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# POSTGRADUATE DISSERTATION

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M.A. in International Relations

**'THE ORIGINS OF POPULISM': THE VALIDITY OF PREVAILING ACADEMIC  
THESES CONCERNING SUPPORT FOR RIGHT WING POPULIST  
MOVEMENTS IN WESTERN EUROPE**

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## **Abstract**

The growing prevalence and popularity of Right Wing Populist organisations and figures across much of Western Europe remains one of the most pertinent political issues in the region. Through the successful exploitation of a controversial ideology broadly concerned with national sovereignty, nativism, and anti-elitism, Right Wing Populists have been able secure increasingly larger segments of the electorate and thus enter the political mainstream in many European countries.

The recentness and rapidity of this phenomenon has spurred a great deal of popular and media interest. Much of this has been wholly negative, defined by explicit comparisons of Right Wing Populists to 20<sup>th</sup> century totalitarians and lengthy critiques about the perceived dangers of their platforms. Within Academia, several new theses have emerged which seek to account for these movements and extrapolate the underlying conditions fuelling their rise.

This dissertation demonstrates how many of these academic theses, despite their modernity and differing conclusions, echo strands of functionalist and anti-popular mentalities that were prominent in the early half of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. More specifically, due to their focus on economic and demographic factors as being the primary motivating force behind support for Right Wing Populism, they mirror Hannah Arendt's conceptualisation of the 'Masses', whereby she claims that 20<sup>th</sup> century totalitarian movements were only able to secure power through the mobilisation of a large body of citizenry which had been rendered identity-less and embittered as a result of the rapid social and economic changes witnessed during the preceding century. By doing so, these do two things. Firstly, they tacitly agree

with popular claims that these movements are the spiritual successors to 20<sup>th</sup> century totalitarians. Secondly, by ignoring or downplaying potential ideological or cultural conditions, such theses serve to delegitimise and trivialise support for Right Wing Populist movements, thus constricting political discourse.

In response, this dissertation argues, using a number of comparative case studies chosen according to the least-similar case design as defined by Christopher Lamont, that these materialist understandings of the support for Right Wing Populists and, by extension, the various assumptions from which they derive, have lost much of their validity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Rather, this dissertation puts forward that support for these organisations is for the most part the consequence of pre-existing cultural and historical factors, combined with rational self-interest, which persist across generations regardless of material changes. Fulfilment of this aim is fundamental as it encourages policy makers to re-assess their preconceived notions of Right-Wing Populists and consequently develop a more all-rounded understanding of them, which in turn allows the production of more relevant and effective positions to address the social conditions stimulating their growth.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction:

At the time of writing this dissertation, the undeniable growth of Right Wing Populist parties across much of Western Europe and North America remains one of the most pertinent issues within the politics of the two regions. Over the past decade<sup>1</sup>, Right Wing Populist organisations have been able to secure increasingly larger segments of the electorate, mainly through the successful transmission of a broad and ill-defined ideology usually based around national sovereignty, anti-elitism, and a disdain for immigration and foreign spending.<sup>2</sup>

The recentness and rapidity of this phenomenon, most strongly symbolised by the election of Donald J. Trump as the United States president following the conclusion of the 2016 election (which represented the first major victory for Right Wing Populists on the national level), has spurred a great deal of media rapportage and attention directed towards it.

Much of this has been wholly negative, with most media sources tacitly or explicitly claiming that many of these movements demonstrate some kind of ideological, rhetorical, or organisational lineage to 20th century totalitarian regimes. A March 2017 article, for instance, published by theAtlantic alarmingly insinuates the potential of the newly elected Trump Administration in the U.S. to form a totalitarian political autocracy.<sup>3</sup> The German 'Alternative für Deutschland' (AfD)

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<sup>1</sup> Particularly following the outbreak of the World Economic Recession in 2007 and the more recent European Migrant Crisis.

<sup>2</sup> Andre Tartar. 2017. How the Populist Right Is Redrawing the Map of Europe. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2017-europe-populist-right/>. [Accessed 4 June 2018].

<sup>3</sup> DAVID FRUM. 2017. How to Build an Autocracy. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/03/how-to-build-an-autocracy/513872/>. [Accessed 8 November 2017].

party is often likened to the Nazi Party due to its stances on mass migration into Europe and its historical revisionism.<sup>4</sup> Even relatively 'moderate' right wing Populists are susceptible to similar accusations; the 'United Kingdom Independence Party' (UKIP) is often lumped in with neo-Fascist and neo-Nazi movements by a number of significant observers with little to no distinction.<sup>5</sup> In Sweden, the nationalist 'Swedish Democrats' party saw heavy media backlash during the 2014 Swedish Parliamentary elections, mostly surrounding the hidden 'Nazi' beliefs of a number of its high ranking members.<sup>6</sup>

Segments of the public have also taken on this belief, evidenced by the revived popularity of literature pertaining to the latter groupings.<sup>7</sup> This fear is not entirely without context. Indeed, diminishing ideological differences between centrist political parties, diminishing voter turnout, growing resentment towards the political and social establishment and an increasing disregard for academia and intellectualism by a growing sub-section of the population all seem to, at least on paper, symbolise a gradual return to the social situation which preceded the rise of totalitarian regimes.

This increased attentiveness towards Right Wing Populism and its support has also been noted within academia. In recent years, several new academic theses

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<sup>4</sup> Kirsten Rulf. 2017. How an Extremist Party's Election Campaign Has Shifted Germany to the Right. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/how-an-extremist-party-s-campaign-shifted-germany-to-the-right-1.5452756>. [Accessed 7 November 2017].

<sup>5</sup> Lowles and Collins, N.L. & M.C., 2018. Right Wing terror threat as high as ever. State of Hate, [Online]. Issue 35, 6 - 9. Available at: <https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/research/state-of-hate-2018/overview/> [Accessed 2 March 2018].

<sup>6</sup> Alexandra Sims. 2018. 'Nazi-inspired' anti-immigration group becomes Sweden's most popular party. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/nazi-inspired-anti-immigration-group-becomes-swedens-most-popular-party-10465862.html>. [Accessed 2 January 2018].

<sup>7</sup> Zoe Williams. 2017. Totalitarianism in the age of Trump: lessons from Hannah Arendt. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/01/totalitarianism-in-age-donald-trump-lessons-from-hannah-arendt-protests>. [Accessed 11 April 2018].

Alison Griswold. 2017. "The Origins of Totalitarianism," Hannah Arendt's definitive guide to how tyranny begins, has sold out on Amazon. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://qz.com/897517/the-origins-of-totalitarianism-hannah-arendts-defining-work-on-tyranny-is-out-of-stock-on-amazon/>. [Accessed 3 January 2018].

have emerged which attempt to identify patterns of support for these movements and in turn provide a rationale as to why they have been so successful over the past decade. Although these often differ substantially in their focus and outcomes (as shown in greater detail in section 2.2), they generally hold similar underlying assumptions in that they seek to attribute support for these movements to material factors, namely economic downturns and demographic changes, whilst often downplaying potential historical, ideological, or geographical rationales. This is the result of the continued prevalence of aspects of certain anti-popular mentalities within academia since the beginning of the 20th century. More specifically, these theses maintain distinct similarities to Hannah Arendt's conceptualisation of the 'Masses' initially introduced in her seminal work, '*The Origins of Totalitarianism*'. The work, consisting of an analysis of the ideological and social factors which eventually crystallised into the rise of 20th century totalitarian movements, argued that the support-base of these movements generally came from deracinated and identity-less 'Masses' which emerged as a result of the rapid socio-economic changes of the 18th and 19th centuries.<sup>8</sup>

Through their preoccupation with developments and patterns within the material and the potential fear and anxiety which may develop because of these, modern academics invested in the subject echo Arendt and by doing so suggest, similarly to the aforementioned media sources, that they demonstrate similarities to totalitarian movements. Given both the recentness of the Second World War and its impact on the collective memory of Europe, such comparisons, whether deliberate or coincidental, serves to undermine the ideologies of these movements and thus delegitimize them, which in turn prompts policy makers (who these

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<sup>8</sup> Arendt, H.A., 1973. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. 2nd ed. United States: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 306 - 382

theses are often made for) to undertake actions based on a somewhat incorrect logic.

### **1.2 Relevance of the Topic:**

As Right Wing Populist organisations gradually become a staple within Western European politics, it becomes necessary for observers and academics to constantly re-assess and examine key assumptions and writings regarding their formation and popularity, as well as the ideologies and core rhetoric of these organisations. Ensuring a proper, all-rounded, understanding of Right Wing Populism is of key importance for both policy and public figures as it provides them with the necessary tools to tackle the underlying social, economic, and political conditions fuelling their rise. Such a dissertation also holds academic relevance, as it seeks to test and challenge not only the prevailing academic theses connected to the subject, but also to ascertain the modern validity of the 'Arendtian' concept of the 'Masses'.

### **1.3 Main Aims**

This dissertation seeks to address the recent surge in support for Right Wing Populist movements by academically assessing the extent to which prevailing academic theses on the subject, and, by extension, the various conceptual assumptions on which they rest, retain validity in the 21st century. More specifically, the dissertation seeks to criticise these by demonstrating how, due to their focus on material factors such as economic downturns and migration as



being the main reasons encouraging support for Right Wing Populism, their validity is diminished.

For the purposes of this Dissertation, the terms 'Right Wing Populist' and 'Far Right' will be used interchangeably and shall be defined using Stephanie Lynn Brodeur's (2005) definition; that is, a movement which seeks to legitimise itself through appeals to the people and which generally incorporate a sense of identitarianism (usually manifested in anti-immigration sentiment) in its rhetoric and policies.<sup>9</sup>

### **MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION:**

*'To What Extent do Theses Which Seek to Attribute the Rise of Right Wing Populism Across Europe to Material Factors Retain Plausibility in the 21st Century?'*

### **SUB-QUESTIONS:**

- *To What Extent Are Current Theses on the Rise of Right Wing Populism Indebted to 'Arendtian' Conceptualisation of the 'Masses' and their Role in the Rise of Totalitarianism?*
- *To What Extent do 21<sup>st</sup> Century Right Wing Populist Groups Maintain Similar Voting and Support Patterns to 20<sup>th</sup> Century Radical and Totalitarian Organisations?*
- *To What Level Can the Rise of Right Wing Populist Groups Be Attributed to Recent Economic and Demographic Shifts?*

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<sup>9</sup> Brodeur, S.L.B., 2005. Why Support the Radical Right?. M.E.A.. Sweden: Lund University pg. 12-17

## 1.4 Chapter Overview

In fulfilment of the aims established in section 1.3, it was deemed appropriate to divide this dissertation into a number of distinct sections. The Literature Review section (section 2) of the dissertation intends to introduce the reader to the various recent academic theses pertaining to the rise of the Far Right. By doing so, it seeks to provide an adequate answer to the first sub-question, demonstrating how, despite their modernity, they maintain similarities with and echo forms of thought which emerged in the early 20th century, primarily the 'Arendtian' conceptualisation of the 'Masses' as being fundamental to the rise of and support for particular political movements.

The remaining sections of the dissertation are less theoretical, instead consisting of a number of case studies (section 4) chosen according to the methodologies introduced in section 3. These will include a brief history of the ideology in that area, its rise to prominence in recent years, and an analysis of its popular support and voting patterns. This is done in order to fulfil the latter two sub-questions, that is, to understand whether their rise can be attributed to recent economic shifts and demographic changes that have in turn led to a loss in identity and embitterment (therefore proving the existence of 'Masses' as conceptualised by Arendt). They also seek to determine whether Populists attract the same groups as radicals and totalitarians did previously.

The concluding section (section 5) shall compile the information provided in the preceding section and draw observations, and thus provide an answer to the main research question that motivates the writing of this dissertation.

## 1.5 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the reader to the topic at hand, the rationale for the writing of this dissertation and the overall relevance of the subject matter. In addition to this, it also established the main aims of the dissertation, in addition to the way it shall be divided for what is perceived as maximum efficiency.

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## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Introduction:

This section seeks to provide the reader with an understanding of the main literature and academic debate underlying this dissertation, as well as the perceived gap within it that influenced its writing. Given the topic, it is appropriate to dedicate a significant portion of this section to modern theses pertaining to the rise of Right Wing Populism and radical movements in order to provide the reader with an adequate understanding of their primary assumptions and potential differences in their outcomes and argumentation. The remainder of the section shall focus on the conceptual origins of these theses, with special reference given to Hannah Arendt's '*Origins of Totalitarianism*', and rationales as to why they have been able to retain significance and popularity into the 21st century despite criticisms that emerged in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### 2.2 Modern Academic Literature on the Far Right:

As mentioned in the introductory chapters of this dissertation, academic interest into the rise and support for political movements and organisations perceived to be Populist and radical in nature has increased substantially in recent years, particularly in the aftermath of the 2008 'Great Recession'<sup>10</sup> and during the

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<sup>10</sup> A term often used to refer to the lengthy period of economic downturn witnessed from 2008 until the early 2010s.

ongoing European migrant crisis<sup>11</sup>. Previously, due to the lack of an electorally successful Right Wing Populist movement within most European countries, literature tended to be almost exclusively focused on fringe and extremist groups that were usually secretive in nature and only recruited from a very specific part of the population. The greater availability of statistical and electoral data pertaining to the Far Right in the 21st century allowed more in-depth, broader studies to be conducted on a national level.<sup>12</sup>

The nature of the evidence and data used for such studies often entails that the emergent theses and theories seek to account for the phenomenon at hand using economic or demographical information. The 'Relative Deprivation Thesis', initially developed in the 20th century in order to provide a model of looking at the rise of radicalism (particularly Right Wing radicalism), is an example of such a thesis and which has seen a resurgence in popularity more recently. Focusing on economics, the thesis ascertains that support for radical, and to a lesser extent, totalitarian, movements generally stems from a feeling of relative deprivation held by certain social groups in comparison to others. As a result, members of this 'deprived' group become more likely to turn to radical groups in an attempt to 'mend' this imbalance and regain a sense of social dominance.<sup>13</sup>

The results and outcome of this thesis directly link up with the 'Ethnic Competition Thesis', which argues that this feeling of deprivation and competition is compounded by the influx of 'foreign' ethnic and social groups during economic decline, which in turn further fuels the flame for radicalism.<sup>14</sup> These beliefs

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<sup>11</sup> An ongoing period of intense irregular migration into Europe from parts of Asia, Africa and the Middle East which has prompted intense debate within European politics and academia.

<sup>12</sup> Mudde, C.M., 2016. The Study of Populist Radical Right Parties: Towards a Fourth Wave. C-REX Working Paper Series, No.1, 6 - 15.

<sup>13</sup> Walls, M.W., 2013. Losers of modernization or modernization winners?. M.A.. Gothenburg, Sweden: Göteborgs Universitet.

<sup>14</sup> Rydgren, J.R., 2011. Voting for the Radical Right in Swedish Municipalities: Social Marginality and Ethnic Competition?. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, Vol.34, No.3, 202-225.

demonstrate some merit in the 21st century; the gradual decline of the middle classes and decreasing income across generations, in addition to increases in immigration throughout the Northern Hemisphere, might potentially lead to disenfranchisement and reactionary behaviour. A study conducted by Jens Rydgren (2011), for instance, provides evidence suggesting that the growth of fringe politics and extremism across Scandinavia demonstrates a direct correlation with rising levels of immigration, with support for these movements consistently being more prevalent in areas with large immigrant populations.<sup>15</sup>

Despite their prevalence, these theses were subjected to criticism. Pippa Norris (2005) questions this link between migration and radicalism through a re-examination of voting patterns and elections, arguing that it is based on a highly superficial understanding of the issue that fails to adequately take into account that migrant populations may in themselves contribute to support for Populist organisations.<sup>16</sup>

The 'Modernisation Losers' Thesis emerged to make up for these faults through the combination of both theses with various aspects of 20th century functionalist thought. Hans-Georg Betz (1994) argues that the rise of extremist and radical movements generally occurs after periods of intense economic and social change. These dramatic changes generally produce three observable effects.<sup>17</sup> Firstly, they serve to diminish social and cultural identity, in turn creating feelings of isolation and embitterment towards outside groupings. Secondly, they create a situation in which certain individual characteristics, such as entrepreneurship and flexibility, become prioritised and demanded. This creates a state of anxiety amongst those

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Norris, P.N., 2005. *Radical Right : Voters and Parties in the Electoral Market*. 1st ed. New York, U.S.A.: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>17</sup> Betz, H.G.B., 1994. *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe*. 1st ed. London, United Kingdom: Macmillan. 37-69

classes and groups incapable of adapting to this situation, fuelling feelings of relative deprivation and reactionary behaviour. Lastly, they serve to weaken existing political discourse and dialogue. Populist and Mass movements become more prevalent in society during these periods by exploiting the aforementioned anxiety within society rather than actually providing concrete ideological positions. Although this thesis has been criticised for a number of reasons, mostly regarding the unproven relationship between unemployment and extremism, it has nonetheless become one of the more prevalent understandings about the rise of totalitarianism and extremism in the modern era. Jens Rydgren (2007) dubs it 'one of the central tenets in the literature on the new radical Right Wing parties'.<sup>18</sup>

### **2.3 Conceptual Roots:**

Despite the recentness of the aforementioned theses and the phenomenon they seek to document and trace, such literature pertaining to the modern Far Right in many ways echoes strands of sociological thought which originated during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In particular, they demonstrate a direct lineage to Hannah Arendt's conceptualisation of the 'Masses' initially introduced in her seminal work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, which serves as a historiographical analysis of the conditions and factors which allowed for the rise of the brutal totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. In brief, it argues, that, although they were the organisational by-product of a number of ideological developments which emerged in the 19th century, these movements were only able to gain support and eventually seize power through the successful exploitation of a large body of

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<sup>18</sup> Rydgren, J.R., 2007. The Sociology of the Radical Right. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol.33, No.1, 241-262.

identity-less and embittered citizens, collectively referred to as the 'Masses'. According to Arendt, the 'Masses' were the consequence of the rapid social and economic changes which took place in the preceding century. Due to their inability to adequately adapt to changing circumstances, many groups were rendered superfluous, and gradually lost any sense of 'traditional' forms of self-identification such as class. Without this, Arendt asserts that the 'Masses' were far more susceptible to mobilisation by totalitarian movements, due to their 'ineptitude' and lack of a binding ideology (which Arendt states is unimportant when looking at these movements).<sup>19</sup> By attributing the rise of modern Populist movements to shifts in the economy, demographic changes and by more often than not failing to acknowledge the nuances or particularities of their ideologies, the aforementioned theses indirectly do two things. Firstly, they tacitly assume that there is some kind of ideological, organisational or rhetorical similarity between modern Populists and 20th century totalitarians; a claim which is contested and to which academia fails to provide a consistent answer.<sup>20</sup> Secondly, and more importantly for this dissertation, they make the assumption that these movements are primarily the result of material factors, whilst cultural, historical, or social factors are either secondary or not at all important in analysing their rise and formation. Despite Arendt's criticism of academic cliché and uniform thinking, many of her core concepts were already widely accepted within academia at the time of writing, although she was the first to directly connect them to specific political processes. Rather, they were the continuation of specific anti-popular mentalities that were already dominant within academia at the time of writing. Functionalist sociologists,

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<sup>19</sup> Arendt, H.A., 1973. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. 306 - 382

<sup>20</sup> Zaslove, A., 2011. *The Re-invention of the European Radical Right*. 1st ed. Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queens University Press. Pg. 19 - 24xlv  
Kershaw, I., 2008. *Hitler: A Biography*. 1st ed. New York, United States: W.W. Norton & Company. Pg. 308 - 316



for instance, consistently stress the damage caused by intense social change and the weakening of social norms. Émile Durkheim (1897), perhaps one of the most renowned functionalist scholars, speaks in great lengths about 'Anomie', that is, a 'condition in which society provides little moral guidance to individuals' caused by a decline in group aspirations as a result of the collapse of social ethics and rapid socioeconomic changes. This, in turn, leads to violence, mass instability, hedonistic behaviour and, eventually, higher trends of suicide.<sup>21</sup>

Such portrayals of the 'Masses' became further cemented within academia shortly after the publication of the '*Origins of Totalitarianism*'. Charles Wright Mills (1956), re-affirms Arendt's description of the 'Masses', commenting how the weakness of public political dialogue and influence was responsible for the gradual breakdown of interest groups into an unrecognizable mass, which was then successfully exploited by the would-be totalitarians.<sup>22</sup> Herbert Blumer (1951), writing specifically about collective behaviour, also adopts a largely 'Arendtian' outlook, describing the 'Masses' using similar terms. In particular, he notes their anonymity, infrequent interaction and susceptibility to control by political and social elites.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps the most notable expansion on the 'Arendtian' and Functionalist critiques of the 'Masses' comes from William Kornhauser (1959). Kornhauser, whose works would later become fundamental in the development of the so-called 'Mass Society Theory', contends that the 'Masses' emerge from the demise of informal networks and intermediary links between the public and elites as a result of economic change. This serves to polarise society into two distinct groups; extensive

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<sup>21</sup> Frank W. Elwell. 2003. Emile Durkheim on Anomie. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.faculty.rsu.edu/users/f/felwell/www/Theorists/Essays/Durkheim1.htm>. [Accessed 15 March 2017].

<sup>22</sup> Wright Mills, C.W.M., 1956. *The Power Elite*. 1st ed. New York, U.S.A.: Oxford University Press. Pg. 300-311

<sup>23</sup> Blumer, H.B. 1951. *The Field of Collective Behaviour*, IN: Lee, A.M.L, 1951. *Principles of Sociology*. 1st ed. New York, U.S.A.: Barnes and Noble. Pg. 167-223

bureaucracies dominated by political elites on one hand and identity-less, isolated groups on the other. The latter group, due to its embitterment and lack of a feeling of belonging, 'readily becomes mobilised' by extremist groups and other mass movements who prey on their disbelief in the established social order and their detachment from the higher echelons of society.<sup>24</sup>

## 2.4 Criticisms:

Despite their prevalence, however, the viability of the 'Arendtian' concept of the 'Masses' or other similar hypotheses in analysing the rise of movements beyond the ones covered remains dubious. Direct critiques of Arendt's characterisation of the 'Masses' began to more strongly emerge in the latter half of the 20th century during a new wave of critical thinking. Richard Hamilton (2001) doubts the validity of the concept, citing the distinct lack of tangible evidence provided by its proponents. Rather, he claims that the concept has been rendered moot due to the large body of unrecognised evidence against it, which lends credence to the idea that there were clear class and political interests contributing to the rise of Totalitarianism.<sup>25</sup> An example of this evidence lies in the writings of Marx and Wood. Marx and Wood (1975) argue that 'membership in secondary or even primary groups can facilitate recruitment to political movements that are fringe or reformist in nature'. In other words, individuals with a history of political activity are more likely to become engaged in 'extremist' actions.<sup>26</sup> This runs contrary to the

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<sup>24</sup> Kornhauser, W.K., 1959. *The Politics of Mass Society*. 1st ed. New York, U.S.A.: Free Press. Pg. 45-51

<sup>25</sup> Hamilton, L.H., 2001. *Mass Society, Pluralism, and Bureaucracy: Explication, Assessment and Commentary*. 1st ed. Westport, U.S.A.: Praeger. Pg. 12-13

<sup>26</sup> Marx & Wood, G.T.M. & J.L.W., 1975. *Strands of Theory and Research in Collective Behaviour*. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol.1, No.1, 363-428.

belief that the 'Masses' who eventually support Totalitarianism lack any real political or class identity. Anthony Oberschall (1973) also rejects the notion that isolated, superfluous groups of people are inherently more likely to participate within fringe politics.<sup>27</sup> Instead, he suggests that they are in fact less likely to become involved, and that rational self-interest (i.e. people become involved in politics to further their own individual agenda) remains the crucial motivating factor behind all political actions. He states that social mobilisation, including that of radical and totalitarian movements, is broadly the consequence of two pre-existing conditions, namely a consensus on current social grievances (whether towards social elites or other groups) within society and an existing basis for organisation.

### **2.5 Gap in Literature:**

Although Arendt's concepts and assumptions were criticised by a relatively broad range of academics, they have continued to re-emerge within the media and academia. The reasoning for this may be linked to a number of noteworthy factors that are often ignored within the wider debate surrounding the topic.

Firstly, the historical significance and recentness of the Second World War in addition to the extreme violence of the Nazi and Soviet regimes has an insurmountable effect on the collective memory of Western Europe. Perceived ideological or organisational similarities between modern Right Wing Populists and 20th century totalitarians can serve to undermine their public popularity. A recent example of this involves the 'Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West' (commonly known as PEGIDA), a Germany-based anti-Islamic Right Wing

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<sup>27</sup> Oberschall, A.O., 1973. *Social Conflict and Social Movements*. 1st ed. New Jersey, U.S.A.: Prentice-Hall.

Populist movement which saw an intense decrease in popular support following the January 2015 publication of a number of private images which showed its founder, Lutz Bachmann, posing as Adolf Hitler.<sup>28</sup> Within a month, the average number of participants attending PEGIDA demonstrations declined from 25,000 to around 2,000.<sup>29</sup> Although this number would see a slight resurgence a few months later, the incident effectively ended the organisation's political influence within Germany.<sup>30</sup> Jonah Goldberg (2011) notes that there is a tendency by media and academic institutions to use associations with Fascism or Nazism as a 'political cudgel' to silence or outright remove opposition without actively engaging them in debate, noting that this is not exclusively aimed at Populist parties.<sup>31</sup> These points are reiterated by Ben Shapiro (2014) in his work 'Bullies' which seeks to demonstrate how political discourse (although he writes about the United States specifically) has become impacted by feelings of fear and intimidation in part the result of associations with totalitarian movements.<sup>32</sup> It is likely that this mentality may also be present within certain academic institutions, particularly given the prevalence of progressive and republican thought within them. Certain observers, most notably William Buckley (1951), have controversially noted that academia had a tendency to maintain certain narratives across generations, partly out of encouragement by lecturers and superiors.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Kate Connolly. 2015. Photograph of Germany's Pegida leader styled as Adolf Hitler goes viral. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/21/pegida-leader-styled-adolf-hitler-lutz-bachmann-german-islamist-terrorists-facebook>. [Accessed 4 January 2018].

<sup>29</sup> Deutsche Welle. 2015. Dresden's PEGIDA numbers drop, but anti-refugee sentiment still strong. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.dw.com/en/dresdens-pegida-numbers-drop-but-anti-refugee-sentiment-still-strong/a-18822438>. [Accessed 13 February 2018].

<sup>30</sup> The Local. 2015. Neo-Nazis arrested as Pegida peters out. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.thelocal.de/20150210/pegida-numbers-fall-to-new-low>. [Accessed 13 February 2018].

<sup>31</sup> Goldberg, J., 2007. Liberal Fascism. 1st ed. New York, United States: Broadway Books. Pg. 3 - 10

<sup>32</sup> Shapiro, B., 2013. Bullies. 1st ed. New York, United States: Threshold Editions. Pg. 19 - 23

<sup>33</sup> Buckley, W., 1986. God and Man at Yale. 2nd ed. Washington D.C., United States: Regnery Gateway.

Another rationale in line with the previous may be a tacit attempt to delegitimize both Populist movements and the 'Masses' in general. By attributing the popularity of a movement to predominately-material factors which in turn create fear, anxiety or alienation, the authors downplay potential ideological or organisational nuances which may exist within said movements. Such a link, in turn, actively discourages policy makers (which many of these theses are intended for) from making any serious attempts at critically engaging them and may also encourage suppression. This sometimes reflects in the rhetoric and speech of a number of public figures, academics, and media institutions, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the recent economic recession.<sup>34</sup> Marxist and Critical theorists indirectly brought up this argument during the latter half of the 20th century. Louis Althusser (1970), in particular, dismisses 'Arendtian' points of views as being a facet of what he terms the 'Ideological State Apparatus', that is, the continuous reinforcement of establishment ideals, in the absence of major military and police repression, through the media and social institutions (such as the education and political systems).<sup>35</sup>

A focus on positivism and the scientific method within Humanities may also compound this problem. Lucian Pye (2006) notes how, during the 1950s and early 1960s, a quantitative paradigm shift (retrospectively referred to as the Behavioural Revolution) occurred within a number of subjects, whereby researchers in the fields of sociology, political science and geography became expected to develop

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<sup>34</sup> Sunny Hundal. 2017. The rise of the far right has nothing to do with economic policy, and the left needs to accept that. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/marine-le-pen-france-election-emmanuel-macron-far-right-nationalism-a7721886.html>. [Accessed 14 February 2018].  
 Matt O'Brien. 2016. The stunning truth that explains the rise of the far-right in Britain and elsewhere. [ONLINE] Available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/05/31/the-simple-and-shocking-truth-that-explains-the-rise-of-far-right-politicians-everywhere/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.df0c4c870011](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/05/31/the-simple-and-shocking-truth-that-explains-the-rise-of-far-right-politicians-everywhere/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.df0c4c870011). [Accessed 14 February 2018].

<sup>35</sup> Louis Althusser. 1970. Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>. [Accessed 2 May 2017].

more systematic and rigorous methodological frameworks for research.<sup>36</sup> The result was an increased emphasis and pressure placed on academics to produce all-encompassing and replicable arguments, which in turn may have encouraged the use of easily quantifiable material aspects, such as economic and demographic shifts, to explain the development of and support for particular political phenomena. David Harvey (1973) notes that this leads to certain qualitative factors, such as political or sociological shifts, to be ignored entirely during study.<sup>37</sup> A certain unwillingness to move away from empiricism may have allowed for the 'Arendtian' and Functionalist assumptions about Mass society to prevail into the 21st century.

The aforementioned prevalence in the belief of the primacy of material factors and the existence of a superfluous and deracinated mass as fundamental to the rise of totalitarianism, and, more recently, Right Wing Populism warrants the conduction of a different study. Whilst not seeking to totally remove the material factor from the rise of the Far Right, this dissertation seeks to argue that, rather than being the by-product of recent shifts and the emergence of an 'Arendtian' 'Mass', modern Right Wing Populist movements are primarily the result of specific non-material factors, such as culture and history, which differ across regions and countries although they may produce superficially similar outcomes.

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<sup>36</sup> Charles Tilly & Robert Goodin, 2006. *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*. 1st ed. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press. Pg. 797 - 806

<sup>37</sup> Harvey, D., 1973. *Social Justice and the City*. 1st ed. Georgia, United States: University of Georgia Press. Pg. 120 - 147

## 2.6 Conclusion:

This section of the dissertation sought to introduce the reader to the major works and ideas underlying the remainder of the text as well their roots. It was noted that, despite their modernity, modern academic theses concerning the rise of the Far Right across Western Europe maintain a high degree of similarity to previously established concepts and ideas, which were prevalent in the early 20th century. In particular, they echo the 'Arendtian' concept of the 'Masses' through their insinuation that support for the Far Right is the result of recent social or economic changes which creates fear or a breakdown of identity. This remains true notwithstanding several major criticisms directed towards the concept in the latter half of the 20th century, which broadly argued that rational self-interest was a larger component to the rise of radical or fringe political movements. The unwillingness to address these criticisms in recent years, for reasons elaborated on in section 2.5, warrants the conduction of a new kind of study of Right Wing Populism. This dissertation intends to provide a different logic to what has been established, arguing how Right Wing Populism is more the result of culture, geography and history rather than recent economic shifts or the perceived loss of identity in the face of migration which have in turn created 'Arendtian' 'Masses'.

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## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter of the dissertation will briefly elaborate on the methods, sources and forms of research utilised during the writing of this dissertation. It shall provide a rationale as to why certain methods are preferable and how case studies and examples were chosen.

### **3.2. Sources**

Given the nature of this dissertation and its overall brevity, primary sources, such as speeches and electoral manifestos are utilised in order to provide a clearer unabridged view of the ideologies examined. Moreover, quantitative sources such as statistics related to deprivation, migration and voter turnout, are used extensively in throughout section 4, as they are necessary in identifying patterns in support for Right Wing Populists and whether these can be linked to migration or economic factors.

### **3.3 Methodologies**

Since the theses in question, in addition to the form of sociological and political thought which underlines their research and conclusions, place such a strong emphasis on the role of economic factors and shifts in the creation of a mass society and the rise of previously fringe groups, it is also believed that utilising the Comparative Method as explained by David Collier (1993), whereby a small



number of case studies are systematically analysed and compared in order to identify consistencies and patterns in Right Wing populism across countries would be tremendously useful.<sup>38</sup> Particular attention will be given to identifying whether these groups witness growth during periods of economic downturn (most notably the 2008 World Economic Recession) and whether this remains constant even during periods of growth and recovery.

The case studies that shall be examined are Great Britain, Germany and Belgium. These were chosen according to the least-similar case design as defined by Christopher Lamont (2015).<sup>39</sup> More specifically, although these countries maintain a number of similar variables, namely membership of the European Union and highly advanced economies, they possess significant differences in ethnic makeup, geography, history and political structures. However, each have seen a recent surge in Right Wing populism. These differences are useful as it allows us to more easily determine why the Far Right is able to maintain popularity in different environments.

Each case study consists of three parts:

- *The Historical Far Right*, this consists a brief history of both the radical right and Right Wing populism within that particular country. This is necessary to establish as it not only aides in determining the ideological and organisational roots of modern movements, but it also enables us to identify the major rationales for support and whether historical movements saw surges as a result of economic or demographic factors.

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<sup>38</sup> Finifter, A., 1993. Political Science: The State of Discipline II. 1st ed. Washington D.C., United States: American Political Science Association. Pg. 106 – 112

<sup>39</sup> Lamont, C., 2015. Research Methods in International Relations. 1st ed. London, United Kingdom: SAGE Publications. Pg. 125 - 140

- *The Modern Far Right*; this entails an analysis of modern Right Wing Populist parties; this allows us to make out to what extent modern movements maintain similarities in ideology and support to past movements and if this support is the result of recent socioeconomic downturns.
- *Reasons for Support*; this consists of explanations and arguments pertaining to the support of these movements based on the evidence and information provided in the preceding parts.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

Overall, it is argued that the aforementioned methodologies and sources are sufficient in providing the reader with both an adequate understanding of the topic at hand as well as of the overall subject of the dissertation and its main aims and points.

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## **4. CASE STUDIES**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Earlier sections of this dissertation made mention of the various theories regarding support for Right Wing Populists, noting how they bear the same underlying assumptions as the 'Arendtian' analysis in that it is assumed that it is mostly material factors which create the conditions for support for Totalitarian or, in this case, Right Wing Populist movements.

This section seeks to analyse a number of case studies through the methods detailed in section 3 with the intention of testing this assumption. Whilst it does not seek to remove the material question from the picture outright (such a claim would be both unrealistic and impossible to prove objectively), it does seek to provide a more balanced understanding of these movements by extrapolating that they are primarily the result of ideological and cultural factors specific to the regions from which they originate.

## 4.2 The Far Right in Belgium

### 4.2.1 The Historical Far Right

The peculiarity of Belgium's geographical location and cultural composition, namely its division between French-speaking Walloons dominant in the country's south and Dutch-speaking Flemish people in the North, is reflected in its internal politics, which very often evolves in response to external influence, particularly from France, Germany and the Netherlands. The Belgian Right, especially its fringes, is representative of this. Historically, support (at least electoral) for the radical right in the country was generally marginally higher in the French speaking Wallonia region of the country and mainly coalesced around the Nazi-funded 'Rexist Party' led by Leon Degrelle which during the 1936 General election was able to score 11.5% of the vote.<sup>40</sup> Although Flanders itself had a relatively influential ultra nationalist movement known as the 'Vlaams Nationaal Verbond' (Flemish National Union or VNV)<sup>41</sup>, it was usually smaller and less significant except for a brief period following the 1939 election when the Rexist movement floundered in the face of rising Communist and centrist political organisations whilst the VNV was able to score 15% of the Flemish vote through a number of pacts with smaller movements. During this period, the Flemish population proved more likely to gravitate towards newly emergent Catholic and Liberal parties,

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<sup>40</sup> Brustein, William, 2018. The Political Geography of Belgian Fascism: The Case of Rexism. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 53, No.1, 69-80.

<sup>41</sup> This would later play an important role in the Nazi Collaboration government set up in Flanders in 1944.

although there briefly existed a handful of Far Left movements that attracted a number of artisans from industrial centres such as Antwerp and Brussels.<sup>42</sup> Towards the end of the 1930s and following the end of the Second World War, perhaps due to Leftist tendencies in France, Walloon politics continued to gravitate Leftwards and even had a strong Communist movement throughout the mid-20th century, whilst Flemish politics remained predominantly Christian democratic and socially conservative. Far Right parties began to re-enter Belgian politics in the mid-1950s, and were nearly exclusively located in Flanders and prioritised cultural concerns specific to that region, such as securing constitutional rights for the local language. The most notable of these, the 'Volksunie' (People's Union) was able to score 6.1% of the Flemish vote in the 1961 election, again through collaboration with a number of smaller, marginal movements.<sup>43</sup> The growth of these parties was severely hindered during this period by the association of the Flemish Nationalist Movement with Nazi collaborationism in the Second World War, explained further in section 4.2.3, and subsequent state repression. However, the exasperation of cultural and linguistic divisions between Flanders and Wallonia as the 1960s progressed led to increasing calls for separatism by segments of the Flemish population. Through the adoption of a Populist, conservative and reactionary electoral manifesto that promised independence, the party grew considerably and was able to securing a record 18.5% of the Flemish vote in 1971.<sup>44</sup>

This success would prove to be short lived. The abandonment of its Right Wing ideology in favour of a more social liberal platform that favoured federalism over

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<sup>42</sup> Mudde, C., 2000. *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*. 1st ed. Manchester, United Kingdom: Manchester University Press. Pg. 81 – 83

Guy Van Sinoy. 1995. 1921-1996. Il y a 75 ans: la fondation du Parti communiste de Belgique. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20050322112131/http://www.lsp-mas.be/marxismeorg/1996pc.html>. [Accessed 1 February 2018].

<sup>43</sup> Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, Pg. 83

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* Pg. 83

outright separatism by the party leadership caused dissatisfaction amongst the party's more radical members. The signing of the Egmont Pact by the party in 1977 heightened this dissatisfaction, encouraging splits and the creation of new movements.<sup>45</sup>

Two of the more prominent of these, the 'Vlaamse Volkspartij' and the 'Vlaams Nationale Partij', would merge in 1979 and form the 'Vlaams Blok' (VB). The VB was consistently more Right Wing, nationalist and anti-establishmentarianism than the previous movement. In line with this, many of the party's policies concerned the creation of an independent Flemish ethno-state that would gradually re-merge with the Netherlands. Moreover, it was the only significant Belgian political party that opposed Belgium's entry in the European Union as it identified federalism as a continuation of the existent status quo it sought to oppose.<sup>46</sup> In the 1980s the party began to adopt more hard-line positions against migration and minority rights, culminating in the 1992 drafting of a '70 point plan' (revised in 1996) which suggested measures to forcibly remove migrants from the country.<sup>47</sup> This methodology proved successful for the party, resulting in it garnering just under 10% of the vote in the 1999 Belgium election (and 25% in the Flemish parliament).<sup>48</sup> Much of this support tended to be concentrated in Antwerp and the areas immediately surrounding it, although it was also moderately successful in the Gent and Brussels areas.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid. Pg. 85

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. Pg. 96 - 98

<sup>47</sup> Vlaams Bloc. 1996. 70 Punten Plan. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://newsroom.roularta.be/static/15032016/70-puntenplan-1996-volledig.pdf>. [Accessed 8 February 2018].

<sup>48</sup> Belgian Federal Election Results 1999. 1999. Stemmen - en Zetelverdeling. [ONLINE] Available at: [http://www.ibzdgip.fgov.be/result/nl/result\\_ko.php?date=1999-06-13&vt=CK&ko\\_type=KO\\_RK&ko=263&party\\_id=](http://www.ibzdgip.fgov.be/result/nl/result_ko.php?date=1999-06-13&vt=CK&ko_type=KO_RK&ko=263&party_id=). [Accessed 8 February 2018].

#### 4.2.2 The Modern Far Right

In the early 2000s, the Flemish Block was hit with a number of lawsuits and warnings for its failure to comply with the Belgian 1981 anti-racism law, resulting in the party becoming barred from receiving state funding or access to television. Due to the detrimental effects this had on the movement, it was disbanded in 2004 and reformed as the more moderate, more Populist 'Vlaams Belang' (Flemish Interest) party. This movement bore more similarities to modern Right Wing Populist movements, as it focused more on the protection of 'Flemish' or 'Western' values in the face of increasing globalisation rather than the preservation of an ethnic identity. The party's performance was effectively the same as that of the previous; much of its voter base tended to come from the same regions and it scored only slightly higher in polls and election results, peaking at 12.0% in the 2007 Belgian election. However, the party would once again lose access to state funding and other privileges in 2008 as part of a Cordon Sanitaire implemented by the Belgian government due to the organisation's continuity with the VB. This caused popular support to diminish rapidly, with the party only scoring a poor 3.67% of votes in the 2014 election. <sup>49</sup>

Another reason for the failure of the Far Right in contemporary Belgian politics stems from the normalisation of Flemish nationalism and conservatism as ideologies following the emergence of the Civic Nationalist and regionalist 'Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie' (NVA) in 2001, itself also a split from the Volksunie. Over the following decade, this was able to capitalise on diminishing support for Christian Democratic parties and become the largest party in the country by 2014. The

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<sup>49</sup> IBZ Official Results. 2014. CHAMBER : LIST RESULTS. [ONLINE] Available at: [http://polling2014.belgium.be/en/cha/results/results\\_tab\\_CKR00000.html](http://polling2014.belgium.be/en/cha/results/results_tab_CKR00000.html). [Accessed 1 March 2018].

mainstreaming of ideologies previously considered fringe and controversial diminished much of the appeal of the radical and Far Right parties, which were up until that point the only parties willing to hold certain viewpoints and were thus the only viable options for nationalist voters.<sup>50</sup>

#### 4.2.3 Reasons for Support

Aside from its ethnic and cultural make-up, Belgium is also notable in that its political situation defies some of the aforementioned academic stereotypes concerning political affiliation and Right Wing populism. The economy of Flanders has maintained relatively consistent growth throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, only hampered during brief periods in the 1980s and more recently with the Great Recession, producing a GDP per capita and general standard of living disproportionality (in terms of population) higher than that of Wallonia.<sup>51</sup> The same can also be of the region's unemployment rate, which in specific areas is roughly 50% of that in Wallonia.<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, although the Belgium's economy had been subjected to intense or destabilizing restructuring during the 1970s and 1980s as a result of a decline in demand for 'traditional' sectors and the introduction of industrialized agriculture,

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<sup>50</sup> Laurens Cerulus. 2015. Belgium's Mr. Right. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/belgium-bart-de-wever-government-flemish-nationalism-n-va-migration-terrorism/>. [Accessed 1 March 2018].

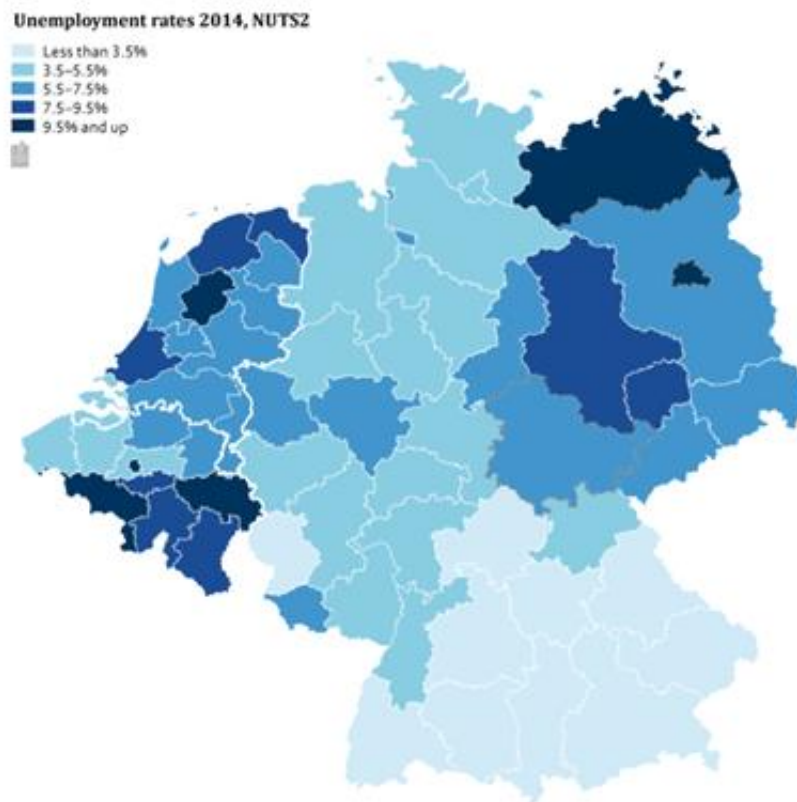
<sup>51</sup> Eurostat. 2009. Regional GDP per inhabitant in the EU27. [ONLINE] Available at: [file://vuw/Personal\\$/Homes/19/s1937499/Desktop/STAT-09-23\\_EN.pdf](file://vuw/Personal$/Homes/19/s1937499/Desktop/STAT-09-23_EN.pdf). [Accessed 8 February 2018]. Pg. 3

BBC. 2008. Wallonia battles wasteland image. [ONLINE] Available at: [https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/1848699/105326\\_08.pdf](https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/1848699/105326_08.pdf). [Accessed 7 March 2018]

<sup>52</sup> Eurostat. 2017. Unemployment statistics at regional level. [ONLINE] Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment\\_statistics\\_at\\_regional\\_level](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics_at_regional_level). [Accessed 8 February 2018].



the negative effects of this process were much more felt in the South and had little reflection on electoral results in Flanders.<sup>53</sup>



*Figure 1 Map Detailing Unemployment Rates Across the NUTS2 Area. Flanders generally demonstrates a lower rate of unemployment than Wallonia. Source: CBS*

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<sup>53</sup> Leo Cendrowicz. 2015. How economics explains Belgium's rifts. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.brusselstimes.com/opinion/9585/how-economics-explains-belgium-s-rifts>. [Accessed 1 March 2018].

Regional GDP in the European Union, 2006					
Region (NUTS 2006)	GDP, Mio. EUR	GDP per inhabitant, EUR	GDP, Mio. PPS	GDP per inhabitant, PPS	GDP per inhabitant, PPS, EU27=100
EU27	11 671 360	23 600	11 671 360	23 600	100.0
<b>BELGIUM</b>	<b>318 223</b>	<b>30 200</b>	<b>295 186</b>	<b>28 000</b>	<b>118.5</b>
<i>Bruxelles-Cap. / Brussels Hfdst.</i>	<i>60 897</i>	<i>59 400</i>	<i>56 489</i>	<i>55 100</i>	<i>233.3</i>
<b>Vlaams Gewest</b>	<b>183 141</b>	<b>30 000</b>	<b>169 883</b>	<b>27 900</b>	<b>118.0</b>
Antwerpen	60 273	35 600	55 910	33 000	139.7
Limburg (BE)	20 237	24 800	18 772	23 000	97.2
Oost-Vlaanderen	37 355	26 800	34 651	24 900	105.3
Vlaams Brabant	33 041	31 500	30 649	29 300	123.8
West-Vlaanderen	32 235	28 200	29 901	26 200	110.7
<b>Région Wallonne</b>	<b>74 184</b>	<b>21 700</b>	<b>68 814</b>	<b>20 100</b>	<b>85.1</b>
Brabant Wallon	10 740	29 200	9 963	27 000	114.5
Hainaut	25 363	19 600	23 527	18 200	77.1
Liège	23 087	22 100	21 415	20 500	86.9
Luxembourg (BE)	5 400	20 800	5 009	19 300	81.6
Namur	9 594	20 900	8 900	19 300	81.9

*Figure 2 Graph Detailing the Average GDP per Inhabitant across Belgian Provinces. Flanders generally scores higher than Wallonia. Source: Eurostat*

Whilst Migratory flows tend to be higher in Flanders (especially in and around the Brussels area), this is neither a general rule nor substantial and there is little tangible evidence to suggest that Right Wing populism has increased as a direct result or in proportion to these trends. In contrast, a 2011 study conducted by Jaak Billiet (2012) argues that differences in perceptions of an ethnic threat are minimal between the two regions, and are subject to change in accordance to recent events such as the 9/11 attacks.<sup>54</sup> However, despite this relative prosperity, the politics of Flanders have remained consistently more Right Wing and Populist since the end of the Second World War, and a breeding ground for the Far Right more recently. This stands opposed to the politics of Wallonia, which, despite their region's relative economic weakness, have remained for the most part Left Wing (with the New Left taking centre-stage in the 1990s and 2000s) and socially liberal. The Right Wing elements of Flemish politics and nationalism are more likely the result of a number of aspects specific to the region not directly related to material factors such as the economy or migration. The historical rurality of the region, at

<sup>54</sup> Jaak Billiet & K.U.Leuven. 2011. Flanders and Wallonia, Right versus Left: is this Real ?. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.rethinkingbelgium.eu/rebel-initiative-files/ebooks/ebook-12/Billiet.pdf>. [Accessed 2 February 2018]. Pg 17 – 22

least in comparison to Wallonia and neighbouring Holland, has likely contributed to a certain sense of communalism, religiosity and social conservatism that in turn encourages a preponderance for Right Wing politics and distrust for urbanised elites, which has continued to prevail across generations. Henk de Smaele (2011) contends that the Right Wing element of Flemish Nationalism likely emerged as a direct result of this, when 19th century Flemish voters, particularly from provincial towns, gave up on the idea of trying to pursue an urbanite form of nationalism following the Industrial Revolution. Instead, they created the image of the 'uncultivated peasant as the true Flemish man'. He claims that, in the modern era, Right Wing political views have become an integral part of Flemish national identity and prevail regardless of material changes.<sup>55</sup> Marc Hooghe (2013), who notes that anti-immigrant attitudes, as well the distrust of ethnic diversity, tended to be far higher in Flanders, even when ethnic diversity was significantly lower, backs this up. This suggests that local perceptions, attitudes and culture had a greater impact on this factor than economic or demographic fears.<sup>56</sup>

The region's Catholicism likely exasperates this fact. Ulrike Ehret (2012) suggests that the nuances of the religion, including its more dominating effect on the individual in comparison to Protestantism and specific ideas, results in less progressive ideas pertaining to social development, economics and ethnic minorities (particularly Semites).<sup>57</sup> This is not without context; the aforementioned study by de Smaele provides statistical evidence demonstrating how, even in

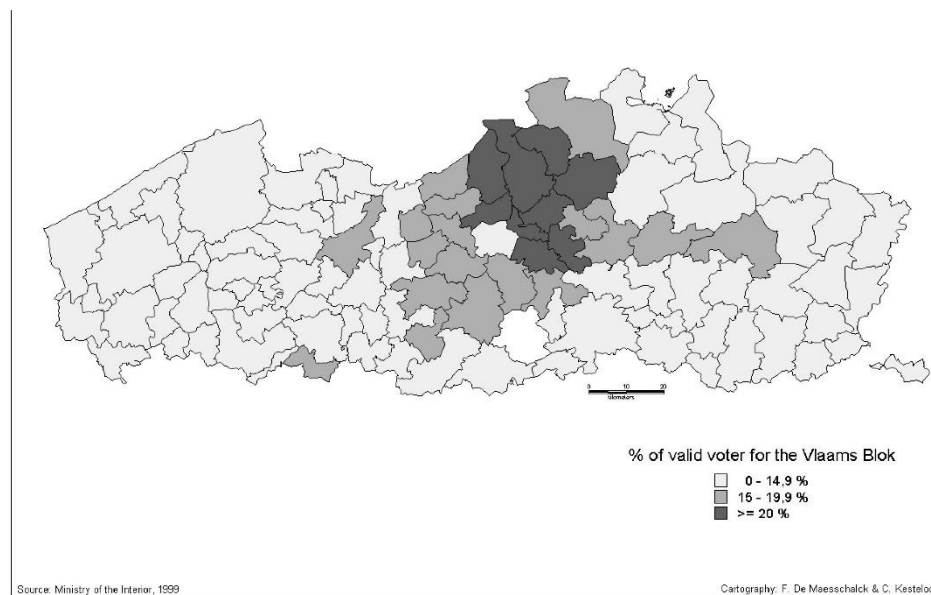
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<sup>55</sup> De Smaele, H.S., 2011. RIGHT WING FLANDERS, LEFT WING WALLONIA ? IS THIS SO ? IF SO, WHY ? AND IS IT A PROBLEM?, [Online]. Vol.12. December 2011, 6 - 11. Available at: <http://www.rethinkingbelgium.eu/rebel-initiative-files/ebooks/ebook-12/Re-Bel-e-book-12.pdf> [Accessed 8 February 2018].

<sup>56</sup> Hooghe & de Vroom, M.H. & T.V., 2015. The perception of ethnic diversity and anti-immigrant sentiments: a multilevel analysis of local communities in Belgium. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 38, Issue 1, 38 - 56.

<sup>57</sup> Ehret, U., 2012. *Church, Nation and Race : Catholics and Antisemitism in Germany and England, 1918-45*. 1st ed. Manchester, United Kingdom: Manchester University Press. Pg. 1 - 39

highly urbanized areas, Catholic voters were more likely to vote for conservative political movements<sup>58</sup>. Prior to the 1960s, the religion played a primary role in the Flanders - Wallonia divide, with many Flemish nationalist and Right Wing movements basing their organisation around Catholic ideals and values.<sup>59</sup>



*Figure 3 Map Detailing the Voter % for the VB in the 1999 Federal Election. Note that most support came from rural areas immediately surrounding urban centres. Source: Ministry of the Interior (Belgium)*

Many voters, particularly older generations, may also turn to the Far Right as an automatic reaction to the Leftism of Walloon politics. In other words, they adopt positions otherwise considered taboo or extreme in order to more strongly differentiate themselves from the Walloon 'other' and legitimize their nationalism. During the Second World War, the Nazi occupational government within Belgium pursued policies that aimed at exasperating the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic divisions in the region and, therefore, strengthen its own position. Preferential treatment was given to the Flemish language and culture, which prompted

<sup>58</sup> De Smaele, 2011, Right- Wing Flanders, Pg. 7 – 8

<sup>59</sup> Erk, J.E., 2005. Sub-state nationalism and the Left– right divide: critical junctures in the formation of nationalist labour movements in Belgium. *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 11, No.4, 554-566.

segments of the Flemish National Movement to favour collaborationism as a method of achieving greater long-term political autonomy and influence. Following the end of the War, the re-establishment of French as the primary national language in the country, whereby the only French translation of the state constitution was recognized whilst the Flemish translation was unofficial and illegitimate, and an extensive denazification processes which included the prosecution of collaborationist elements (which had by this point become largely associated with Flanders) within Belgian society, served to heighten feelings of oppression amongst parts of the Flemish population. This led to the recreation of a radical and distinctly anti-francophone nationalist movement. Although this situation was partly rectified in the 1960s with the drawing up of linguistic borders and the acceptance of the Flemish language as a national language with equal status to that of French, it's very likely that feelings of distrust towards Wallonia have persisted across generations and become somewhat ingrained in collective memory, thus encouraging the rise of populism and the Far Right.

The political situation in Belgium bears a number of similarities to that of Italy. Like in Belgium, support for Right Wing populism tends to come from the economically richer and ethnically homogeneous North.<sup>60</sup> However, despite greater threats of cultural 'weakening' as a result of mass irregular migration, higher rates of unemployment, and a generally weaker economy, Central and South Italy have remained largely centrist or Left-leaning with little deviation in recent years. In addition, Nationalism and feelings of oppression in the face of an ethnic 'other' do not always translate into support for the far or radical right, as is sometimes taken for granted by certain academics. Modern Southernism in Italy, for instance, is

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<sup>60</sup> Elizabeth Schumacher. 2018. Matteo Salvini: Italy's far-right success story. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.dw.com/en/matteo-salvini-italys-far-right-success-story/a-42830366>. [Accessed 5 March 2018].

largely centrist, liberal and materialist in character, despite the rurality, religiosity, and weakness of the area.<sup>61</sup> The same may also be said for ultranationalist groupings, such as the Irish Republican Army in Ireland, which have had strict Marxist ideologies since the 1960s<sup>62,63</sup> These examples suggest populism and its emergent form are more the result of political trends within a specific area than public fear or moral outcry.

### **4.3 The Far Right in the United Kingdom**

#### **4.3.1 The Historical Far Right**

On the surface, recent political developments and the rise of the Far Right in the United Kingdom correlate more with prevailing theses on the subject. From the 17th until the mid-20th century, due to a combination of factors including geographical isolation from the rest of Europe, naval dominance, and specific practices pertaining to trade and commerce, the United Kingdom was able to maintain control of an overseas empire spanning large parts of Asia, Africa, and the Americas. This dominance helped ensure the prosperity and political dominance of the metropole in international affairs. The rapid breakdown of the British Empire in the mid-20th century because of changing international attitudes towards imperialism and the efforts of anti-colonialist movements severely diminished Britain's international stature as power became concentrated in the

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<sup>61</sup> Gary Drake. 2014. Takin' It To The Sicilian Streets. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.timesofsicily.com/takin-sicilian-streets/>. [Accessed 24 April 2018].

<sup>62</sup> Perhaps because of significant financial contributions from Libya and the Soviet Union.

<sup>63</sup> Moloney, E., 2003. A Secret History of the IRA. 1st ed. London, United Kingdom: Norton. 6 -13

hands of two international superpowers- the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on one hand and the United States on the other.

The weakness of many former British colonies following independence prompted a surge of migration towards the United Kingdom, particularly during 1950s until the 1970s.<sup>64</sup> This, in addition to a lengthy period of stagnation during the 1970s and the consequent enactment of policies of mass deindustrialization and privatisation of national industries by the Thatcher administration, fuelled feelings of societal polarisation amongst the British public that felt its long-term security was falling increasingly under threat.<sup>65</sup> The 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech by Conservative minister of parliament Enoch Powell, in which he chastises the 'rapid transformations' currently underway in Britain and how these threatened the future survival of native British people, perfectly captures popular British sentiments during this period.<sup>66</sup> A Gallup Poll released shortly after the speech suggested that in excess of 70% of the population agreed with Powell's message, whilst Powell himself received notable public support following his later dismissal from the Conservative Party which sought to abandon such explicitly and negative views on race and migration.<sup>67</sup>

During the 1970s and the 1980s, ultranationalist and blatantly neo-fascist organisations including the 'National Front' (NF) and the non-electoral 'British

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<sup>64</sup> Office for National Statistics. 2013. Immigration Patterns of Non-UK Born Populations in England and Wales in 2011. [ONLINE] Available at: [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160107164635/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_346219.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160107164635/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_346219.pdf). [Accessed 14 February 2018]. Pg. 1 - 2

<sup>65</sup> Anderson, G.A., 1968. More Call for Britain to Shut Out Nonwhites. Schenectady Gazette, 25 April 1968. Pg. 1

Larry Elliott. 2012. British recessions: a short history. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2012/dec/07/britain-recessions-history>. [Accessed 14 February 2018].

<sup>66</sup> The Telegraph. 2007. Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/3643823/Enoch-Powells-Rivers-of-Blood-speech.html>. [Accessed 10 February 2018].

<sup>67</sup> Heffer, S., 1998. Like the Roman: the Life of Enoch Powell. 1st ed. London, United Kingdom: Weidenfeld & Nicolson. Pg. 466 – 468



Movement' were able to make major political headway through the mobilisation of an increasingly disenfranchised population as well as through the successful exploitation of youth subculture, fashion and sport in order to propagate their ideals.<sup>68</sup> Both movements criticised the British government for its perceived unwillingness to preserve the 'ethnic purity' of the British populace, its weakness with regards to both internal and foreign policy, and neoliberal economic policies.<sup>69</sup> In response, they advocated policies including nationalisation programmes, racial segregation, strict limits to non-white migration, the expansion of social services and an aggressive foreign policy that prioritised the preservation of British sovereignty.<sup>70</sup>

During its heyday, The National Front achieved a large following and were consistently able to capture significant media attention, becoming staples of media rapportage throughout this period. Much of this support came from Blue-collar workers from the far north of England, with some support in major cosmopolitan areas such as London. However, despite this notoriety, it failed to make any electoral breakthroughs, only scoring a low 0.6% in the 1979 election (its best result to date).<sup>71</sup> The rationale for this is twofold. Firstly, the nature of the British 'First Past the Post' system of voting, whereby only political parties or candidates that achieve a plurality of votes within an area receive parliamentary representation, generally prevented marginal parties from entering parliament as they failed to receive the most votes in even their most successful regions.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Taylor, S., 1989. *The National Front in English Politics*. 2nd ed. London, United Kingdom: The Macmillan Press LTD. Pg. 82 - 109

<sup>69</sup> Particularly concerning the North Ireland dispute which was becoming increasingly violent during this period.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. Pg. 53 – 76

<sup>71</sup> Election Demon. 2001. *General Election Results 1885-1979*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.election.demon.co.uk/geresults.html>. [Accessed 4 February 2018].

<sup>72</sup> Stuart Wilks-Heeg & Stephen Crone. 2011. *Is 'first-past-the-post' working?*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://democraticaudituk.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/av-briefing-no1-1.pdf>. [Accessed 4 February 2018].



Secondly, the Conservative Party promising to adopt harder stances towards mass migration in the late 1970s discouraged many moderate voters, who may have had qualms with a number of the more radical positions of the two movements, from supporting the radical right.<sup>73</sup>

### 4.3.3 The Modern Far Right

These movements failed to retain their significance, however, and became wracked by internal divisions and controversies which pushed them into obscurity by the early 1990s.<sup>74</sup> Multiple attempts at rekindling and moderating the British Far Right were made but proved largely unsuccessful. The most prominent of these was the creation of the 'British National Party' (BNP) in 1982 by former National Front leader John Tyndall. Whilst initially ideologically similar to its predecessor, the party attempted to reform its image by ousting Tyndall and replacing him with 'Moderniser' Nick Griffin in 1999. Like the Vlaams Belang in Belgium, Griffin sought to appeal to a wider demographic by downplaying biological Nationalism and instead pushed for a more civic nationalism, which prioritised values and culture over race<sup>75,76</sup>. The policy proved moderately successful in attracting white voters in the north of England, especially former voters of the aforementioned Far Right movements, allowing the party to maintain some electoral success across

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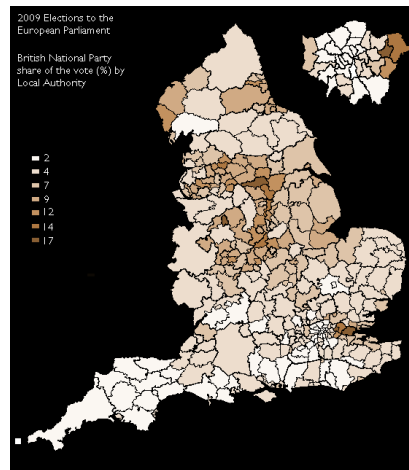
<sup>73</sup> Matthew Collins. 2017. THE NATIONAL FRONT AT 50 – HOPE NOT HATE MAGAZINE. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/2017/11/23/national-front-50/>. [Accessed 4 February 2018].

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> The sincerity of this change is difficult to take seriously, however. A number of insider reports into the movement consistently revealed that higher-ranking members of the organisation internally still thought heavily along racial lines. In addition to this, membership of the organisation was exclusively reserved for white British for most of its existence until it was forced to reverse this policy due to legal pressure.

<sup>76</sup> Goodwin, M., 2011. *New British Fascism: Rise of the British National Party*. 1st ed. New York, United States: Routledge. Pg. 68

the early 2000s, culminating with the election of party leader Nick Griffin to the European Parliament in 2009.<sup>77</sup> The departure of Griffin in 2014 following a period of electoral downturn, controversies, and consistent antifascist pressure caused stagnation within the movement and, as of 2018, a number of radical groupings<sup>78</sup> have splintered from the party.<sup>79</sup>



*Figure 4 Map Detailing the Percentage of Votes Given to the BNP during the 2009 EU Parliament Elections. Source: Electoral Geography*

Modern Right Wing Populists fail to capture the same spirit as the aforementioned groups. Unlike in Belgium, the modern Far Right in the United Kingdom is disconnected from previous high-profile organisations and is rather the electoral continuation of a number of economically liberal, anti-federalist and socially conservative groupings which emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. Pg. 97 – 110

Electoral Geography. 2009. United Kingdom. European Parliament Election 2009. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.electoralgeography.com/new/en/countries/u/uk/united-kingdom-european-parliament-election-2009.html>. [Accessed 1 March 2018]

<sup>78</sup> These include National Action, a violent neo-Nazi organisation formed by former members of the BNP's youth branch. In late 2016, the group became the first radical Right Wing organisation to be proscribed as a terrorist organisation in the UK due to its involvement in the murder of Labour MP Jo Cox. A second group, Britain First, formed by former BNP member Paul Golding, is currently undergoing criminal proceedings for its alleged involvement in a number of hate crimes.

<sup>79</sup> Matthew Collins. 2018. The collapse of the BNP and EDL has made the Far Right deadlier. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/02/collapse-bnp-edl-Far-Right-terrorists>. [Accessed 1 March 2018].

reaction to shifting attitudes regarding the European Union within the Conservative Party.<sup>80</sup> The 'United Kingdom Independence Party' (UKIP) is undoubtedly the most notable of these. Formed in the early 1990s by Alan Sked, the organisation is an offshoot of the now-defunct 'Anti-Federalist League'.<sup>81</sup> As the name implies, the party's policies primarily concerned the 'preservation' of British Sovereignty in the face of external organisations whilst failing to provide an internal policy other than vague outlines for comprehensive privatisation and deregulation programmes in the vein of those witnessed during the Thatcher era. The party rose to fame in the late 1990s, largely due to the antics of newly appointed leader Nigel Farage, who was able to exploit popular dissatisfaction with the European Union to secure a seat in the European Parliament in 1999.<sup>82</sup> The party would become electorally popular, at least in European Parliamentary elections, following the expansion of the European Union and the signing of the Lisbon Treaty in 2004. The acceptance of the provisions of the treaty, which included a sizeable increase in the authority of the European Union in the internal affairs of member-states, by the mainline Conservative Party, as well as a number parliamentary expenses scandals in 2006, prompted many Right Wing, rural, voters to support more anti-establishmentarian parties, including UKIP and the BNP.<sup>83</sup> As a result, UKIP would achieve just over 16% of votes in the 2004 and 2009 European Parliament

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<sup>80</sup> The Economist. 2016. The roots of Euroscepticism. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21694557-why-britons-are-warier-other-europeans-eu-roots-euroscepticism>. [Accessed 3 April 2017].

Toby Helm. 2016. British Euroscepticism: a brief history. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/feb/07/british-euroscepticism-a-brief-history>. [Accessed 1 April 2018].

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

Rob Merrick. 2017. Ukip: A timeline of the party's turbulent history. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/ukip-timeline-party-westminster-alan-sked-nigel-farage-conference-key-events-brexiteadership-a7974606.html>. [Accessed 1 March 2018].

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

Ford, R., 2014. *Revolt on the right : explaining support for the radical right in Britain*. 1st ed. Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge. Pg. 74 - 76

elections, allowing Right Wing Populists to control roughly 20% of the electorate by 2010.<sup>84</sup>

The increased attention given to the party following the aforementioned results allowed the party to enter the political mainstream and prompted the creation of a more-encompassing electoral manifesto and ideology rather than focusing solely on the European Union. Unlike the Right in the 20th century, UKIP began to espouse a liberal political ideology, criticising social services and state interventionism into both economic and social affairs as being partly responsible of ongoing problems within the United Kingdom.<sup>85</sup> In addition to this, it advocated the decentralisation of political power away from parliament towards localised institutions (such as councils) as a means of tackling urban decay.<sup>86</sup> Lastly, and perhaps most notably, it proposed severe cuts to immigration, particularly from Islamic and non-Commonwealth countries, claiming that many newcomers held ideas and beliefs incompatible with 'British Values', in turn leading to crime, as well as serving to further saturate already over-saturated employment and property sectors.<sup>87</sup> The policy proved successful for the most part, allowing the party to achieve just over 27% of the vote in the 2014 European parliament election (making it the largest party) and 12.6% in the general election held the following year (an increase of 9 points since the previous).<sup>88</sup> However, as was witnessed in

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

BBC. 2015. Election 2015: Results. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/election/2015/results>. [Accessed 1 March 2018].

<sup>85</sup> United Kingdom Independence Party. 2015. Believe in Britain: UKIP Manifesto 2015. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/ukipdev/pages/1103/attachments/original/1429295050/UKIPManifesto2015.pdf?1429295050>. [Accessed 1 March 2018]. Pg. 6-10

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. Pg. 59

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. Pg. 10-13

The Express. 2016. UK immigration policy is 'INSANE' – UKIP leader calls for more jobs for British workers. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/739639/paul-nuttall-uk-immigration-policy-unemployment-british-jobs>. [Accessed 1 March 2018].

<sup>88</sup> European Parliament. 2014. Results of the 2014 European elections. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/en/country-results-uk-2014.html>. [Accessed 1 March 2018].

the case of the National Front and British Movement, it was unable to score more than a single seat because of the First Past the Post electoral system.

### 4.3.3 Reasons for Support

In terms of ideology and support, it becomes hard to ascertain whether the rise of Right Wing populism can be characterized as a result of economic factors or migration. Many of the party's policies, including immigration, centre around the issue of sovereignty in the face of multilateral institutions and state expenditure<sup>89</sup> rather than, as was the case of the B.N.P or the National Front, perceived attacks on the British populace or attempts to degrade the British nation-state. Many of the party's policies fell in line with stances taken by the UK's more mainstream Right, although it was consistently more Populist in terms of rhetoric and public image. This is very much reflected in the support-base of the party. Whilst the BNP and other more radical movements were usually supported by Blue-collar, white British males from labour strongholds in the economically depressed Midlands and Northern England, parties such as UKIP usually gain their support from the country's more prosperous, traditionally Conservative, and rural southern areas as well as Wales.<sup>90</sup>

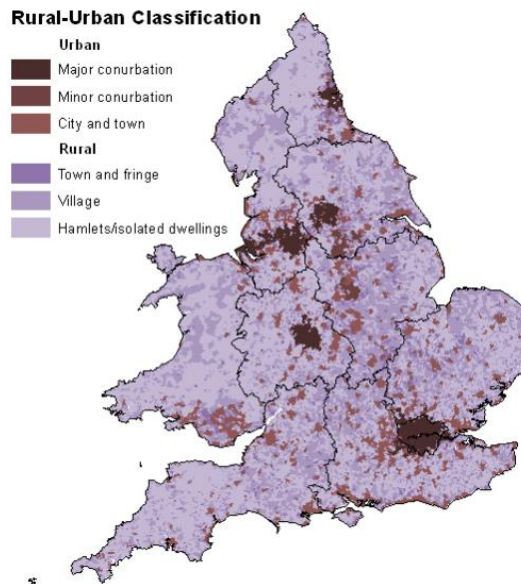
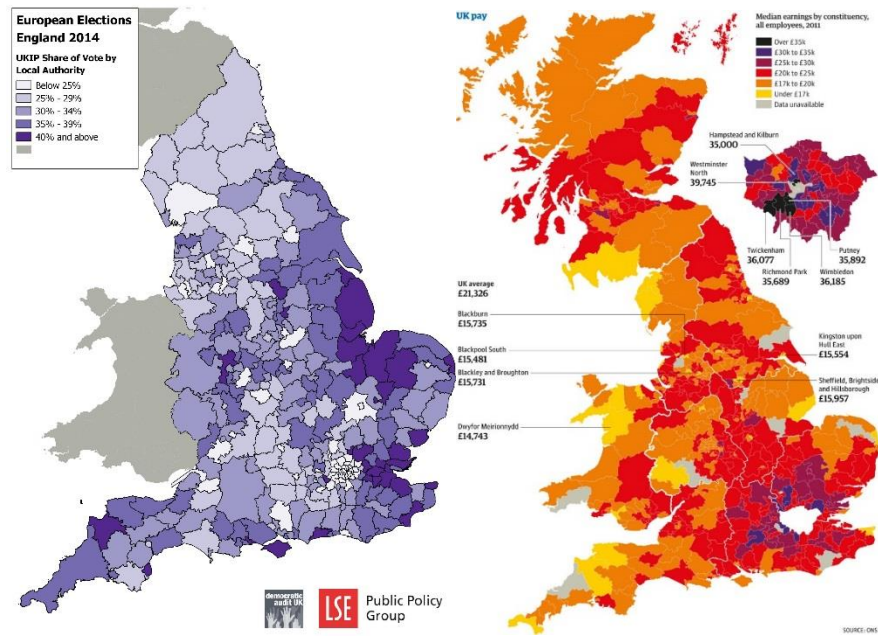
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<sup>89</sup> The over-encompassing involvement of the state in society was a recurring theme throughout the party's heyday

<sup>90</sup> Martin W. Lewis. 2013. Changing Geographical Patterns in British Elections?. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.geocurrents.info/geopolitics/changing-geographical-patterns-in-british-elections>. [Accessed 1 March 2018].

Christine Jeavans. 2014. Mapping UKIP's polling strength. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-29568123>. [Accessed 1 March 2018].

The Guardian. 2011. Wages throughout the country: how does your area compare?. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2011/nov/24/wages-britain-ashe-mapped>. [Accessed 1 March 2018].



*Figure 5 UKIP Voting Map (Top Left), UK Median Earnings by Constituency (Top Right), UK Rural-Urban Classification (Bottom). Note UKIP generally scored higher outside urban areas and there is little correlation between support and economic performance. Source: LSE/Office for National Statistics*



Coastal areas in the country's southeast, including areas such as Rochester and South Thanet formed the heartland of UKIP support during all elections it has thus far partaken in.<sup>91</sup> Services (including tourism), trade and agriculture usually form the bulk of the economies of these regions, whereas more radical Right Wing parties are more successful in areas, such as Newcastle and Liverpool, where secondary sector industries (such as mining and manufacturing) either were or continue to be dominant. Although support does sometimes tend to overlap, most notably in parts of Yorkshire and Cumbria, this is not a general rule that occurs across the country.

This difference in voting patterns suggests that whilst the policies desired by Right Wing Populist parties may possibly appeal to voters from the country's more industrialised and economically depressed regions, the particular mannerisms, rhetoric and publicity of these parties have largely failed to draw them away from their 'traditional' parties and organisations. The relative prosperity and ethnic homogeneity of areas with high rates of UKIP support is an indication that this support is largely unmotivated by the material and may be the result of specific cultural or regional nuances. An argument often put forward suggests that Populist support may be at least in part motivated by the inability of many members of the British public, especially older and rural citizens, to come to terms with the current reality and global order in the 21st century. This phenomenon, sometimes disparagingly referred to as 'Little Englander', is a form of British exceptionalism that emerged in the immediate aftermath of the British Empire. Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon (2016) suggests that many continue to tacitly believe in the racial,

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<sup>91</sup> Robert Ford & Matthew Goodwin. 2014. What's the difference between BNP and Ukip voters?. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/14/bnp-ukip-voters-politics-immigration>. [Accessed 1 March 2018].

cultural and economic superiority of the United Kingdom in comparison to the rest of Europe and as a result demonstrate an increased unwillingness to relinquish 'unique' cultural aspects or abide by the rules set by multilateral organisations.<sup>92</sup> Elements of this attitude were arguably previously witnessed during the Brexit Referendum in 2016, during which the majority of British citizens voted in favour of leaving the European Union out of a fear of 'Europeanisation' and imperial nostalgia.<sup>93</sup>

Furthermore, and in line with the previous argument, the long-term ability of island populations to retain elements of their culture or identity has previously been recorded by historians such as Ferdinand Braudel (1995). Braudel, although focusing on Mediterranean islands such as Sardinia and Malta noted how small, relatively geographically isolated, islands generally experienced slower political and cultural evolution.<sup>94</sup> In the context of Right Wing populism in the United Kingdom, it is possible to ascertain that support may also be motivated by the populace's hesitation in adjusting to the new political centre, that is, an Europeanist Conservative Party and a Social Democratic Labour Party. This provides rationale as to why, for instance, hard-Left figures such as Jeremy Corbyn continue to have major influence over the British Left whilst other Left Wing movements in the rest of Europe have made deliberate attempts to distance themselves from their former ideologies.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Grob-Fitzgibbon, B., 2016. *Continental Drift Britain and Europe from the End of Empire to the Rise of Euroscepticism*. 1st ed. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press. Pg. 461 - 470

<sup>93</sup> Gardner, A.G., 2018. Brexit, boundaries and imperial identities: A comparative view. *Journal of Social Archaeology*, Vol. 17, Issue 1, 3–26.

Michael Lloyd. Nostalgia, xenophobia, anti-neoliberalism: the roots of Leave's nationalism. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2016/03/15/nostalgia-xenophobia-anti-neoliberalism-the-roots-of-leaves-nationalism/>. [Accessed 3 March 2018].

<sup>94</sup> Braudel, F., 1995. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Volume 1. 1st ed. London, United Kingdom: University of California Press. Pg. 149 – 151

<sup>95</sup> COLIN SHINDLER. 2018. Jeremy Corbyn's Anti-Imperial Nostalgia. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/01/26/jeremy-corbyns-anti-imperial-nostalgia/>. [Accessed 6 February 2018].



Considering this, it is possible to say that, rather than being the result of a loss of identity as Arendt-influenced scholars might suggest, support for British populism is actually greater in areas with stronger, more 'stubborn' cultural and ethnic identities, which are then appealed to by groups such as UKIP. Some evidence suggesting that concerns and fears relating to ethnic replacement fuel support for Right Wing populism in the UK does exist however. Jens Rydgren (2011) argues that the tendency of Populist support to come from ethnically homogenous regions in close proximity to culturally diverse metropolitan areas (such as London) is not coincidental. Rather, he refers to this as the 'Halo effect', that is, a condition in which citizens within commuting distance to cosmopolitan cities with a degree of knowledge, albeit not total familiarity, with their standards of living are usually more fearful of demographic changes which in turn fuels anti-immigrant sentiment. He claims that, due to their superficial understanding of multiculturalism stemming from a lack of in depth communication with ethnic minorities, they are overall less trusting of outsiders than people living in urban areas.<sup>96</sup> However, following the conclusion of the 2017 general election, the validity of this argument becomes weakened somewhat. Britain's decision to formally begin the process of leaving the European following the conclusion of the 2016 Brexit Referendum, as well as the departure of Nigel Farage as party leader, in addition to the reversal of a number of position on key issues, led to a dramatic decrease in popular support for the party.<sup>97</sup> With a decline of nine points over a three-year period, its more than likely that the European Union remained the most pertinent issue at hand of UKIP

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<sup>96</sup> Rydgren & Ruth, J.R. & P.R., 2011. Contextual explanations of radical Right Wing support in Sweden: socioeconomic marginalization, group threat, and the halo effect. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 4, 711 - 728.

<sup>97</sup> BBC. 2017. Election results 2017: Paul Nuttall quits as UKIP leader. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/election-2017-40220074>. [Accessed 5 March 2018].

supporters, and that immigration and ethnicity, although important, was usually a secondary consideration. This is backed up by a poll conducted in the run-up to the referendum, which identified sovereignty maintained foremost importance for most voters.<sup>98</sup>

#### **4.4. Germany:**

##### **4.4.1 The Historical Far Right**

Right Wing radicalism and the Far Right have for the most part been unsuccessful in post-war Germany until recently, largely due to the previously mentioned stigma attached to perceived association with such groupings, as well as an intense denazification process that hindered the development and functioning of non-democratic parties. Initial attempts at rekindling the radical right began in the late 1940s with the formation of the 'Sozialistische Reichspartei Deutschlands' and the 'Deutsche Reichspartei' (DRP) by former members of the Nazi administration. The banning of the former on the basis of its ideology following the conclusion of the 1949 West German Federal Election<sup>99</sup> allowed the DRP to become the sole electoral radical right party. However, despite this, the party remained electorally insignificant, failing to gain national representation in any federal election.<sup>100</sup>

Internal Ideological differences caused the party to dissolve entirely by 1965 and in its place grew the 'Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands' (NPD). Unlike previous parties, which were more overtly Neo-Nazi ideologically, the NPD

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<sup>98</sup> Lord Ashcroft. 2016. How the United Kingdom voted on Thursday... and why. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://lordashcroftpolls.com/2016/06/how-the-united-kingdom-voted-and-why/>. [Accessed 5 March 2018].

<sup>99</sup> In which it won 11% of the vote in the Northern State of Lower Saxony.

<sup>100</sup> Mudde, The Ideology of the Extreme Right, Pg. 25 – 26

attempted to portray itself as a national-conservative party more concerned with the revitalisation of Germany in its current order rather than the re-establishment of a totalitarian state. Irredentism, particularly concerning East Germany, Strasbourg-Lorraine, and former areas of the German Reich located in modern day Poland became a major feature of the movement, in addition to more 'standard' positions such as economic protectionism and explicit racial and anti-Semitic policies. The group also tried to capitalise on prevalent anti-communist and anti-capitalist tendencies in order to achieve electoral success.<sup>101</sup> This tactic was most successful in the 1969 Federal election, which saw the party become the fifth largest with over one million votes (4.3%). However, despite this significance, the party consistently failed to rise above the 5% voter threshold required for entry into the German parliament and gradually failed towards the end of the 20th century as many of its initial voter base gradually passed away and due to numerous internal conflicts.<sup>102</sup> Germany never witnessed a 'resurgence' in Nationalist parties during the 1970s-1990s in the same manner as the United Kingdom and Belgium, with radicalism having been mostly dominated by Far Left, soviet financed, groupings such as the Bader-Meinhof, New Leftist ideologues who sought to reconcile Marxist dogma with modernism, or small neo-Nazi terror cells.<sup>103</sup>

More recently, discussions abound within the Federal Constitutional Court about banning the group entirely due to anti-constitutional elements within its manifesto. Whilst the court itself attested to these claims, the proposal was rejected due to

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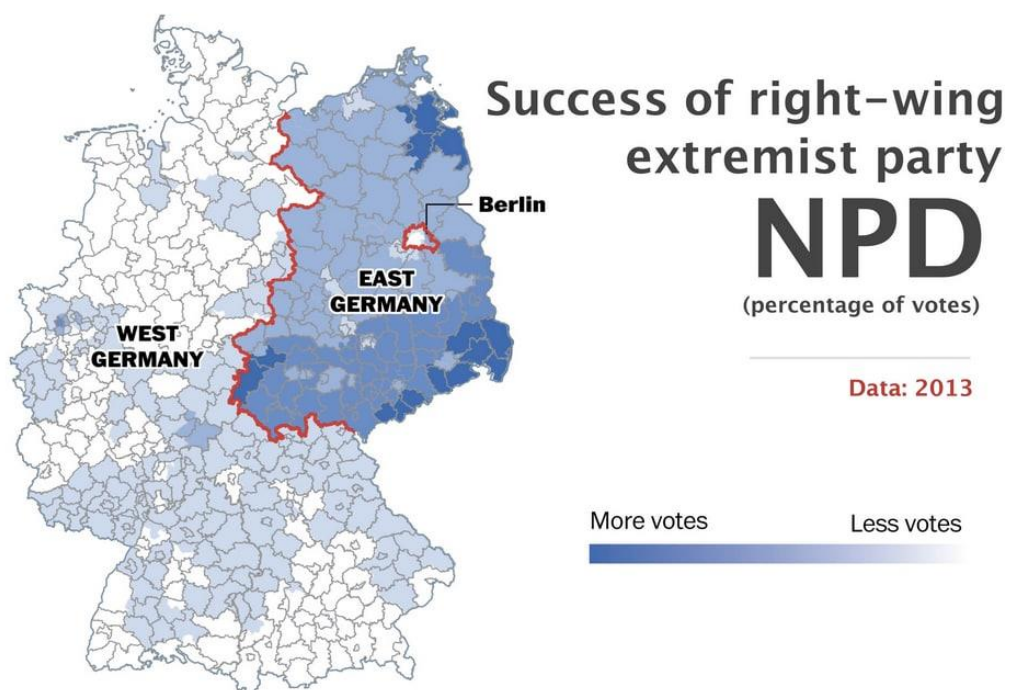
<sup>101</sup> Ibid. Pg. 27 - 30

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. Pg 28 – 30

<sup>103</sup> Guittet, E.P.G, 2016. West German radical protest in the long 1960s. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, [Online]. Vol.9, No. 1, 150 - 158. Available at: [http://www.timothyscottbrown.org/uploads/2/4/7/8/24785786/emmanuel-pierre\\_guittet\\_in\\_critical\\_studies\\_on\\_terrorism.pdf](http://www.timothyscottbrown.org/uploads/2/4/7/8/24785786/emmanuel-pierre_guittet_in_critical_studies_on_terrorism.pdf) [Accessed 7 March 2018].

the political insignificance of the organisation, which during the 2017 federal election only scored a poor 0.1% of votes.

Initial support for Germany's historical Far Right was mainly concentrated in the country's north-western regions, particularly in provinces such as Bremen, Lower Saxony and Baden-Württemberg. During the 1965 federal election and subsequent regional elections, the NPD was able to 'break into' the country's south and achieve moderate success in the southern Hesse and Bavaria regions (7.8% and 7.4% respectively). Following the reunification of Germany in 1991, much of the NPD's support drifted away from the west and into the recently democratised, economically depressed eastern regions.<sup>104</sup> Between 2004 and 2011, the party was able to repeatedly gain representation in the regional parliaments of Saxony and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, although it would lose this by the start of 2014.



*Figure 6 Map Detailing Support for the NPD in 2013. Source: Washington Post*

<sup>104</sup> Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, Pg. 28 - 35

#### 4.4.2. The Modern Far Right

The emergence of an electorally-successful Far Right in Germany is a very recent phenomenon in comparison to the other cases observed, only beginning following the 2014 state elections that saw the entry of the 'Alternative für Deutschland' (AfD) party into a number of regional parliaments. Founded in 2013, much of the AfD's early rhetoric tended to focus on issues exclusively pertaining to the European Union, particularly bailouts to Greece, rather than migration or wider political concerns.<sup>105</sup> However, the party was only partially Eurosceptic, and favoured continued existence within the European Union provided the integration process be slowed down dramatically as opposed to the total dissolution of the organisation.<sup>106</sup> The policy proved moderately successful regionally, allowing it to enter the parliaments of Saxony, Thuringia and Hesse in 2014. However, the party's staunch anti-E.U. rhetoric discouraged other parties from forming political alliances or coalitions with it. As a result, it only scored 4.7% of the vote in the 2013 Federal election and was unable to enter parliament.<sup>107</sup>

The party's single-issue position did not last. In 2015, following the election of Frauke Petry as party leader, the party swung to the right. Under Petry, the party adopted a platform more in line with other Populist parties, that is, one heavily focused on the preservation of national sovereignty, liberal economics, and anti-

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<sup>105</sup> David Child. 2017. Who are Germany's far-right AfD?. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/09/german-election-AfD-170921080912611.html>. [Accessed 5 February 2018].

<sup>106</sup> Berbuir, Lewandowsky & Siri, N.B., M.L., J.S., 2018. The AfD and its Sympathisers: Finally a Right Wing Populist Movement in Germany?. *German Politics*, [Online]. Vol. 24, Issue 2, 154 - 178. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09644008.2014.982546?needAccess=true> [Accessed 14 February 2018].

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

immigration.<sup>108</sup> The party is known for its historical revisionism, whereby it criticises the German political class and education system for what it perceives as attempts to foster a sense of guilt and anti-patriotic feelings amongst the German population. In its place, it promises to bring in a “180 degree” turn on national pride.<sup>109</sup>

Increasing pro-Kremlin and Russian minority sponsorship for Right Wing Populist movements in Europe have sometimes been cited a significant contributory factor for this shift in ideology.<sup>110</sup> <sup>111</sup> This belief is strengthened by the consistent pro-Russian affinities the AfD and other similar parties in Europe display, with some idealising the administration of Vladimir Putin and its ideology due to its ‘purity’ and conservatism in the face of Europeanist progressivism.<sup>112</sup> However, the legitimacy of these claims is controversial. Although many of these parties do, indeed, receive funding from Russian sources, it is difficult to calculate to what extent they affect party policy. It is more likely that this shift was an attempt by new party leaders to exploit recent tensions emerging in Germany in response to the growth

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<sup>108</sup> Jefferson Chase. 2017. AfD: What you need to know about Germany's far-right party. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.dw.com/en/AfD-what-you-need-to-know-about-germanys-far-right-party/a-37208199>. [Accessed 26 February 2018].

<sup>109</sup> Philip Oltermann. 2017. AfD politician says Germany should stop atoning for Nazi crimes. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/18/AfD-politician-says-germany-should-stop-atoning-for-nazi-crimes>. [Accessed 26 February 2018].

<sup>110</sup> The rationale for Russian investment in these parties is relatively clear in the eyes of those who advocate this position; the Russian government views the European Union and federalism as threats to its influence in the local politics of the region and therefore seeks to undermine their stability in order to strengthen their own position. This is especially important in order to maintain Russia's preferential energy deals with Europe in the face of federal attempts to localise energy production.

<sup>111</sup> SIMON SHUSTER. 2017. How Russian Voters Fueled the Rise of Germany's Far-Right. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://time.com/4955503/germany-elections-2017-far-right-russia-angela-merkel/>. [Accessed 26 February 2018].

Kathrin Hille. 2017. Russia adds Germany's AfD to contacts book of European Populists. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/d78bd9b8-f833-11e6-9516-2d969e0d3b65>. [Accessed 26 February 2018].

<sup>112</sup> Washington Post. 2017. The Kremlin creeps into Germany. [ONLINE] Available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-kremlin-creeps-into-germany/2017/09/25/3d06277e-a227-11e7-b14f-f41773cd5a14\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.b535a72f97f5](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-kremlin-creeps-into-germany/2017/09/25/3d06277e-a227-11e7-b14f-f41773cd5a14_story.html?utm_term=.b535a72f97f5). [Accessed 22 February 2018].

and activism of the PEGIDA lobby as well as the integration of a number of former PEGIDA activists into the organisation.<sup>113</sup>

The change in ideology, regardless of the motivation behind it, worked in allowing the party to make major political headway. During the 2017 federal election, the party grew by seven points, achieving 12.6% of the vote, which translated into 94 parliamentary seats. The party was also able to gain regional representation across Germany, a first for the German Far Right. Similar to the NPD, most of this support comes from the country's more economically depressed and industrialised northeastern regions, particularly Saxony, Thuringia and Brandenburg.<sup>114</sup>

However, southern, more prosperous and more rural regions such as Bavaria and Hesse have also provided the party with some support. Like other Far Right parties across Europe, the AfD is generally unsuccessful in urban, cosmopolitan areas, and is far more likely to gain ground in rural areas immediately surrounding cities.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> This prompted former founder Bernd Lucke to leave the party. However, the party officially did not associate itself with PEGIDA.

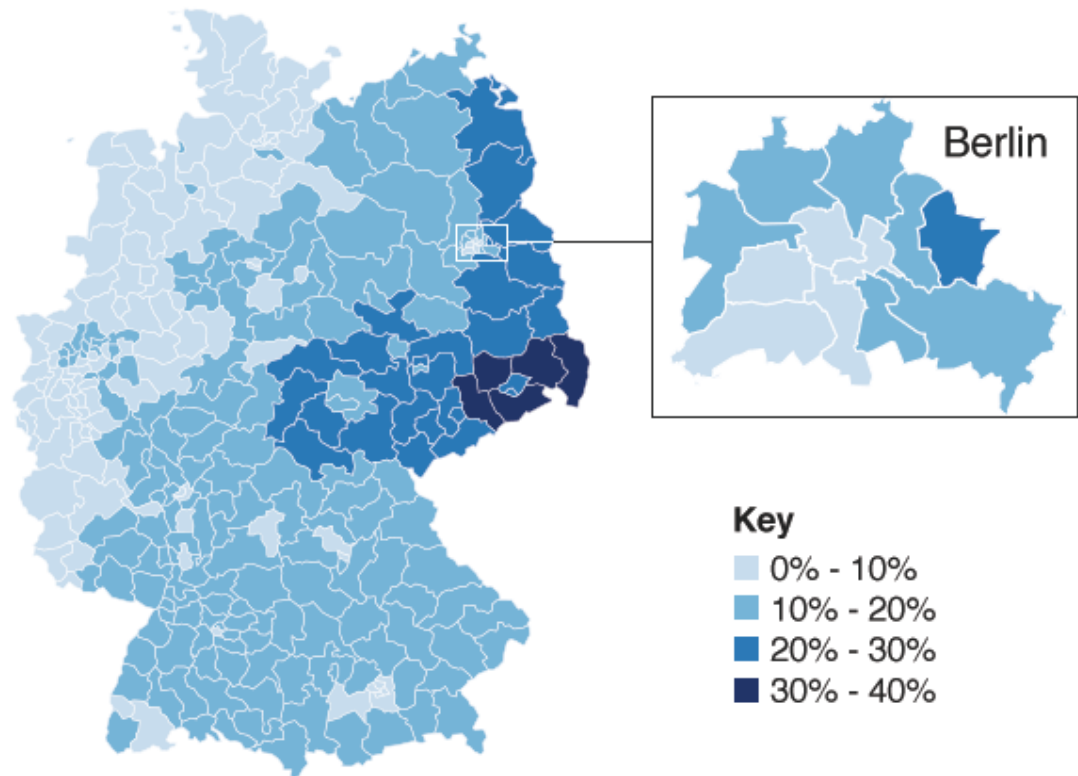
Dario Sarmadi & Nicole Sagener. 2017. Germany's Right Wing Populists join hands with anti-Islamist Pegida. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/germany-s-Right-Wing-Populists-join-hands-with-anti-islamist-pegida/>. [Accessed 22 February 2018].

<sup>114</sup> Seán Clarke. 2017. German elections 2017: full results. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2017/sep/24/german-elections-2017-latest-results-live-merkel-bundestag-AfD>. [Accessed 22 February 2018].

<sup>115</sup> Paul Kirby. 2017. German election: Why this is a turning point. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-41094785>. [Accessed 22 February 2018].



## AfD vote share: party list



Source: German federal returning officer

BBC

*Figure 7* Map Detailing the AfD Vote Share in the 2017 Federal Election. Most Support came from the country's Eastern Regions. *Source: BBC*

### 4.4.3 Reasons for Support:

The Far Right in Germany and the AfD is noteworthy for a number of reasons. Firstly, unlike what may be claimed for parties such as UKIP, the ideology did not see any noticeable rise in popularity in lieu of economic downturns and the influx of migrant workers following the reunification of the country. Between 2008 and 2011, arguably the peak period of the downturn, the Far Right actually saw a decrease in the overall number of votes, with the NPD witnessing a 0.1% and a 0.2% decrease in the 2009 and 2013 elections respectively.<sup>116</sup> Rather, it was the

<sup>116</sup> World Elections. 2009. Germany 2009. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://welections.wordpress.com/2009/09/30/germany-2009/>. [Accessed 23 February 2018].



Far Left, fronted by the 'Die Linke'<sup>117</sup>, which was able to make gains on popular dissatisfaction, largely through proposals of radical economic restructuring.<sup>118</sup> Whilst it is true that, at certain points, this party was accused of attempting to 'flirt' with the radical right with a number of statements that suggested Germany was under threat by an influx of foreign workers, there is little evidence to suggest that this had a significant impact on their support-base.<sup>119</sup> Indeed, these similarities subsided following the conclusion of the 2010 election, and the party became one of the more visible advocates for migrant rights and integration programmes afterwards.

While the start of the European Migrant Crisis in 2015 no doubt contributed heavily to the dramatic growth in popularity the AfD was able to achieve in just four years of existence, much of its support still comes from areas with significantly lower numbers of migrants.<sup>120</sup> This is significant as it again suggests that perceptions of migrants and anti-immigrant sentiment may in themselves be less of a result of direct contact or negative experiences with migration, but more of a result of the political culture and mentalities already present within a particular area.

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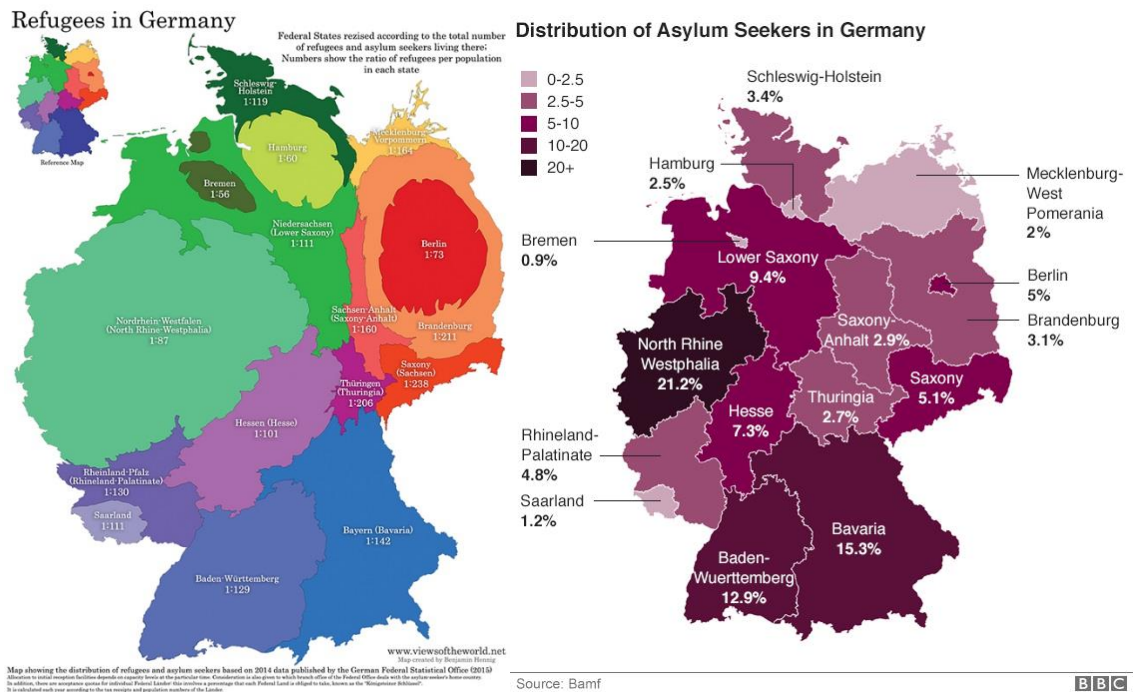
<sup>117</sup> Founded in 2007 as a merger of the Party of Democratic Socialism and the Labour and Social Justice Party, the Left Party is considered the spiritual successor of the Socialist Unity Party, which ruled East Germany from 1946 until 1989.

<sup>118</sup> Cornelia Hildebrandt. 2012. AN INSIDE LOOK AT GERMANY'S LEFT PARTY. [ONLINE] Available at: [http://www.rosalux-nyc.org/wp-content/files\\_mf/hildebrandt\\_insidelookatgermanysLeftparty.pdf](http://www.rosalux-nyc.org/wp-content/files_mf/hildebrandt_insidelookatgermanysLeftparty.pdf). [Accessed 25 February 2018]. Pg. 5 -10

The Federal Returning officer. 2013. Official final result of the 2013 Bundestag Election. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/en/info/presse/mitteilungen/bundestagswahl-2013/2013-10-09-endgueltiges-amtliches-ergebnis-der-bundestagswahl-2013.html>. [Accessed 23 February 2018].

<sup>119</sup> Die Welt. 2012. Writers warn about Linkspartei. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.signandsight.com/features/241.html>. [Accessed 25 February 2018].

<sup>120</sup> Benjamin Hennig. 2015. Refugees in Germany. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.viewsoftheworld.net/?p=4556>. [Accessed 28 February 2018].  
BBC. 2015. Migrant crisis: What next for Germany's asylum seekers?. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34175795>. [Accessed 25 February 2018].



*Figure 8 Areas with Higher Rates of AfD Support are Generally Less Affected by the Ongoing Refugee Crisis. Source: Views of the World/BBC*

This is especially important in the case of East Germany. An in-depth study conducted by Felix Arnold (2015) details how, as a result of its recent history with Communism and totalitarianism, the political culture in East Germany is significantly different to that of the west or south.<sup>121</sup> Rather, it falls much more in line with the political cultures in other former communist countries such as Poland and Hungary in that it is consistently more nationalistic, social conservative and Populist.<sup>122</sup> As a result, the politics of East Germany outside of cosmopolitan West Berlin are usually far more 'radical' and anti-elitist than in other regions of Germany.<sup>123</sup> This distrust of the elite is also manifested in lower electoral turnouts, with turnouts in the East being at least 10% lower than those in the West on

<sup>121</sup> Arnold, F.A., 2018. Political Culture in East and West Germany. DIW Economic Bulletin, [Online]. Vol. 5, 480 - 492. Available at: [https://www.diw.de/documents/publikationen/73/diw\\_01.c.513594.de/diw\\_econ\\_bull\\_2015-37.pdf](https://www.diw.de/documents/publikationen/73/diw_01.c.513594.de/diw_econ_bull_2015-37.pdf) [Accessed 28 March 2018].

<sup>122</sup> This is true in the case of both Left wing and Right Wing populism.

<sup>123</sup> Dirk Kurbjuweit. 2014. What Today's Germany Owes to Its Once-Communist East. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/how-east-germany-influences-modern-day-german-politics-a-994410.html>. [Accessed 27 February 2018].

average are. This situation has managed to persist across generations despite recent economic growth and lower rates of unemployment.<sup>124</sup> With the 'collapse' of the NPD and the relatively moderate stances of the AfD, more socially conservative voters may have turned to Right Wing populism as it more closely fits their political beliefs. Evidence of this is provided by a study published by 'Die Zeit', which demonstrates how many current AfD voters are former Christian Democrat and Merkel supporters who became dissatisfied with their recent positions.<sup>125</sup>

The aforementioned study also noted how the AfD was most successful with people in their mid to late 40s ranging from a wide spectrum of socio-economic backgrounds, whilst younger voters were more likely to support centrist or Left-leaning parties.<sup>126</sup> This discrepancy in voting patterns might be a result of older generations becoming increasingly disenfranchised with modern political parties and their ideologies. Rapid changes in the definitions of 'Left' and 'Right', whereby positions considered to be centrist during the 1990s and early 2000s have now become considered radical, resulted in the 'moderation' of many mainstream European political parties. This has caused them to focus more on broad social and cultural issues rather than specific economic concerns or social classes in order to appeal to a wider, more diverse, audience. Consequently, older generations, who are still concerned with traditional notions of morality and class-based politics, have become politically isolated. This has made them increasingly likely to support 'fringe' parties such as the AfD or Die Linke as they are more

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<sup>124</sup> Arnold, F.A. Political Culture in East and West Germany. Pg. 480 – 492

<sup>125</sup> Paul Blickle, Andreas Loos, Fabian Mohr, Julia Speckmeier, Julian Stahnke, Sascha Venohr & Veronika Völlinger. 2017. The AfD Profits from Non-Voters and Merkel Defectors. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2017-09/german-election-alternative-for-germany-angela-merkel>. [Accessed 27 February 2018].

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

representative of ideologies more prevalent in previous years. East-West migratory trends in Germany due to economic factors has caused the population of East Germany to become statistically older than that of the West.<sup>127</sup> Therefore, support for Far Right or Far Left areas may be seen as more of a result of a lack of younger, more politically liberal, voters rather than the result of a dramatic ideological shift stemming from economic or demographic changes.

In conclusion, support for the Far Right in Germany is linked to a number of factors. Whilst unemployment and economic deprivation is usually far higher in Far Right strongholds, there is little to suggest that this correlation necessarily means causation. Rather, support for the Far Right and anti-immigrant sentiment have continued to increase despite rapid economic improvement in recent years and relatively low rates of foreign-born populations in comparison to the country's west. It makes more sense to argue that support for radical movements in Germany is more the result of a political culture specific to the country's Eastern region resulting from over forty years of historical divergence. This difference is made more prominent by the older population of the area, which has resulted in slower rates of political transformation in comparison to what was witnessed in the West.

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<sup>127</sup> H. Bucher. 2007. Germany – Age structure 2007 and 2025 (projection). [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.diercke.com/kartenansicht.xtp?artId=978-3-14-100790-9&stichwort=projection&fs=1>. [Accessed 27 February 2018].

## **5. CONCLUSION TO DISSERTATION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The concluding section of this dissertation shall summarise and compile the information provided in the previous sections in order to provide the reader with an adequate answer to the aims of the dissertation established in the introductory section.

### **5.2 Summary of Dissertation:**

Due to the nature of the dissertation and the subject matter, it was appropriate to divide it into a number of distinct sections. Each section dealt with a specific aspect of the piece and to achieve varying goals.

The Introduction section of the dissertation introduced the reader to the subject of this dissertation, the context in which it was written, as well as its overall relevance and importance to academics and policy makers. It was noted how, in recent years, popular and academic interest in the policies, support and organisation of Right Wing Populist organisations has seen an increase, largely due to their rapid growth across parts of Europe and North America. Much of this interest tends to be negative, with mainstream media sources more often than not positing these groupings as spiritual successors to 20<sup>th</sup> century totalitarian and extremist movements. Academics concerned with the subject and their emergent theses, whilst not near as explicit, also make similar assumptions. Through their fixation on connecting the growth of these organisations to 'negative' economic or demographic changes, such as those seen following the 2008 World Economic Recession, these theses in many ways demonstrate elements of anti-popular

sociological thought widely associated with the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, they echo Hannah Arendt's conceptualisation of the 'Masses' introduced in her work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, whereby she claims totalitarian organisations were only able to gain power through the successful exploitation of a deracinated and identity-less 'Mass' which emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as a consequence of the rapid socioeconomic changes of the preceding century. Like Arendt, modern theses downplay or outright ignore the importance of ideology or culture in the support of these movements, suggesting that their supporters lack rational self-interest.

From this introduction, the main research question guiding this dissertation, in addition to three relevant sub questions, were introduced;

#### **MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION:**

*'To What Extent do Theses Which Seek to Attribute the Rise of Right Wing Populism Across Europe to Material Factors Retain Plausibility in the 21st Century?'*

#### **SUB-QUESTIONS:**

- *To What Extent Are Current Theses on the Rise of Right Wing Populism Indebted to 'Arendtian' Conceptualisation of the 'Masses' and their Role in the Rise of Totalitarianism?*
- *To What Extent do 21<sup>st</sup> Century Right Wing Populist Groups Maintain Similar Voting and Support Patterns to 20<sup>th</sup> Century Radical and Totalitarian Organisations?*
- *To What Level Can the Rise of Right Wing Populist Groups Be Attributed to Recent Economic and Demographic Shifts?*

The remaining sections of the dissertation were dedicated to adequately answering each of these questions. The literature review section analysed the most prevalent and academically important theses on the rise of Right Wing populism. It ascertained that, despite their individual differences in scope and conclusion, they often held similar underlying assumptions in that they focus on material factors such as the economy and demographics as being the primary element driving support for the Far Right. The rest of the section determined the roots of this mode of thinking, re-affirming its connection to Arendt and the forms of anti-popular thought that preceded her. It also provided reasoning for why these concepts have remained so prevalent, despite multiple criticisms, within academia, stating that the historical importance of the Second World War, potential tacit attempts at legitimisation, in addition to a paradigm shift that emerged in the mid-20th century, all contributed to academics choosing to focus on quantifiable arguments.

Following this, three case studies were examined. These were chosen according to a number of methodologies, namely David Collier's Comparative Method and Christopher Lamont's Least-Similar Case Design, elaborated on in section 3. The particular cases looked at were Belgium, the United Kingdom, and Germany. These were chosen on the basis that they shared similar variables in that they were all Western, European Union countries with highly advanced economies and a tradition of liberal democracy which have experienced a surge in Right Wing Populist support over the last decade. However, there existed a large degree of ethnic, geographic and cultural differences between the three that were felt made each country warrant further examination. The case studies consisted of three parts. The first provided the reader with a brief history of the Far Right in the



aftermath of the Second World War, accounting for its rise, ideology, support and eventual development into 21st century Right Wing Populist movements. In the cases of Germany and the United Kingdom, it was noted that the modern Far Right had little direct connection with 20th century movements, and were rather the product of liberal and anti-federalist political organisations, which emerged as a response to the enlargement of the European Union in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In the case of Belgium, the modern movement was a continuation, albeit in a more 'moderate' form, of the hard-line Flemish nationalist movement, which sprung up in the mid-20th century out of a number of concerns pertaining the long-term survival of Flemish culture given Belgium's contemporary political situation. Once this had been concluded, the second and third parts of each case study dealt with the support of these movements in order to identify whether their rise could be linked to factors unrelated to the economy or shifting demographics. A number of common features across countries could be determined. Firstly, there is little to suggest that the growth of these organisations as a direct result of recent economic downturns or changes, or that they necessarily recruit from areas where 20th century radical movements were more successful. In the cases of the United Kingdom and Belgium, Right Wing Populist movements maintained either greater or comparable electoral popularity prior to outbreak of the refugee crisis or the global recession or 2015 migrant crisis. Whilst movements in these classes usually attract white voters with little headway into minority groups, this does not indicate that racial tensions are their primary drivers of support. In Belgium, the Far Right is more likely the result of a number of variables, including the historical rurality of Flanders, Catholic social values, and cultural (including political culture) and economic differences between the country's Northern and Southern regions. In the United Kingdom, evidence suggests that Right Wing Populism is directly motivated



by the country's geographic isolation and historical economic dominance, which have bred a unique political culture whereby a large percentage of the population still subscribe to ideas of British exceptionalism and therefore are slower to adapt to modern political realities and ideologies. Would-be Populists then exploit this to secure gain electoral ground. Whilst demographic concerns may exasperate Far Right support somewhat, as demonstrated by the 'Halo Effect' mentioned in section 4.3.2, its significance is arguable. The case of Germany is more particular. Unlike in the previous two case studies, Germany lacked a politically significant Far Right during the 20th century. Right Wing Populism is rather a more recent phenomenon, only really emerging within the last five years, and remained insignificant during the earlier years Germany's economic recession and the refugee crisis. Whilst its support in many ways correlates with economic deprivation, there is little evidence to suggest this is its cause. Rather, evidence suggests that support may also much be motivated by wider cultural aspects, namely a distinctly Populist political culture in the East which bears similarities to those in countries such as Poland and Hungary, and an aging population which has difficulties adjusting to the new political centre.

### **5.3 Relevance**

The information compiled for the writing of this dissertation strongly suggests that the 'Arendtian' conceptualisation of a deracinated and ideology-less 'Masses' as being fundamental to the rise of Totalitarian movements cannot be applied to modern Right Wing Populist movements. Rather, evidence suggested that areas with a categorically stronger sense of a unique identity and ideology are more likely to support these movements. By extension, it was felt that many academic

theses concerning the subject at hand, whilst not irrelevant or unimportant by any means, are weakened by their downplaying of the possibility that cultural, historical or political factors unique to a specific region or country may be important to the rise of anti-elitist, Populist movements in Western Europe. Attempts at trying to compare modern-day populism with the rise of totalitarian movements such as the Nazi Party oftentimes fall short, and are based on partially incorrect understandings of both. There is little to suggest, except in the case of Germany, that these parties recruited from the same groupings and, with that, for the same reason, as previous radical parties.

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