1950’s would find its citizens embroiled in disputes concerning its role as a world power. France had holdings in both French Indochina and Algeria during this period which would see movements and wars of independence throughout the decade. This would ultimately result in the collapse of the Fourth Republic and with the birth of the Fifth Republic with Charles De Gaulle writing much of the new constitution while being quite aware of the optics of the moment as he conveniently reappeared again to guide France out of a disaster.\textsuperscript{63} What De Gaulle was attempting again demonstrates the flexibility that populism provides to the cynical and sincere alike. It allows for the proposition of a new style of politics that can be claimed to be above the traditional squabbles of political institutions while also coincidentally resembling them again when put into a position of power.

Populism and Bigotry

A particularly ugly form of regional populism would arise throughout parts of the nation during the Civil Rights movement. Throughout the South but also present elsewhere to a lesser extent, politicians saw the political value in responding to the fears and anger of white racists. Several notable figures ranging from Ronald Reagan to Richard Nixon who would coin the phrase ‘the silent majority’ and be perhaps the first political candidate with perhaps the exception of Barry Goldwater to make an implicit appeal to what would be called the ‘southern strategy’ though Nixon himself argued it was started by Eisenhower. This form of populism largely built upon prejudice was certainly not new as seen by the regularly hateful rhetoric produced by the Know Nothings or the Volksch Movement in Germany but the prominence it would take throughout much of the region would be. Oftentimes this rhetoric was cynical in nature with the politicians using it as red meat to get or stay elected such as with President Lyndon Johnson who regularly engaged in it before revealing greater depths by passing the Civil Rights Bill. Likely nowhere else is this better demonstrated than the tumultuous and ugly political career of George Wallace. Wallace would eventually make a run for president that would be cut short by his attempted assassination and in later years he would articulate his regrets due to a stated religious revelation but he started far humbler. Wallace began his political career by running as a fairly moderate candidate in a losing bid for Governor of Alabama in 1958. After the loss he reportedly said to his associates “... no other
son-of-a-bitch will ever out-n***** me again”. Wallace had essentially identified that the core issue among the majority of white southerners was a lingering racial resentment that has only diminished somewhat as of this writing. Wallace from there used this as a springboard to re-establish himself as the nation’s leading southern populist when such a thing both overtly and subtly meant the goal of maintaining white supremacy. He would mark this forever into the annals of American History when he produced his infamous “Segregation Forever” speech that he delivered in Montgomery on January 14th 1963 where he said

“Today I have stood, where once Jefferson Davis stood, and took an oath to my people. It is very appropriate then that from this Cradle of the Confederacy, this very Heart of the Great Anglo-Saxon Southland, that today we sound the drum for freedom as have our generations of forebears before us done, time and time again through history. Let us rise to the call of freedom-loving blood that is in us and send our answer to the tyranny that clanks its chains upon the South. In the name of the greatest people that have ever trod this earth, I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny... and I say... segregation today... segregation tomorrow... segregation forever.”

In this speech he invokes the symbols of populistic rebellion where he invokes imagery of the freedom of ‘the people’ against unnamed tyrants to justify

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the racial hatred held by him and his supporters. The ramifications of this are still present as a significant if not majority of populist strains in the United States are based on similar sentiments ranging from David Duke's political career in Louisiana to contemporary “MAGA” candidates following the presidency of Donald Trump.
CHAPTER EIGHT
POPULISM: APPEAL AND AESTHETIC

Trumpism and Its Language

Just as instrumental to the success and ongoing appeal of populism is the way in which it is presented. Populism is more than political proclamations concerning the secretive plans of its enemies. It is just as much if not more style than substance with its own dress code and tongues and shibboleths that is meant to convey a sense of legitimacy that informs that the speaker is of ‘the people’. It is this same method that also informs the same audience of who their opposition is which is communicated usually through the ‘elite’ bonafides of their opposition which usually includes wealth, education, and connections. This position logically follows for if the system and its institutions are thoroughly corrupt, what does it say for the individuals that either prosper or control such systems. Just as instrumental to populism is not merely the message but the mode itself. Populism has spread throughout various technological forms as we shall clarify later but it is the power of spoken address and more specifically the rally that has elevated it to its greatest heights.

Populism existing as a part of the democratic tradition starting from the introduction of liberalism largely carries many of the same expected elements but it is its divergences that have brought it both success and notoriety. ‘The people’ and their assumed proxy leader exist in a fundamentally symbiotic relationship as they feed off the energy that they provide each other until either they fail,
succeed or become co-opted into larger structures. We can observe this in its primary form: the rally where ‘the people’ and the leader are bolstered by their physical proximity to each other. This is not necessarily an unusual phenomenon in any sense of the word in that it is quite similar to the same energy that performers ranging from comedians to professional wrestlers have mentioned which help drive their performances. Populism bears some similarities to the call and response style found in some music and religious traditions where the speaker specifically relies on the presence of the audience for its style and efficacy. This style echoes through in a speech delivered by Former President Trump to an audience in Cedar Rapids, Iowa where he told his supporters to “Knock the crap out of” anyone that might protest him within the audience to a response of cheers.66

The question of what we can specifically attribute to the rise of Trumpism is a common point of inquiry among academics and laymen alike which is perhaps what has spurred much of this investigation into populism. While seeking an origin point for any particular phenomenon is generally a dubious task at best we for the sake of contention shall begin with the rise of the Tea Party movement at the beginning of the 2010’s. It is with this information that someone like Trump seems more like a nigh inevitable consequence of events rather than an unexpected aberration. He began his presidential run with a largely incoherent

speech that put forth every imagined grievance that the Tea Party and White nationalists had been espousing for years up until that point.

“...Our country is in serious trouble. We don’t have victories anymore. We used to have victories, but we don’t have them. When was the last time anybody saw us beating, let’s say, China in a trade deal? They kill us. I beat China all the time. All the time...

...So I’ve watched the politicians. I’ve dealt with them all my life. If you can’t make a good deal with a politician, then there’s something wrong with you. You’re certainly not very good. And that’s what we have representing us. They will never make America great again. They don’t even have a chance. They’re controlled fully— they’re controlled fully by the lobbyists, by the donors, and by the special interests, fully...

...We have losers. We have losers. We have people that don’t have it. We have people that are morally corrupt. We have people that are selling this country down the drain...

...Sadly, the American dream is dead.”

But if I get elected president I will bring it back bigger and better and stronger than ever before, and we will make America great again....

Trumpism as a populist force still remains a work in progress as is the usual of populist projects. An idea worth consideration is that few if any populist projects have seemingly ever had a tangible decisive victory against ‘the elite’. Even the presidency of the wealthiest country on earth has not been enough to achieve this. This is because this is a necessary aspect of populism that requires an adversary much as fascism similarly does in order to perpetuate itself. Populism often broadly lacks a defined end goal that we might imagine with systems like Communism. For populists, ‘the elite’ are both powerful and ethereal, defeatable yet never truly defeated, for to do that would make populists unnecessary.

As previously noted, for populists such as Trump there is an understood political heritage that is separated from policy as demonstrated by his admiration of Andrew Jackson. Despite the irony of Trump being a son of inherited New York based wealth built on land speculation and development, this would not prevent him from attempting to find kinship with Jackson. Again, the details of policy are secondary to the sense of heritage and legitimacy that are often sought by populist figures though in the case of Jackson this seems like a hastily considered claim to stake given recent evaluations of his legacy.68

On the matter of Jackson again, while we have ascertained the presence of populism throughout the colonial era of the United States it would largely disappear for a time before re-emerging. Andrew Jackson was perhaps the biggest figure of populism in American history up until the twenty-first century and also likely its most infamous recent examples included. Jackson shares some of the common elements that we would see with some later populous figures like Georges Boulanger and Douglas MacArthur in an indirect way with his military service during the war of 1812. He would rise to prominence for his leadership at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815 which would prove tragic in that declarations for peace had already happened for the battle which was unknown to both sides before it began. Perhaps one of the more benign aspects of his brand of populism appeared at his inauguration where the White House was broadly open to the voting public at the time. This would end up being a scandal within itself at the time as some commentators describe it as a sort of drunken jamboree where inauguration attendees managed to get into various bits of trouble though much of it seems to have been exaggerated. As previously noted, populism is often based on personal grievances and Jacksons was not born from a structured ideology but was rather a personal response to the misgivings he had based on his investment into land speculation. Jackson would also be defined by his

unexaggerated hatred for the banking system which drove a considerable amount of his ire which extended to the class of individuals he thought responsible when he presented his veto for a national bank. Much of this was a part of the still ongoing power struggle that had been ongoing since the nation's independence between the northeastern financial interests and more rural based agrarian land owners which clarifies some of the pre-existing conflicts when Jackson says.⁷⁰

“...It is to be regretted that the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes. Distinctions in society will always exist under every just government. Equality of talents, of education, or of wealth can not be produced by human institutions. In the full enjoyment of the gifts of Heaven and the fruits of superior industry, economy, and virtue, every man is equally entitled to protection by law; but when the laws undertake to add to these natural and just advantages artificial distinctions, to grant titles, gratuities, and exclusive privileges, to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful, the humble members of society--the farmers, mechanics, and laborers--who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favors to themselves, have a right to complain of the injustice of their Government…”

Within Jackson’s presidency we can yet again see the boundaries presented on who was properly considered a member of ‘the people’ that he

⁷⁰ Andrew Jackson, Avalon Project - President Jackson's veto message regarding the bank of the United States; July 10, 1832, accessed November 30, 2021, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/ajveto01.asp.
claimed to represent against the monied ‘elites’. Andrew Jackson was a prominent slave owner who enslaved dozens of people throughout his life who we would never imagine as a part of any such democratic system. This further extends outward towards all of the marginalized Americans in the United States who did not have the privilege of being able to be a part of ‘the people’. Again this demonstrates the limitations both explicit and informal that are involved in the creation of these groups that rather than be inclusive as their name suggests are many times highly selective.

The Revival of Left Populism

Following the failure of Occupy Wall Street the American left would temporarily disappear from the mainstream for several years. This movement would see its new champion rise during the 2016 Democratic primaries where former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton would receive her primary challenge and with that a rebuttal towards mainline centrism that had dominated much of American politics since the Carter administration. With all of the populist figures presented so far we can safely say that Vermont senator Bernie Sanders was probably the most unlikely candidate at first appearances. Rather than the bombastic personalities of figures like Huey Long or Teddy Roosevelt, Sanders is often passionate but also somewhat more reserved with less of an emphasis on the traditional rhetorical flourishes of earlier populists. Despite his status as democratic socialist since his youth, his advocated policies largely call for a return to the policies of the New Deal and the Great Society put forth by earlier
Democrats before they shifted gears following the Nixon administration. ‘The elite’ he rallies against is not a vague class of individuals with dubious charges placed against them but rather a highly observable and privileged group in the form of billionaires. This sentiment as previously mentioned is not new as we can find earlier figures that rallied against the industrialists and robber barons of their day up through the Gilded Age but Sanders has refined his message for the modern era of the twenty first century. He began his campaign with.  

“...Today -- today, with your support and the support of millions of people throughout our country, we begin a political revolution to transform our country economically, politically, socially, and environmentally.

Today, we stand here and say loudly and clearly, "Enough is enough. This great nation and its government belong to all of the people, and not to a handful of billionaires."

Let me be very clear, and let the top 1 percent understand this, there is something profoundly wrong when the top 1/10th of 1 percent owns almost as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent, and when 99 percent of all new income goes to the top 1 percent.”

With this opening proclamation Sanders soon found himself moving fast through a primary that previously seemed pre-determined. While Sanders in both of his runs was unable to secure the primary nomination for the Democratic

Party, he has effectively become much of its spirit and its future much as Barry Goldwater did for the Republican Party in 1964 or Ronald Reagan in the 1976 primary. This has arisen again with the young progressives that dominate much of the narratives that surround the present Democratic Party with them gaining both the praise of their supporters and the ire of their enemies both within and outside of the party. We can also see this in the way that some of the other candidates spoke during the 2020 Democratic primaries where many of the issues first raised or brought to prominence by Senator Sanders such as public healthcare, debt forgiveness, worker’s rights, became mainstream issues that candidates had to address. The present socialist adjacent left populist movement is still a story in motion that exists in an uncertain space after the election of President Joe Biden who remains as a largely center-leaning politician within his party and the United States in general. While some progress has been made, there is an anxiety present about the movement that hopes to overcome the old guard of politics in the United States to address issues such as climate change that dangerously hang over all of us and for whom it seems that our time to address is slowly running out. Within the minds of Millennials and Generation Z it continues to exist as the primary counterweight to its rival in the form of the

fascist adjacent alt-right that has risen to prominence throughout the globe over the course of the past decade with the end result still undecided.
In this discussion it would also be remiss to not closely examine some of the innate implications that are attached to the idea of ‘the people’ along with the undue assumptions that should not go unchallenged. As Anderson alludes to, it is rare to create communities that are utterly all encompassing and that is also the case here as we see the understood implicit limitations of ‘the people’ as an expression. While given the present discourse we might suggest that it is understood that the opposition is some sort of ‘elite’ in nature that opposes the will of ‘the people’. While this is often true, it is not necessarily the case that the opposition is necessarily a privileged class depending on who and how the terminology is being used which again reflects our earlier discussion relating to the role of proxies within populism. This is invoked when certain politicians within the United States present the idea of the ‘real American’ which in this instance is often understood to mean white conservative southerners and midwesterners or perhaps citizens of rural areas as political stratification by territory increases. When conservative pundits and politicians speak about the dangers of undocumented immigrants within the United States it is explicitly understood that they are not considered apart of ‘the people’ while also not existing as a privileged class like the wealthy might. This is reinforced in this poll conducted by

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73. Anderson, 7.
Grinnell College concerning who people thought were worthy of immigrating into the United States with some notable discrepancies that illustrate how a population imagines itself.\textsuperscript{74}

![Immigration Polling Graph](image)

**Figure 6. Immigration Polling**

Throughout the 19th century leading into and following the Civil War the face of the United States was progressively changing. From countries like Sweden and Ireland there were massive movements of people moving to the United States often hoping to escape the famines and other assorted issues from home. While the United States in some ways has positioned itself as the refuge of the immigrant this is more of a hopeful imagining than anything demonstrably

presented for much of its history. Waves of immigrants have largely faced both subtle and overt discrimination both personally and systemically since the inception of the country. Several points of interest are to be found in this chart from the United States Census of the decades before and during the rise of the Know Nothings.\textsuperscript{75}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{ccc}
\hline
Year & First Number & Second Number \\
\hline
1840 & 153,640 & 141,209 \\
1859 & 121,282 & 110,949 \\
1858 & 123,126 & 111,954 \\
1857 & 231,306 & 216,224 \\
1856 & 200,438 & 186,083 \\
1855 & 200,877 & 187,729 \\
1854 & 427,833 & 405,542 \\
1853 & 366,645 & 361,576 \\
1852 & 371,608 & 362,484 \\
1851 & 379,466 & 369,510 \\
1850 & 369,980 & 308,323 \\
1849 & 297,024 & 286,501 \\
1848 & 226,527 & 218,025 \\
1847 & 234,968 & 229,117 \\
1846 & 154,416 & 146,315 \\
1845 & 114,371 & 109,301 \\
1844 & 78,615 & 74,745 \\
1843 & 52,496 & 49,013 \\
1842 & 104,565 & 99,945 \\
1841 & 80,289 & 76,216 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Mid-19th Century United States Census Data}
\end{table}

The column of the first number shows the total number of recorded immigrants to the United States during this twenty year period while the latter denotes how many of them were from European countries. While there certainly

was immigration from elsewhere it appears that these are largely outliers with the primary source of immigration being from various European nations. This demonstrates an interesting dichotomy in the history of nativism that shows both the changing nature of both the people but also of whiteness and who is allowed into the power structures of hegemony in a way that we do not see in the same manner today. The broader history of this sentiment dates back to early observations made by figures such as Benjamin Franklin who said about the Germans that they “can no more adopt our ways than they can adopt our complexion.”76 Over a hundred and fifty years later this prejudice was still maintained against Irish, Italian, and Hungarian immigrants that were often given the middle ground categorization of ‘dark white’ to denote their position between whiteness and blackness.77

Nativism As A Driving Populist Force

A factor in this at the time as noted by Tyler Anbinder in his work on the subject is the distinctly anti-Catholic bent of the negative response to immigrants coming into the country at the time. Such sentiment would not go away anytime soon with the Klu Klux Klan holding heavy anti-Catholic beliefs amongst their various prejudices. There existed a degree of economic factors in both the creation of Know Nothings and the nativist ideology in general which is not

particularly different from what we might find today though it should be noted that as with today it is only a small part of the equation. Some citizens generally believed that the new immigrants coming into the United States were willing to work for lower wages than people born in the United States thus driving down the value of labor in the area primarily in and around the cities of the nation. This was accompanied by various protectionist policies and oaths by organizations to not purchase the goods or services produced by immigrants though how widespread this was and how seriously it was adhered to remain in serious doubt.\textsuperscript{78}

Even before a relatively organized response from reactionary parties there existed some rising tendencies among the nativists to this increase in migrants. In Anbinder’s work we can find earlier efforts at political organizing surrounding the disenfranchisement of the rights of immigrants throughout the 1840’s which would eventually result in clashes with these new populaces including riots that lasted for days. They would be temporarily rebuffed after various political defeats across the country but this would not stall them for long as a new political happening would dramatically shake up the landscape of the nation at the turn of the 1850’s. The Whig party began to fall apart and with that there were new opportunities for nativists to refocus the sentiments around the nation towards resentments towards the new immigrants which up until this point were largely unfocused and were only able to last for a limited time.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{79} Anbinder,11, 15.
The result of this would be one of the driving factors behind perhaps the first prominent third party in the United States. The Know Nothings were an association of nativist populists whose rhetoric was at times predictably simple-minded while also being surprisingly prophetic on rare occasions in its foretelling of future movements.\textsuperscript{80} The broader expressed sentiments of the association are laid bare within the publications of the Know Nothings as demonstrated by this political cartoon.\textsuperscript{81}

\begin{figure}
  \centering
  \includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{americancitizens.png}
  \caption{Know Nothing's Political Cartoon}
\end{figure}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{80} The Know Nothings were effectively a mixture of political party and a clandestine club which derived their name from people asking them about their connection to this group and them saying that they knew nothing about it. \\
\end{flushright}
This reveals in the purest terms the striking xenophobia that defined the Know-Nothings where similar movements now are generally more subtle by implementing various dogwhistles. The Know-Nothings themselves would eventually collapse with the ascension of the Republican Party but this particularly ignorant brand of populism has come to define much of what we imagine when we conjure the notion of populists now.

As previously alluded to, all too often populism within the United States is strictly positioned around White men in discussions which is challenged by authors such as Omar Ali who demonstrates that these traditional narratives often involve erasure of these efforts. These organizations both found themselves allied with the People's Party of the United States while also pursuing their own goals separately from the party as they attempted to build popular infrastructure in the wake of Reconstruction throughout the region. Given the ways in which black populations were largely excluded from traditional bases of power within the United States following the end of Reconstruction in 1876 it is of short surprise that grassroot efforts would prove so popular. If we are to conclude as we might that the political processes within the United States in general were largely favorable to establishing policies and directives for the benefits of white people then the reaction that we would start to see starting in the South particularly would seem inevitable.\textsuperscript{82}

Starting in the early 1880's we would start seeing some of the first rumblings of this as African American politicians attempted to challenge the regional hegemony of the Democratic Party who often operated hand in hand with terrorist organizations like the Klu Klux Klan in order to maintain their rule via violence in one form or another. Many of these individuals may have also been a part of the Republican Party which elected several black senators and congressmen during the decade or so following the Civil War due to the newly enfranchised freemen. This violence resulted in attacks across the United States as many of them attempted to forge alliance with the now obscure previously noted Greenback Party that was built around various economic reforms during the era. For these white Democrats no fear loomed larger in their collective consciousness more than a repeat of Black Republicans obtaining power again and they would use both state power along with impromptu militias to reinforce their power. This is particularly notable in Mississippi where corruption was wildly prevalent among the Democratic Party whose claims were reinforced with the threat of violence elsewhere in the state. This new organizing would culminate in the creation of the Colored Alliance which took inspiration from prior organizations such as the Knights of Labor in its design which often were required to act in secrecy. Eventually they would by their count amass a membership of over one million members though contemporary historians disagree on the specifics of this matter. This era of Black populism would unfortunately be hindered by Southern efforts at disenfranchising African
Americans during the height of Jim Crow. What would be noted particularly about this is the strength of the response towards this populist organizing that wasn’t present to the same degree for movements before and after. It reveals that not all groups that organize as ‘the people’ are treated equally within our political spheres and whereas the Know Nothings were allowed to become accommodated within standing party structures, this same fate would be denied to the late Black populists.\(^{83}\)

\(^{83}\) Ali, 9, 13, 15, 39.
As previously alluded to, populism often serves as a way to channel the dissonance created from democratic systems that often produce seemingly undemocratic outcomes. As previously noted this is an expression similar to the Marxist idea that the conflicts created within capitalism “heighten the contradictions” to the point that citizens will obtain a sense of international class consciousness. This differs notably though in that populist movements are not innately connected to a citizens relation to their labor, they are generally based on a national scale at their largest, and they refer to more ambiguous categories. By Marxist definitions there can be only one working class but a nation may share multiple populist movements that constitute different definitions of the ‘people’ as demonstrated by the Sanders and Trump campaigns. This issue did not go necessarily unnoticed within Marxist thought which developed the concept of ‘false consciousness’ to describe such a phenomenon where segments of the working class would divide among lines different from class interests.\footnote{Ron, Eyerman. “False Consciousness and Ideology in Marxist Theory.” \textit{Acta Sociologica} 24, no. 1/2 (1981): 43–56. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4194332, 43.}

Sometimes these contradictions reveal themselves in glaring ways as events will occur that seem to defy established national mythologies. This will in turn spawn movements that seek to either rectify this mistake against the national
consciousness or attempt to make it a part of a new national narrative that suits some subsection of ‘the people’ better. These ideas are represented within movements at the same time such as what we see with Trumpism and the debate over whether he is a deviation from America’s past or a logical fulfillment of it.

Both France and the United States also have and continue to wrestle with this issue abroad with both existing as nations that threw off the yoke of tyrants only to create their own imperial projects throughout the last several hundred years. With France this began nearly immediately with the war against Haiti during Hatian Revolution which eventually would see Haiti free but also stuck paying debts for some time. This would continue in nations like Algeria, Vietnam, and elsewhere with France still engaging in similar projects with them only recently pulling out of an extended campaign in Mali. The United States has also managed a foreign empire since its incursion into the Philippines that still is ongoing until this day with the last two decades of American foreign policy defined by ongoing projects in the Middle East. Further examination on this matter is beyond the perimeters of this project but their contribution to this existing national dissonance is not insignificant.


Boulanger and Dreyfus

The specter of populism had lay dormant within France for sometime after the failure of the Revolutions of 1848 where a democratic surge washed across much of Europe where it was subsequently often put down as we shall examine later in this paper. While France was not without discontent in the years leading to the Franco-Prussian War it was only with the visceral example of a national loss that traumatized much of the country that we would see it arise in a new vicious form. Ironically, the rise of a new unified German state operated primarily by Prussian aristocrats would have the effect of yet again striking the hornets nest that was the French populace. With the loss of the territory of Alsace-Lorraine in the conflict we would see the rise of a new form of reactionary populism built upon this sense of grievance. Arising quite suddenly to fulfill this prophecy about fifteen years following the conclusion of the war was General Georges Ernest Boulanger. Boulanger was a long veteran of various French conflicts including the Franco-Prussian War where he steadily rose through the ranks eventually resulting in his greatest political achievement in being made the Minister of War in 1886 from which he would use the position as a springboard for his political ambitions.

Boulanger exists as a massive contradiction in populist thought that nevertheless is quite common. Boulanger was born into a family of aristocrats and eventually rose to the rank of General and Minister of War and yet there was
a significant sentiment that he was a champion of ‘the people’ that would upright France and strike against its enemies that had left it wounded. Boulanger was presumed among many to be favorable to the republican cause but this could not possibly be further from the truth as would soon be revealed. As noted in Irvine’s writing, the opportunity to return to monarchy was not yet seen as a lost cause among the royalists of France. They would find their champion in the nation’s new popular War Minister who had recently been put into office but popular perceptions varied much from what they wanted. Boulanger was perhaps as a measure of his broad popularity viewed as the epitome of republican patriotism and even had quite a significant following amongst some of the big names of the French left despite his involvement with the destruction of the Paris Commune during his military service.  

It is for this reason that Zeev Sternhell argues in his work that the sort of proto-fascism present in France during this era transcended the traditional boundaries of left and right wing politics that we might have understood up until that point in time which again is a recurring trend in this analysis. As with many movements of this sort it would evaporate with the turn of the 1890s as we would see an all too common sight for collapsing populist movements. Boulanger would be absent following the January elections of 1889 which saw him elected as the Deputy of Paris after fleeing France for Belgium following rumors that he would be charged for crimes against the government.

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87. Irvine, 73, 83.
which he managed to evade. While Boulangism was not quite yet dead it had been struck with a mortal blow that resulted in it withering away throughout the remainder of the year. Again the Boulangist reveal one of the essential paradoxes of populism in which these movements are ironically more attached to their leadership than more traditional political entities that have existing structures that allow them to survive without direct top down leadership. Boulanger would die only two years later and his movement would collapse after briefly being co-opted into the larger French conservative Royalist movement in 1889 but this new populist nationalism would carry and morph into a darker form shortly afterwards with the Dreyfus Affair.89

The grievances raised earlier in the 19th century by Boulanger and the Revanchists would not merely disappear with his decline. An enemy still existed somewhere that had to explain the loss of French dignity and the right wing of French society would find it in an unfortunately common place. Alfred Dreyfus was a Jewish French artillery officer who was accused of selling secrets to Germany and convicted of such in 1894 in what at the time was based on dubious evidence which we now know was utterly false.90 This subject was not settled over the course of a few months or even a year but rather nearly a decade as it would come to define much of France’s political culture leading into the years of World War One. This conflict would be fought in the streets, courts,

89. Irvine, 125, 153, 155.
and news media of the era which would prove to be in manner revolutionary
within itself. This is most evident in Emile Zola’s defense of Dreyfus in his famous
letter printed in L’Aurore. 91

![Image of J'ACCUSE]

Figure 9. J'ACCUSE

The aforementioned blatant anti-semitism often found in certain populist
screeds was purpetuated by nationalist publications like L'Eclair who claimed that
Dreyfuss’s guilt was being obscured by Jewish ‘elites’. Much of this brand of
populism was also surrounded by an association with the French military as a
source of virtue with France for many of the right populists. At a certain point it
became fairly clear to the involved parties that Dreyfuss was innocent but his
guilt was required at that point by those against him to maintain the cultural

Guieu, Jean,
cache that was afforded to the French military which became a part of the identity of its supporters. Populism in this manner is as much or perhaps more about perceptions than it is reality as it becomes necessary to project strength. Years later Dreyfuss would eventually be pardoned and placed back into the ranks of the French military but the effects on French society would not dissipate and would permanently mold its political culture for the years to come.\footnote{Louis Begley, \textit{Why the Dreyfus Affair Matters} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 21, 23.}
No political ideology that has any sort of degree of success is without challenge but the flexible nature of populism has made specific criticisms both plentiful but also sometimes indistinct. To some degree this might be intentional as by nature a critique of populism can be difficult without necessarily targeting the concept of democracy broadly. While these ideas are not equal neither are they necessarily historically detached from each other as it seems there is often a general malaise towards the idea of the popular will that often arrives in waves alongside populism. This was often prevalent in academic circles around the 1950’s through the 1960’s which is where the majority of the dialogue concerning populism arose until its reexamination throughout much of the previous decade. This is further reinforced by newspaper op-eds from the last seven or so years that are largely critical of both populism's goals and causes with some calling for a society more driven by the perceived deserving credentialed ‘elite’ that have risen to the top of an alleged meritocracy though these ideas as presented have notable historical precedence.

It would be relevant to mention that some of the founders wrote in their accounts their worries about the ways in which ‘the people’ might react to this new rising democratic sentiment. While the Founding Fathers did largely oppose the notion of the old styles of feudalism that gave us landed nobles and divine
right of kings they were mostly wealthy and often slave owning merchants that were often primarily concerned with their financial interests. Alexander Hamilton, one of the primary supporters of the northeastern based federalists, once referred to the citizens of the United States as a ‘great beast’. This contradiction towards ‘the people’ in general would come to define much of American populism to come as the ‘people’ were either largely mistrusted by those in power or they were often a specific crowd of people that did not properly represent a title as broad as ‘the people’.

Shortly after this time period the backlash to both the revolution in France and much of the rest of Europe for that matter became a continued topic of concern amongst various conservative intellectuals like Edmond Burke. In Femia's work he lays out some of the foundational ideas against populist rhetoric or even the basics of popular sovereignty. One of the primary ideas perpetuated by Burke and Hobbes as previously demonstrated is a fundamental disagreement concerning the nature of human rights as an abstract good. For Burke the purpose of society was to provide various institutions that would guide and advise humans who he viewed as ultimately chaotic and fearful into forming society such that they would not be the ones managing it but rather being

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managed.94 This is present in Burke’s writing when he says in his highly critical 1790 work *Reflections on The Revolution in France*.95

“By these theorists the right of the people is almost always sophistically confounded with their power. The body of the community, whenever it can come to act, can meet with no effectual resistance; but till power and right are the same, the whole body of them has no right inconsistent with virtue, and the first of all virtues, prudence. Men have no right to what is not reasonable and to what is not for their benefit.”

While the French Revolution itself had been a fading memory at this point more than fifty years after its era, its sentiment still lived on both throughout France and for that matter Europe in general. This would culminate in a wave of populist energy during the Revolutions of 1848 and in France in February of that year that would see the overthrow of the last king of France Louis Philippe who abdicated the throne and fled the country after having a strong sense of what happened the last time this occurred. One of the most notable intellectuals during this time period who would help redefine some of the ways in which we might understand ‘the people’ in a revolutionary sense is the anarchist philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Proudhon's opinions changed dramatically during this period of time as he was heavily affected by the revolutions into adopting what we might regard as a more optimistic stance concerning the

possibilities of the republic. He argued that the political reforms of the era were a sort of bandage over the equally if not more important economic reforms that he deemed necessary.96

Even for those who were in favor of republicanism or larger societal changes at the time like Marx or Proudhon, there was a degree of skepticism at the time concerning how much could be realistically expected from the revolution. The fall of the king was not broadly considered by contemporary thinkers of the time as a righteous triumph of ‘the people’ as much as it was considered a sort of farce that would have little foundations behind its success that would surely collapse quickly. The final tragic consequence of the French Revolution of 1848 and subsequently many of the revolutions across Europe that year was their ultimately limited nature. Only several months later in November 1848 would France see yet again the beginning of the end of the New Second Republic with the crowning of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte III to the Presidency of France. This was followed around three years later with his subsequent coup that would result in him being elevated to the status of Emperor of France with a reign that would last all the way up until his rule collapsed following the Franco-Prussian War that would welcome in the Third Republic and the final end of the French monarchs.97 What this presents to us is both the fleeting nature of populism without accompanying structure but also the ways in which populism has affected more

97. Jones and Moggach, 70,79.
established ideologies such as socialism rather than merely acting as a shallow imitation.

Clinton and Contemporary French Populism

Hillary Clinton found herself in a complicated position as the wife of former president Bill Clinton, former Senator from New York and Secretary of State during the Obama administration. Clinton had already become profoundly aware of the possibilities of populist politics given her run against Sanders in the primary but here she encountered the issue that populism within the right wing of the United States seems to have a significantly greater hold than left populism does. Over the course of months she encountered the worst aspects of right populism both personified by Trump himself but also of much of his following. This resulted in perhaps the most telling speech of her campaign that some contend helped doom her candidacy in her now infamous “Basket of Deplorables” speech where she said the following.98

“...We are living in a volatile political environment. You know, to just be grossly generalistic, you could put half of Trump’s supporters into what I call the basket of deplorables. Right? The racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamaphobic — you name it. And unfortunately there are people like that. And he has lifted them up. He has given voice to their websites that used to only have 11,000

people — now how 11 million. He tweets and retweets their offensive hateful mean-spirited rhetoric. Now, some of those folks — they are irredeemable, but thankfully they are not America. But the other basket — and I know this because I see friends from all over America here — I see friends from Florida and Georgia and South Carolina and Texas — as well as, you know, New York and California — but that other basket of people are people who feel that the government has let them down, the economy has let them down, nobody cares about them, nobody worries about what happens to their lives and their futures, and they’re just desperate for change. It doesn’t really even matter where it comes from. They don’t buy everything he says, but he seems to hold out some hope that their lives will be different. They won’t wake up and see their jobs disappear, lose a kid to heroin, feel like they’re in a dead-end. Those are people we have to understand and empathize with as well.”

While many would argue that some of her sentiments have a ringing degree of truth about them concerning the hateful words and actions that surround much of right wing populism, there is a sense that it was a taboo to directly say it. It was likely not that she didn’t add a sense of empathy to the speech necessarily but that much of it was perceived as yet another ‘elite’ scolding much of the nation yet again. The speech is perhaps one of most defining anti-populist political statements in American history so far as it directly addressed both the broader ideology and its followers.
France in recent years has seen its own surge in populist momentum during and following the presidency of Francois Hollande. Hollande, while ostensibly a socialist often broke from left wing policy on an assortment of issues including foriegn policy which drew detractors from the left. His administration was in power during a series of terrorist attacks that occured around France including the Charlie Hebdo attacks of 2015 and the attack at the Eagles of Death Metal concert that occurred later the same year.\textsuperscript{99,100} While these issues were not necessarily his fault and polling suggests that it actually boosted him slightly, it would not be enough to convince him to run again.\textsuperscript{101} ‘The people’ of France went looking elsewhere for leadership and they would find it in an election that would signify the conflict between populism and neoliberalism in a similar manner to the United States in 2016.

The dominant figure of this new populism was the perennial right wing leader Marine Le Pen who is presently the acting President of her party the National Rally. Le Pen’s history with right wing populism goes beyond herself and

extends back through her family with her father Jean-Marie Le Pen having been the leader of the party back when it was still called the National Front.102 Despite the perceived failings of the previous socialist leader of France, the left was not without their own candidate in the run up to the election in the form of Jean-Luc Melenchon. Melenchon has his own complicated history with the political parties and groups of French left-wing politics that ultimately resulted in the creation of his political group called the La France Insoumise Group that he was the leader of up until just recently.103 Finally we arrive at the current president of France who arguably arrived as a conceivable safe consensus vote against the possibility of Marine Le Pen in the form Emmanuel Macron. Macron himself is not without his own various eccentricities but much of his political appeal as a centrist figure in French politics lies in perhaps his perceived ability to succeed in at least some manner against the rising tide of French populism that we find yet again. The populism of modern France has an extensive deal of continuity with its past just as American politics does but it is also yet again distinctly timely in its specific nature.

Much of French opinion is still largely biased against the neoliberal politics of deregulation and austerity that has had unpopular consequences over the last several decades that contributed to the rumblings at the beginning of the previous decade.\textsuperscript{104} There is a deep skepticism of globalization that is sometimes an expression of xenophobia but this draws towards deeper conclusions that are more complicated. Within similar sentiments like Brexit in the United Kingdoms, there is a sense that the results of international capitalism have not been favorable for the majority of people in many of these countries.\textsuperscript{105} While this sentiment might rarely be specifically declared by these opponents of globalization in this matter, we can see similar language if we try. This position is not exclusive to the nationalist populist right in these nations like France either, there certainly also exists a degree of skepticism both concerning global capitalism and decrees by the United Nations and the European Union on the left as well. This is not to say that much of the response has not been the effect of a sort of returning nativist insurgence from these countries. France in particular suffers from a high degree of prejudice concerning from its Muslim population where it regards both recent migrants and second generation citizens with suspicion. France in this way actually shares its own sort of ‘real american’

sentiment that we alluded to earlier that concerned itself with placing ‘the people’ of the South and Midwest against those living in coastal states. For France there is a sentiment about what is French by nature and there is a strong backlash against deviations from this perceived ‘frenchness’ among its citizens. Much of this comes with any talk about the identity politics of France that seek to deconstruct the nature of ‘frenchness’ which sometimes acts similarly to the American idea of the melting pot where cultures meet to amass into a uniform culture and ideology. In spite of these factors Macron was able to secure a solid victory in the election of 2017 with a clear victory with 66.1% of the vote but as we shall note later this is still a developing matter.

When talking about populism as a major force in world history it would be remiss to ignore the effect it has had upon our media and the way that our media has in turn often propagated it. Despite the common concerns both legitimate and questionable regarding the influence of ‘elite’ institutions upon mass media, we can examine the ways in which new forms of communication have always played a major role in distributing populist thought. Sometimes these new forms of media can subvert established power structures by allowing non-traditional perspectives to break through into the popular imagination in ways that would have been simply impossible otherwise. It was the advent of the printing press that would help break the grip that the Catholic church held upon Europe leading into the Protestant Reformation and while comparisons to that level of change might be difficult they are still certainly significant within themselves.\textsuperscript{107}

While the advent of relatively modern newspapers in the 17th century would expand the reach of information for much of the populace, it would not be until the 19th century when it would become fully available with the creation of penny press papers. This widespread distribution starting in New York throughout the 1830’s would revolutionize the industry of the next several decades with both

\textsuperscript{107} Ulinka Rublack, \textit{The Oxford Handbook of the Protestant Reformations} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 73.
its reach and content contributing for better and worse to populist movements. While these cheap new newspapers allowed for the spread of information to working class people throughout the United States and beyond whereas such material would previously be beyond their grasp, the material within these papers often suffered as a result. Many of these papers would regularly focus on the easy market for salacious or dubious stories that resulted in oddities such as the Great Moon Hoax of 1835 where papers recorded that a scientist had witnessed strange creatures on the moon. Some of these papers would lead the way for modern tabloid media and the dubious new sources that populate social media websites that are responsible for spreading dangerous amounts of misinformation in topics ranging from politics to health.\(^\text{108}\)

The radio as a form of communication arrived around the turn of the 20th century where it lay somewhat dormant in early years as people struggled to figure out what exactly to do with it. One of the first sections that really took up its mantle was religious broadcasters who would use it as a platform to deliver sermons to the populace starting sometime around the 1910’s. This would revolutionize popular religion and culture with figures like Sister Aimee Semple McPherson and her Foursquare Church. It would not take long for individuals to realize the power that the radio held to appeal to the populace at large in political matters and in turn lay the way for demagoguery. The dominant figure in this

matter would be the Roman Catholic priest Charles Coughlin who would through the 1930’s provide a mixed populist message in a similar manner to the earlier Know Nothings which ironically would be known by the slogan Social Justice. He combined a platform that was critical of American capitalism but was also deeply anti-semitic and eventually steered almost entirely into open support of fascism as many feared that his contemporary Long would eventually do. This eventually led to the suspension of Coughlin’s platform by the government who invoked the Espionage Act of 1917 against him but his stylings would persist later into the century and beyond. Contemporary figures such as Tucker Carlson on Fox News operate with a similar ostensibly populist ‘national conservative’ platform that beckons back to much of this sometimes overtly and other times under the guise of ‘just asking questions’.

Populism in Film

Common American populist themes also appear through the work of one of America's most prominent filmmakers during the first half of the twentieth century in the form of Frank Capra. Two of his now biggest films Mr. Smith Goes to Washington and It's A Wonderful Life both feature Jimmy Stewart as noble everyman protagonists who find themselves pitted against men who often embody the worst aspects of the American system. In Mr Smith Goes to Washington his character Jefferson Smith is a literal boy scout leader chosen to replace a dead Senator in an effort to appease the public while blatantly corrupt

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officials work in the background. Smith is tutored in this by his fathers friend who is also a Senator but who himself is a conflicted politician who has been corrupted by party bosses who want him to prevent Smith from building a campsite so that they can perform a plan which will misuse allocated money on a construction project at the same area that's been already been a part of a bill they want to pass. This eventually leads to accusations against Smith who performs a filibuster to prove his innocence after his fathers friend betrays him by suggesting he is corrupt. Smith is subverted by the political machinations of the corrupt bosses until he passes out and his fathers friend can tolerate it no further and tells everyone that Smith was right and about the corrupt scheme that the leadership was pushing all along.\textsuperscript{110}

It is with this that we revisit perhaps a quintessential populist sentiment that even with alleged democracies that the popular will is ultimately managed and subverted by a class of political ‘elites’ operating within exclusive clubs. While not exclusive to right wing politics in the United States, this is apparent in proclamations from political leaders and supporters alike to ‘drain the swamp’ which is a call to remove the perceived political corruption from Washington though in this instance it is both vague and dubious given the nature of much of its support.

In It’s A Wonderful Life Stewart plays the role of George Bailey who lives as a small town banker within the town of Bedford Falls. While the movie touches

\textsuperscript{110} Frank Capra’s Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (Columbia, 1939).
on various highly sentimental elements that elevate the values of the common man and the small town he lives in, the populist element particularly hits its stride when George Bailey is juxtaposed against the villain of the movie Mr. Potter. Potter controls much of the town of Bedford Falls and we can see in the alternate timeline where George is never born that the town changes from the idyllic small American town to a depicted cesspit that indulges in various vices that the movie deems poorly. Potter is the epitome of the financial ‘elite’ represented in some brands of populism as an uncaring robber baron that exists as a parasitic influence upon the town. This comes to a head in the movie when George under duress is considering transferring ownership of his bank to Mr Potter who had stolen the money George needed to keep the bank open during the Depression. George refuses to give Potter control of his bank on principle which is well communicated to the audience.

The movie concludes as the virtues of George Bailey are reaffirmed as ‘the people’ of Bedford Falls give him the money he needs in order to keep the bank open which ultimately demonstrates the value of family, community, and common decency over greed.\footnote{\textit{It's a Wonderful Life}, (Liberty Films, 1946).} While this message and indeed the film might not seem particularly remarkable in this matter considering many other films have had similar messages, the Federal Bureau of Investigation disagreed. In a report concerning the real or imagined influence of communist thought in Hollywood films the FBI opined that the film in its portrayal of the virtues of the common man
versus a greedy banker was perpetuating communist ideology.\textsuperscript{112} This worry over economic populism and its potential left wing sympathies would continue to be relevant in other productions throughout the second Red Scare which would not entirely end until the late 1950’s.

The final movie for this examination that demonstrates the populist notion well is 1976’s \textit{Network}. The film has the famous “I’m mad as hell and I’m not going to take it anymore” line where the protagonist laments the losses of the common man due to the encroaching fears of the era. Perhaps a more poignant scene in the film is provided by a man who represents ‘the elite’ who tells the increasingly distressed populist commentator Howard Beale that corporations have effectively transcended the powers of nations and that they can do nothing about it.\textsuperscript{113}

It is rare that we are presented so thoroughly with such an imposing example of populism’s antagonist that goes beyond the simplicity of political cartoons or basic caricatures but it is conveyed well here. The movie itself is quite pessimistic in nature though this is of little surprise if we consider its position as a post Watergate film that expresses the understandable cynicism that surrounds positions of power throughout the country which would eventually develop into many of the sentiments that we still find to this day.


\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Network} (United Artists, 1976).
Populism in The Era of Social Media

Finally, with the arrival of the internet we have finally achieved a platform that would allegedly allow for the democratization of speech and access to such across anyone who wanted to provide it. While this would show some promise it carried the same issues of the penny press papers with their dubious reliability sometimes accidentally but oftentimes more on purpose. We may imagine the problems that might result when examining this study that shows where Americans typically get the majority of their news presently.  

As we can see, social media has increasingly become a popular news source for many Americans though this has shown some decline as perhaps an increasing

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skepticism is growing about the validity of what they find. This sort of reporting does allow for citizen journalists to spread information that might be censored by governments or obscured by private entities but just as often this ability is abused. This is most readily apparent in the spread of misinformation in both the elections of 2016 and 2020 along with the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic. What this has revealed is that the ongoing war against the elite has also turned into one against credentials and expertise as large amounts of the population have decided that the experts too are in a cabal with these elites to enforce their will over the population.
CHAPTER THIRTEEN

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Summary of Thoughts

What we might now conclude about the nature of populism's historic recent rise in the west during the previous decade is that perhaps it never really went anywhere to begin with. It is ultimately the byproduct of the inequities produced by liberal capitalist democracies that are not able to fulfill the promises that they advertise. We can look back and see the ebbs and flows of popular sentiment that has and continues to create these movements that seek to provide a sense of direction for these seasonal outrages. While some may argue that populism is a detriment to democracy, from this I can contend that it by its very nature is an inescapable fact of any system that would place value on the will of ‘the people’. The creation of overt illiberalism is often the result of the frustrations of subtle illiberalism where sections of the populace are determined wisely or not to take drastic action. ‘The people’ no matter where you go whether it be France, The United States or elsewhere are merely a combination of citizens responding back to the events and movements that drive history with the information that they have available which unfortunately is all too often blatant propaganda. This is not to say that these notions are either for good or for ill but rather that they just are and we continue to live with the consequences of it regardless.
Populism shall continue to exist as long as humanity feels that they lack agency in their lives and that the means of changing that seem distantly out of their control which is not an unfamiliar feeling perhaps to any of us. This reckoning that each populist movement must have with itself, ‘the elite’, and the society it inhabits is ultimately its own but they each speak to broader sentiments that are a part of a shared legacy dating back to our modern world devised during the 18th century. This has resulted in both the rise of movements that reformed our systems just as much as it has created despots that use the language of democracy and the common man to subvert it. It has created more equitable societies that recognize the agency of its citizens beyond the crumbs that are often granted within historical democracies but it has also spread hate that has resulted in the death and injury of the marginalized.

Populism Looking Forward

As of this writing the state of populism in The United States, France, and the world in general is in a sort of holding pattern. There has not necessarily been a retreat from the world's populist movements but at the same time they lack the immediacy and momentum that they carried throughout the middle of the previous decade. Perhaps some of this has been a case of people getting what they asked for and not necessarily being happy with results with them either going too far or too little. We have witnessed a brief response throughout the world to some of these trends such as the election of Joe Biden following the defeat of Donald Trump last year after a relatively close election due to the
electoral college. Biden as a storied Washington insider whose political career goes back to the post-Watergate era in American politics seems to have been put into his position as a counter to the bombastic and divisive stylings of his predecessor though time will tell if that manages to be enough as he attempts to wrangle with populism.\textsuperscript{115} Trump as of this writing shows also indication that he intends to run again in 2024 with polling regularly suggesting that he would again sweep the Republican field and run a highly competitive election against Biden so it would be improper to count out American populism at this time. In France Emmanuel Macron awaits his second battle with Marine Le Pen in an election that will more than ever before carry the public's notions about what is acceptably French and if Macron’s relatively milquetoast centrist politics will be enough against the forces of reaction.

The consequences of these elections and movements reflect upon broader trends that exceed the borders of these two nations. While the “Make America Great Again” oriented Christian nationalism of Donald Trump is distinctly American in many ways, its style and practices are worryingly adaptable. We can find demonstrable traces of this sort of boisterous strong-man style nationalist populism in figures like former Army Captain President Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil that used a sort of almost comedic oafishness to disguise vicious sentiments against vulnerable groups while using his former military experience to signal to

extremist organizations\textsuperscript{116}. Further west last year in Peru we saw an election between right and left populists directly with the election between the economic left populism of Pedro Castillo and the nationalist populism of Keiko Fujimori which resembles that of Marine Le Pen in various ways. Fujimori herself is the daughter of the former fascist dictator of Peru Alberto Fujimori who remains in prison for various crimes who she had planned to pardon if she was victorious.\textsuperscript{117} Castillo managed to edge out a victory but is currently experiencing the difficulties of attempting to rule with a nation as divided as any other which populism has yet to solve.

Another interesting factor that extends beyond the primary objective of this document is the ways in which the internet has produced entirely new communities and ways for populism to arise from. The previously mentioned development of the internet has allowed for systems of populism that seemingly have the capacity to potentially cross multiple nations as we have witnessed with the development of entities such as international white nationalists movements that spread in the unsavory corners of the internet. It seems to follow that if a large amount of the population of varying nations believes that the world is dominated by a cabal of ‘globalist elites’ then it has begun to extend the


\textsuperscript{117} Marco Aquino, “Peru’s Keiko Fujimori Says Would Pardon Father If Elected President,” Reuters (Thomson Reuters, January 18, 2021), https://www.reuters.com/article/us-peru-politics-idUSKBN29N1HT.
sentiment that we might also see the creation of an international volk.\textsuperscript{118} This is already most clearly evident within the realm of the aforementioned Q-Anon conspiracy and its associated movements which has extended from the United States to the rest of the world. In this way it might ironically come to resemble some of the more internationalist ideas present within Marxist thought that left populism sometimes resembles though obviously this produces its own problems. A relevant idea within the American context is that Congress consistently polls terribly and yet few blame the individual from their district. This increasing focus on international ‘globalists’ allows for populists within a nation such as Russia to ward attention away from domestic matters and ‘elites’ in order to focus them on the ‘elites’ that exist abroad despite the influence of their home grown oligarchs. Lest we not be critical enough of ourselves this also occurs when commentators extend the woes of the United States to be the exclusive province of foreign powers like China or Russia rather than evaluating if the powerful entrenched interests of the United States and its allies might also be worthy of consideration.

Another avenue of research that extends beyond the measures of this document but which will likely become important in the coming years and decades will be the impact of climate change upon populism. The immediate

consequences of such will be the way in which several parts of the world either
due to heat, water supply, or rising oceans will slowly become effectively
uninhabitable. This seems quite likely to result in a rising surge of populist
nativism as climate immigrants will travel seeking new homes to escape the
difficulties of their nations of origin only to be met with what will likely be
considerable hostility. We already can see this in the manner in which immigrants
that are fleeing from war are treated throughout most western nations while
supplies are plentiful. It seems plausible that this will eventually result in fortress
nations where ‘the people’ again become more defined by origins.\textsuperscript{119} We can
already take note of a similar phenomenon with current immigrants in Europe
being treated by nationalist populists as proxy adversaries for the ‘globalists’ who
they believe are attempting to subvert their countries with a foreign population.

Issues and Solutions

A common element to all of this conjecture is perhaps a general sense of
considerable pessimism that is difficult to dismiss. Populism doesn’t have reason
to arise when things are going well though this has not necessarily stopped it
from doing so before. It is ultimately as much an ideology as it is a general
sentiment that the relations of power are not as they should be without the larger
ideological framework provided within more rigorous political theories such as
Marxism. It is perhaps this same reasoning that makes it sometimes intuitively

\textsuperscript{119}. Andrew Leigh, “How Populism Imperils the Planet,” The MIT Press Reader,
November 15, 2021.
appealing. Populism does not require any literature beyond perhaps a short pamphlet if even that, it is most effective as propaganda often is with short powerful phrases and an unambivalent lens in which to process modern difficulties. This document is ultimately not a condemnation nor an exaltation of populism but rather an attempt to demystify populism as this foreign entity that appears to show up in political processes every so often. Going forward we largely have two options to take in regard to how to approach populism depending upon our individual and collective objectives. We can either attempt to wield or assault populism for various political ends as we continue to make our way throughout the 21st century. Alternatively we can choose to grapple with the realities that have led people to populist conclusions and attempt to push forth by removing the undue influence of entrenched power within our systems so that we may disperse the catalysts that ultimately produce it. With climate change as an eminent danger upon all of us, we are at a pivotal point in history where we may choose to either stay the course and potentially slide into illiberalism or ironically fulfill populism’s role and fulfill the democratic promise that we engaged in so long ago.
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