Follow the (strong) leader
Left-wing populism and right-wing populism in Europe

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A rise of authoritarian-populist forces on both sides of the political spectrum

Average share of votes for right-wing (upper panel) and left-wing populist parties (lower panel) in 33 European countries 1980-2018 (source: Timbro Authoritarian populism index, 2019)

Outline

Part I. Definitions, research question and hypotheses

Part II. How to gauge authoritarian populism and track its evolution over time with the EVS?

Part III. Modeling strategy

Part IV. Who follows the (strong) leader?

Conclusion and discussion
What (and who) drives this increase?

- **Economic anxiety**
  - Authoritarian-populism arises when growing inequality and economic insecurity mobilize the have-nots (Lubbers, Gijsberts & Scheepers, 2002)

- **Cultural backlash**
  - An ‘authoritarian reflex’ from the conservative against ongoing social change (Norris & Inglehart, 2019)

- **Political disenfranchisement**
  - Critical citizens are disillusioned with democracy and more likely to express approval for authoritarian alternatives (Norris 2011; Foa and Mounk, 2017)
From authoritarian-populist parties to populist attitudes

• Authoritarian-populist parties share specific features (Norris, 2016)
  1. Authoritarianism
  2. Anti-establishmentism
  3. Nativism

• This conceptualization draws upon
  – The Authoritarian Personality (Adorno & al. 1950)
  – Authoritarianism refined as a combination of authoritarian submission; conventionalism and authoritarian aggression (Altemeyer, 1981, 1988)
  – Authoritarianism defined as ‘a cluster of values prioritizing collective security for the tribe at the expense of individual autonomy’ (Norris & Inglehart, 2019) and made up of three components:
    1. Authority
    2. Conformity
    3. Security
Deconstructing left-wing populism and right-wing populism

• The ‘ideational’ approach defines populism as a ‘thin/thick-centered ideology’ (Mudde, 2016; Freeden, 1996)
  – Three core characteristics (Akkerman, Mudde & Zaslove, 2014)
    1. **Anti-elitism**
    2. ‘*The people*’ as a whole
    3. **Popular sovereignty**
  – Populism needs to be combined with left- or right-wing ideologies, operating as exclusionary or inclusionary ways of defining ‘the people’ (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013)

• As a result, radical left and radical right voters have different attitudinal profiles (Rooduijn et al., 2017)
  – Yet authoritarianism and intolerance also exist left of center (Van Hiel et al., 2006; Conway et al., 2017, 2019; Van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2019)
Research question & hypotheses

• Left-wing populism and right-wing populism, two opposite poles of a cultural cleavage?
  – **H1**: Radical left identifiers are less supportive of authoritarian leadership than radical right identifiers
  – **H2**: Different moderators at the individual level
    • **H2a**: Cultural liberalism more likely mitigates support for authoritarian alternatives among radical left sympathizers
    • **H2b**: Economic liberalism more likely mitigates support for authoritarian alternatives among radical left sympathizers
  – **H3**: Support for authoritarian alternatives decreases with well-being at the country level...
    • **H3a**: ... and is more likely to decrease among radical left sympathizers
  – **H4**: Left-wing populism and right-wing populism do not necessarily move in concert over time
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Authoritarianism in the European Values Study

• Five repeated items

1. Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections: ‘I’m going to describe various types of political systems and ask what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is a very good (1), fairly good (2), fairly bad (3) or very bad (4) way of governing this country?’ – from 1999 onwards –

2. Greater respect for authority: ‘Here are changes in our way of life that might take place in the near future. Please tell me for each one, if it were to happen whether you think it would be a good thing (1), a bad thing (3), or you do not mind (2)?’ – since 1981 –

3. Maintaining order in the nation: ‘If you had to choose, which one of the things is most (1)/next most important (2)?’ – since 1981 –

4. Confidence in the armed forces: ‘How much confidence you have in... ? A great deal (4), quite a lot (3), not very much (2) or none at all (1)’ – since 1981 –

5. Obedience – & good manners –: ‘Here is a list of qualities which children can be encouraged to learn at home. Which five would you say are the most desirable for a child to have?’ – since 1981 –
Authoritarianism in the EVS (cont’d)

- **Country and round selection**
  - **3 time points** *(1999, 2008 & 2017)*
  - All the **23 countries** that participated to the last 3 rounds:
    - Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain & Sweden

- **No obvious single dimension** of authoritarianism
Operationalizing authoritarian populism in the EVS

- One straightforward dependent variable
  - Support for a strong leader ruling without constraints

- Authoritarian populism operationalized as the propensity to be supportive of authoritarian leadership for
  - Radical left sympathizers
    - 1-2 on the left-right scale; average 6.6%; min: 2%; max: 10%
  - Radical right sympathizers
    - 9-10 on the left-right scale; average 5.9%; min: 2%; max: 16%
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Modeling strategy

• Three-level model for repeated cross-sectional data (Schmidt-Catran & Fairbrother, 2016)
  – Random intercepts for countries and country-years

• Three levels
  – 23 countries
  – 69 country-years
  – 95,411 individuals
Modeling strategy (cont’d)

• Baseline model (H1)
  – Dependent variable
    • Support for authoritarian leadership (0 to 1)
  – Independent variable
    • Ideology
  – Control variables (micro-level)
    • Cultural liberalism: Divorce, abortion, homosexuality, euthanasia and suicide as justified behaviours; People of a different race, immigrants/foreign workers, Muslims as desirable neighbours (additive index; \( \alpha = .76 \))
    • Economic liberalism: Competition is bad; government ownership should be increased; The state should ensure that everyone is provided for (additive index; \( \alpha = .53 \))
    • Sociodemographics: Sex; Age; Education (age completed education); Income (quartiles)
  – Control variables (macro-level)
    • Survey year
    • Human Development Index (source: OECD)
      – Cross-sectional component (average over the whole time series) (Meuleman, 2016)
      – Longitudinal component (year-specific deviation of the average)
Modeling strategy (cont’d)

• Additional models to examine variations of authoritarian populism
  – Across cultural & economic attitudes (H2)
    • H2a: Ideology##Cultural liberalism + controls
    • H2b: Ideology##Economic liberalism + controls
  – Across levels (H3)
    • H3a : Ideology##HDI + controls
  – Over time (H4)
    • Ideology##year + controls

➢ Graphics for predicted values (marginal effects, fixed & random effects, plotted over ideology)
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Radical left identifiers are less supportive of authoritarian alternatives than radical right identifiers (H2).
### Baseline model

**Random effects**
- Residual var. \( \text{Std. Err.} \) \(0.08534\) \(0.00040\)
- Random intercept var. (country) \( \text{Std. Err.} \) \(0.00630\) \(0.00211\)
- Var. slope (year) \( \text{Std. Err.} \) \(0.00245\) \(0.00211\)
- Cov. (slope country*year) \(1.03E-15\) \(1.03E-14\)

**N**
- (individual-level) 93,346
- (country/year-level) 69
- (country-level) 23

**Fit statistics**
- AIC \(35534.78\)
- BIC \(35846.43\)
- ICC (country level) \(0.0669532\)
- ICC (year*country level) \(0.092942\)
Cultural liberalism (H2a) and economic liberalism (H2b) mitigate authoritarian populism among radical left sympathizers.
Support for a strong leader ruling without constraints decreases with well-being (H3), even more so among radical left sympathizers (H3a).
Left-wing populism and right-wing populism do not necessarily move in parallel over time (H4)
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Left-wing populism & right-wing populism are *not* two sides of the same coin

- **Authoritarian populism can occur on the left**
  - Radical left identifiers are less inclined to support autocracy than their radical right counterparts, but more inclined to do so than their moderate left counterparts

- Yet **cultural liberalism strongly dampens the influence of authoritarianism** on radical left identifiers

- **Left-wing authoritarian populism and right-wing authoritarian populism have followed different trends in many Western and Eastern European countries between 2008 and 2017**
  - Right-wing authoritarian populism has been on the rise, while left-wing authoritarian populism has been on the wane