Executive Summary

Populists are increasingly dominating politics in Europe. This paper provides an overview of the populist landscape in Europe, including its history, its ideological underpinnings on both the political left and right, and the factors that have contributed to its resurgence.

Although populism often responds to real grievances, it rarely offers credible policy solutions. Instead, as the examples of Poland and Hungary suggest, when populists accede to power, they can succumb to authoritarian tendencies, weakening institutional constraints on that power, including the traditional checks of the judiciary and civil society. The rise of populism is of immediate practical interest to US policymakers. Europe’s populists routinely channel subversive Russian propaganda and help erode Europeans’ trust in the EU, NATO, and liberal democratic politics at large. Some of them even have financial ties to the Kremlin.

To rise to the populist challenge, Europe’s political elites need to do more than just pursue their traditional strategy of isolating and delegitimizing populists. Instead, they have to offer policy solutions that resonate with their electorates and address the grievances that are currently driving voters into the open arms of populist charlatans. The United States can help, too—most importantly by holding its European friends and allies to high standards of democracy and rule of law, helping them combat Russian disinformation, and fostering greater economic openness and dynamism.
I n 2016, Western politics were shaken by two events of potentially historic importance: the Brexit campaign’s success in the United Kingdom and Donald Trump’s victory in the US presidential election. Both appear to be symptoms of a dramatic political realignment transforming Western politics beyond recognition. Instead of the traditional divide between the political left and right, a new cleavage has emerged between centrist establishment forces and those who are challenging the status quo from populist positions.

For example, Trump has attracted the support of many disenchanted voters who previously supported Democratic presidential candidates. On matters of economic and trade policy, his rhetoric often mimicked that of Sen. Bernie Sanders, the far-left candidate who lost the Democratic nomination to Hillary Clinton. In the UK, the campaign to leave the EU united the populist right and the antiestablishment segments of the Labour Party. While its conservative and libertarian critics saw the EU as synonymous with over-regulation, redistribution, and socialism, its left-wing enemies saw it as a vehicle for neoliberal reforms lacking democratic accountability or transparency.

European electorates, traditionally apathetic toward the EU, are growing more receptive to the implicit or explicit rejection of the European project integration at heart of the current antiestablishment backlash. The common European currency and European institutions at large are blamed for Europe’s poor economic performance since the 2008 global economic downturn. The 2015 refugee crisis, together with the wave of terror attacks that struck Paris, Brussels, and Nice, has amplified the existing anxieties over immigration and has given birth to a narrative that associates the EU with an unqualified endorsement of open borders.

Populists often contrast ineffective policies of European leaders, the cumbersome functioning of EU institutions, and the woes facing the European project with Vladimir Putin’s strong and decisive leadership and his embrace of traditional values. Worse yet, they oppose policies aimed at curbing Russia’s influence in Central and Eastern Europe. Populism’s simultaneous resurgence across Europe and the Kremlin’s efforts to assert its dominance in the post-Soviet space belie any illusions that may have once existed about the inevitable triumph of democratic capitalism in Europe or about Europe “whole and free.”

In response, mainstream politicians might be tempted to counter populism by embracing some elements of populist agendas, such as tighter immigration restrictions or government control of the economy aimed at protecting domestic jobs. To some extent, that reaction is understandable. The grievances driving today’s populist revolt are real and cannot be ignored. However, it would be a mistake to use those grievances to justify policies that would damage economic performance further, undermining the sense that existing political and economic institutions are able to deliver widely shared prosperity.

Before any strategy can be devised to counter populism, it is necessary to understand it. The term “populism” is vague and refers to both political strategies and styles, as well as to policy platforms. In the former sense, populism is a matter of degree—all political messages, wherever they come from, “are adapted to what one assumes voters want to hear.”
Populist narratives can be found on the left and the right. Their narratives overlap significantly: both left- and right-wing populists stress the silent majority’s anger that has been betrayed or left behind by a self-serving, out-of-touch elite. The specifics differ across countries and include the capture of politics by the financial industry or big business, austerity policies, stagnating incomes and loss of employment, too much political correctness and inability to respond to security threats, or immigration in general.

However, once in office, they secured political control of all branches of government—including those that had traditionally been independent of political pressures, such as the constitutional court, central bank, and public broadcasting organizations. To justify these steps, both parties have emphasized the substantial popular mandate they received in the elections. In Greece, the current government dominated by the far-left Syriza has attracted controversy, partly by trying to limit the number of private television broadcasters.

**Populism and Authoritarianism**

It is possible to view populism as a helpful corrective to the excesses of establishment politics. Mainstream politicians are by no means immune to complacency and stasis, unless they are challenged by political competitors. The main reason why the current wave of populism can become a problem for European democracies lies in the authoritarian leanings displayed by populist political forces after they have arrived in power in several European countries.

Authoritarian populism’s distinguishing mark is rejecting constraints that are placed on political decision making. In a small number of cases of openly communist and neo-Nazi parties that are allowed to operate in Europe, such rejection is explicit. More frequently, however, European populists’ authoritarian proclivities reflect their belief that the majority’s will should trump the institutional constraints placed on politics. As Andrzej Lepper, the late leader of Poland’s populist authoritarian party *Samoobrona* (Self-Defense), put it, “if the law works against people and generally accepted notions of legality then it isn’t law. The only thing to do is to break it for the sake of the majority.”

In cases when populists have arrived in influential positions, they have pushed the formal and informal boundaries of democratic governance. Another illustration of the authoritarian leanings of some of the political groups under consideration is their embrace of referenda in representative democracies. In the UK, proponents of Leave see the Brexit referendum as the final word on the UK’s EU membership, despite a constitutional system in which sovereignty remains with Parliament, not with popular majorities.

In other EU member states, populist parties have initiated referenda on subjects that are typically decided by elected representatives of the people, not by a volonté générale. Recent examples include the referendum held in Greece in July 2015 over the bailout conditions proposed by the Troika; the Dutch referendum on the association agreement between the EU and Ukraine, also held in April 2016; or the referendum on the EU-organized refugee relocation mechanism held in Hungary in October 2016.
The view of politics as completely subordinated to the majority’s will is at odds with an understanding of liberal democracy as a system that constrains political decision making in a framework of constitutional rules. To the extent in which populism and authoritarianism are connected, the current populist wave opens questions about the future of politics in countries that rank among the oldest and most stable democracies in the world.

That question, as Trump’s electoral triumph shows, is not completely irrelevant in the US context either. Trump’s signature policy proposals, including shutting down mosques and using a deportation force, have been identified by his critics as incompatible with the First, Fourth, Fifth, Eighth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the US Constitution.

If current trends continue, populists will likely end up governing an increasing number of European countries. Whatever that means for the future of their political institutions, it raises challenges for US foreign policy and engagement with Europe. American policymakers have to be aware of the corrosive effects that authoritarian populism can have on the commitment of European countries to a Western-led liberal order. Nor should America take it for granted that liberal democracy will survive in countries where the current populist wave is amplified by underlying political institutions’ weaknesses, subversive Russian propaganda, and the Kremlin’s co-opting of political elites.

Meet the Discontents: An Overview of Populist Parties in the EU

Classifying political parties as populist or authoritarian is not without controversy. Few would openly advertise their populist, much less authoritarian, character. Similar to other political groups, such parties are not homogeneous or impervious to change. Instead, they encompass a variety of views, some of them friendlier to ideas of liberal democracy and limited government than others. Some on the political right advocate a relatively modest role for the government in the economy. Conversely, many left-wing populists have an accommodating view of individual and civil liberties.

Furthermore, mainstream political parties are not completely immune to authoritarian tendencies. The question of placing political parties in one category or another thus becomes necessarily a question of degree.

All the parties considered in this paper are represented in national parliaments, except Alternative for Germany (AfD), which in our view deserves interest despite its absence from the Bundestag. There is, of course, a much richer infrastructure of other fringe parties, groups, and movements outside national parliaments that we do not study in this paper. Table A1 in the appendix provides an overview of the leading populist parties in EU countries represented in national parliaments. Whenever represented in the European Parliament, these parties are typically part of the following parliamentary groups: Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF, nationalists), Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD, hard euroskeptics), and European United Left-Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL, far left).

In some cases, the opposition to the EU and Muslim immigration is an extension of traditional nationalism. The nationalist segments of the populist landscape in Europe are relatively old. Their political influence has been growing slowly but steadily, as their campaigns and messages have become increasingly effective.

For example, the foundation of France’s National Front (FN) dates back to 1972, although the party struggled as a political force for the first decade of its existence. During the leadership of its founder, Jean-Marie Le Pen, its appeal was self-limiting, perhaps because of Le Pen’s recurrent controversies, including his statements about the Vichy regime and the Holocaust. His daughter, who took control of the party in 2011, extended its appeal and rebranded the party as a more modern force with wider appeal.

Austria’s Freedom Party (FPÖ) was founded in 1956, initially as a classical liberal alternative to Austria’s two dominant political parties, the center-right People’s Party (ÖVP) and the Social Democrats (SPÖ), both of which controlled Austria’s government throughout its postwar history. The FPÖ’s embrace
of nationalism and electoral success began under Jörg Haider’s leadership starting in 1986.

Haider led the party into the 1999 election, after which the FPÖ joined the coalition government, much to the EU’s dismay, which responded by imposing diplomatic sanctions against Austria. Although only a junior coalition partner, the FPÖ initiated a number of new bills that were rushed through the legislative process and later struck down by Austria’s Supreme Court. The FPÖ’s most recent resurgence in the polls, which led to the narrow defeat of its candidate, Norbert Hofer, in the second round of the presidential election on December 4, 2016, was driven largely by the public reaction to the refugee crisis that hit Europe in 2015.11

The Party for Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands, founded by Geert Wilders, has conservative roots. Wilders started his political career working for Frits Bolkestein, an eminent classical liberal who led the People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) and later became an influential EU commissioner. Wilders left VVD over its support for Turkey joining the EU. His platform married economic liberalism with a critical attitude toward Islam and immigration.

The firm anti-immigration and anti-Islam agenda gradually eclipsed all other elements of the PVV’s program. Besides advocating a prohibition of halal slaughter, restrictions on Islamic headscarves, and a program of repatriating criminals of foreign and dual citizenships, the PVV wants the Netherlands to leave the EU and return to using the guilder instead of the euro.12

The Danish People’s Party (DF) was founded in 1995 and resembles its Austrian and Dutch counterparts in combining pro-market rhetoric with a rejection of Muslim immigration and multiculturalism. While not formally a part of the government coalition, the DF is providing parliamentary support to the current government.

The Sweden Democrats (SD) date back to 1988 and started as an extremist movement with documented ties to white supremacists and neo-Nazis.13 Over time, the party has emulated the more successful nationalist parties in Western Europe such as the FPÖ and the FN, garnering political influence and a broad following. The effort paid off in 2010 when the party first entered Swedish Riksdag, and again following the 2014 election when it became the third-largest party in the Riksdag, after the SPÖs and the Moderates. Like its counterparts elsewhere, the SD advocate immigration restrictions, reject multiculturalism, and want to renegotiate Sweden’s place in the EU.

The Finns Party, initially known as True Finns, was founded in 1995. Unlike their counterparts in other Nordic countries, the Finns’ economic platform is explicitly left wing, advocating a strong economic role for the government, including a redistributive state, in line with the status quo existing in Finland.

A small number of populist parties in European countries are rooted in regionalist movements. The most prominent ones include the Flemish Interest (VB) in Belgium and the North League in Italy. The VB is the Flemish Bloc’s successor, which dates back to the 1970s and was disbanded after a court ruling in 2004. The VB advocates for Belgium’s dissolution, citing as models the peaceful separations of Czechoslovakia and the dissolution of Sweden and Norway’s union. Furthermore, it opposes immigration, particularly from Muslim-majority countries.

The North League’s ideology has been fluid because the organization has served mainly as a catchall party for Northern Italian separatism. The party favors a socially conservative, anti-immigration government that takes an active role in the economy. Following its electoral success in 2008, the party became a part of Silvio Berlusconi’s government. The Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonia and Baranja (HDSSB) falls into the same regionalist category, drawing support in the northeast of the country thought to be neglected by the central government.

A different category of parties derive their ideological basis from conservative and libertarian euroskepticism. The AfD was founded in 2013 by a group of German academics opposed to EU bailouts for ailing economies on eurozone’s periphery. Over time, the AfD has grown into a formidable political force, in part by embracing the anti-immigration and anti-Islam agenda that was initially associated with the Movement against Islamization of the Occident (PEGIDA).

AfD’s voters are also concerned about the “Islamization” of the West and support PEGIDA’s mass
Thilo Sarrazin, a former Bundesbank board member and author of the bestselling book *Germany Is Abolishing Itself*, has been a frequent guest speaker at AfD events. While critical of the euro, his main concern is the allegedly corrosive effect of immigration from Muslim-majority countries on Western societies. Although AfD is not represented in the Bundestag, it is expected to gain a substantial number of seats in the federal election in 2017.

Likewise, Alan Sked, a noted conservative historian at the London School of Economics, founded the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in 1991 as a single-issue anti-EU party steeped in ideas of free-market capitalism. To some extent, the UKIP has remained true to its foundational principles and has provided a home to free enterprise advocates critical of EU overregulation.

At the same time, the gradual broadening of its support (the party received 3.8 million votes in the 2015 general election) has come at the price of crafting messages that are more explicitly directed against immigration and against corrupt political elites. Research into UKIP’s support reveals that UKIP’s core loyalists were largely politically disaffected voters animated by xenophobic impulses, including women who otherwise reject far-right groups such as the fascist British National Party. Another large group of UKIP voters are strategic defectors who aim to punish mainstream politicians but do not necessarily harbor any deep-seated disdain for the EU.

A relatively small number of political parties represented in national parliaments in Europe can be classified safely as neo-Nazi: Greece’s Golden Dawn, Bulgaria’s Attack, and Slovakia’s Kotleba—People’s Party Our Slovakia. Like the German Nazis and Italian fascists, Golden Dawn uses the Roman salute, and the party’s banner features a Greek meander whose design and color scheme echo the German Nazi party’s swastika. Attack in Bulgaria uses the solar cross in its imagery, a symbol appropriated by neo-Nazis worldwide. Its manifesto advocates the introduction of national betrayal as a crime and the prosecution of national traitors.

In Slovakia, the uniforms Kotleba party members wore imitated the style used by the Hlinka’s Guards of Slovakia’s wartime fascist regime. At the time of its founding in 2003, the Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik) belonged in this category, too. In 2007, Jobbik started to operate a paramilitary wing, the Hungarian Guards, which the government later disbanded. With its rise in the polls, Jobbik has reinvented itself by scrapping the fascist imagery and instead embracing a more polished, professional look.

However, Jobbik is not the most significant authoritarian populist party operating in Hungary. Since its creation in the early days of Hungary’s transition from communism, Fidesz (Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége, meaning Alliance of Young Democrats) has morphed from an anticommunist, libertarian-minded youth group, through a center-right, reformist, and staunchly Atlanticist party at the turn of the century, to a populist nationalist party that seeks to move Hungary toward illiberal democracy. Under Viktor Orbán’s leadership, Fidesz first formed a coalition government in 1998. The government, credited with being reformist and pro-Western, oversaw Hungary’s accession to NATO in 1999 and also provided support to NATO’s intervention in Serbia and Kosovo later that year.

In 2010, Fidesz gained enough seats to form a one-party government, followed by gaining a short-lived constitutional majority in the 2014 election. Fidesz’s two current terms in office can provide a glimpse into what to expect from populists who gain power. Consistent with the distrust of liberal democratic institutions, which is characteristic of authoritarians, Orbán has spearheaded a political takeover of all elements of the state.

“The executive and legislative branches are no longer separate,” writes economist Janos Kornai, adding that the “parliament itself has turned into a law factory, and the production line is sometimes made to operate at unbelievable speed: between 2010 and 2014 no less [sic] than 88 bills made it from being introduced to being voted on within a week; in 13 cases it all happened on the same or the following day.” Furthermore, “reliable people close to the center of power occupy decision-making positions even in organizations which are not legally under the control of the executive branch . . . in the constitutional court, the state audit office, the fiscal council, the competition
authority . . . the ombudsman’s office, and the central statistical office.”

Fidesz’s constitutional majority approved the new Hungarian constitution without any attempts to reach a broad societal or political consensus and ignoring domestic and international criticisms. The large parliamentary majority has provided a cachet of legality to any government decision, even when providing favoritism to specific individuals or groups. Fidesz has used the EU’s 2015 refugee crisis as an opportunity to reject any immigration from Muslim-majority countries and has also led a group of Central European countries into a standoff with the European Commission over its plan to redistribute asylum seekers across the 28 member states.

On October 2, 2016, the country held a referendum with the following question: “Do you want the European Union to be able to order the mandatory settlement of non-Hungarian citizens in Hungary without parliament’s consent?” Leaving aside the deliberately suggestive wording of the question, the referendum could not carry any legal weight because the resettlement scheme was a matter of European, not Hungarian, law. The referendum was ultimately void because of a low turnout, yet its goal—to deepen the divisions between European countries at a time when a united front is required to confront the bloc’s many challenges—was largely met.

Poland’s experience with populists in power has followed Hungary’s. The country has had a colorful landscape of populist parties, which have seen significant churn over the years. The 2001 parliamentary election saw the rise of the Self-Defense party, led by Andrzej Lepper, who became known for his disruptive campaigning and colorful conspiracy theories. The success was repeated in the 2005 election, when Self-Defense received 11.4 percent of the vote and joined the government coalition, together with the Law and Justice Party (PiS) led by Jaroslaw Kaczynski and the League of Polish Families.

In 2015, punk rock musician Paweł Kukiz won 21 percent of the popular vote in the country’s presidential election. Afterward, he formed a political party, Kukiz’15, to replace Poland’s system of proportional representation with single-member constituencies, thereby eroding the established political parties’ positions. Kukiz, whose music has grown to emphasize nationalist themes, sees himself as “a right-winger with a left-wing heart.”

The PiS, in turn, has combined radical social conservatism, inspired by Poland’s Catholic traditions, with a critical view of the EU—although it does not advocate rejecting Poland’s membership—and an embrace of the authoritarian political traditions of prewar Poland. The 2015 refugee crisis enabled the PiS to adopt an uncompromising anti-immigration position, notwithstanding the fact that Poland, which is among the most ethnically homogenous countries in the world, has not seen any significant migration inflows.

### Although populism is commonly associated with the political right, it has its manifestations on the far left as well.

Following PiS’s return to power in October 2015, the country has seen a standoff between the government and the country’s constitutional tribunal over the effort to establish political control of government institutions, including public-service broadcasters and the judiciary. The crisis prompted the European Commission to launch an inquiry into the problem to see if there is a “systemic threat to the rule of law.” In June 2016, the commission issued an initial opinion concluding that the matter “has not been resolved.” If the situation persists, the EU could hypothetically impose sanctions against Poland and even suspend Warsaw’s voting rights in the European Council.

Although populism is commonly associated with the political right, it has its manifestations on the
far left as well. Some of these emerged as significant political forces on the eurozone’s periphery in reaction to the economic downturn and efforts at fiscal consolidation. These include, most prominently, Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece. The latter was formed in 2004 as a coalition of small political groups on the far left and grew in importance during Greece’s sovereign debt crisis until becoming the largest political force in Greece. So far, Syriza’s record in the office—including its attacks on free media and using direct democracy as a substitute for democratic procedures—confirms the suspicion that in practice, populist policymakers will gravitate toward solutions that are authoritarian in nature.

In turn, Podemos was founded in 2014 by a young political scientist as an extension of the previously existing protest movement directed against the perceived corruption of the political class, rising inequality, and fiscal austerity. In the elections held in June 2016, Podemos received 24.5 percent of all votes, making it the third-largest political party in the country. Croatia also features a small antiglobalization protest party, Human Shield, which aims to fight foreclosures by occupying property. In 2015 it succeeded in having one of its candidates elected to the country’s parliament.

Italy’s Five Star Movement (M5S), founded by comedian Beppe Grillo, lacks a clear ideological compass. A member of the EFDD group in European Parliament—together with UKIP—M5S champions environmental sustainability, noninterventionist foreign policy, direct democracy, and internet access. Its growth has been fueled to a large extent by Italy’s poor economic performance in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis.

Many other EU countries have parties that are positioned to the left relative to traditional social democratic or labor parties and that share a populist outlook that contrasts the perceived self-serving economic and political elites against the struggling citizenry. Usually broader-tent coalitions of different left-wing groups, these parties include the Left Alliance (Finland), Left Front (France), Left Bloc (Portugal), Socialist Party (the Netherlands), Left Party (Sweden), Red-Green Alliance (Denmark), Left (Luxembourg), Left (Germany), People Before Profit Alliance (Ireland), and the Workers’ Party (Belgium).

Additionally, several EU countries also feature openly communist parties, which could be classified not just as authoritarian but also totalitarian. Portuguese and Spanish Communist parties have existed since the 1920s, although Spain’s Communist Party was outlawed and its leadership exiled under the Franco regime. The Communist Party in Greece and the Progressive Party of Working People in Cyprus, which date back to 1918 and 1926, respectively, openly embrace Marxism-Leninism as their ideology’s foundation.

The Czech Republic’s Communist Party is an outlier among Central and Eastern European countries because it is the direct successor of the totalitarian-era Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and has not undergone major rebranding efforts. Yet in comparison to its Greek and Cypriot counterparts, Czech Communists’ rhetoric is more moderate, dictated in part by legal reasons, because political groups openly advocating for the restoration of the communist regime are not allowed to operate in the country. Furthermore, toning down its rhetoric was necessary for the party to survive politically through an era when the memory of totalitarianism was still alive.

**Understanding the Rise of Populism**

Although the rise of populism across Europe is not a new phenomenon, its current outburst culminates from several decades of steady support for both the far right and the far left, as numerous political scientists have documented. Existing research has focused on parties of the far right—nationalists, anti-immigration groups, euroskeptics, and others—whose vote share has been growing steadily.

On the far left, the pattern of growth in support has been different. A large number of traditional far-left parties, many of them hardline communist groups adhering strictly to Marxist-Leninist traditions, saw a steady decline in support until the outbreak of the 2008 global financial crisis. Since then,
they have regained their momentum, but this time mostly in more recent and eclectic anticapitalist parties such as Syriza.\textsuperscript{31}

Moreover, it has been documented that a significant overlap exists between the voters supporting left-wing and right-wing populists, suggesting that studying the phenomena jointly is indeed justified.\textsuperscript{32} Figure 1 is from a recent study by the Swedish political scientist Andreas Johansson Heinö,\textsuperscript{33} which provides an aggregate vote-share metric for both left-wing and right-wing populists across Europe.

There are many explanations for the rise of populists, and discriminating among them on an empirical basis can be difficult. The most straightforward way to account for these political groups’ existence is that populist ideas reflect deep-seated preferences of growing parts of European electorates. Alternatively, votes for such parties should be interpreted not as an endorsement of their platforms, but rather as an expression of protest and disenchantment with mainstream politicians. Such disenchantment might reflect a variety of different grievances, such as poor economic outcomes, excessive immigration inflows, and concerns about security.

A look at Western history reveals that support for populists rises in troubled economic times. Economic historians who studied the Great Depression concluded that the drastic economic downturn was associated with rising support for fascist parties, especially in cases when the downturn was protracted and led to large cumulative losses of income.\textsuperscript{34} However, the rise in populist support and its political effects were uneven. It was stronger in countries with a recent history of democracy and low hurdles to parliamentary representation of new parties, as well as in countries that were on the losing side of World War I and that therefore experienced a collective sense of national humiliation.

The dynamics that followed the Great Depression were only one instance of a more general pattern observed in Western liberal democracies. Financial crises between 1870 and 2014 increased the share of...
votes going to the far right by 30 percent on average in the five years from the beginning of the crisis. They also led to higher levels of political fractionalization as new political forces entered the scene and raised the risk of gridlock and political dysfunction—typically at times when economic reforms are necessary.

The historical record therefore suggests that support for populists depends on changes in economic performance. At first sight, studies of individual-level data seem to belie the notion that economic hardship is driving electorates into the hands of populists. Some instead cite the fear that immigration will undermine domestic culture as a decisive factor driving support for far-right parties. Evidence from Flanders and the UK suggests that cultural factors can dominate the narrowly economic ones.

Such findings are echoed by recent research on the drivers of support of Donald Trump in the United States. Others, too, find systematic ideological differences between Geert Wilders’ PVV voters and other political parties’ supporters. A working paper coauthored by one of the authors of this report found that urbanization is a strong predictor of support for right-wing populist parties. More importantly, corruption is strongly and robustly associated with the vote share of right-wing populists—but not of left-wing populists—and this relationship is not driven only by a small group of countries, such as the post-Communist states of Central and Eastern Europe, which suffer from systematically higher rates of corruption.

And while concerns over immigration have been central to the rise of the far right, there is no direct relationship between the size of immigration inflows and support for far-right parties. However, immigration can be a source of concern because of fears that it can change the domestic culture and character of the country. It can also be a source of political tensions because of the perceived competition over a limited amount of resources available for redistribution through the welfare state.

Arguably that problem is exacerbated during periods of low economic growth, such as the one witnessed in the aftermath of the 2008 Great Recession. Populism seems to have many root causes: ideological, cultural, and sociological. But whatever those are, their gravity is magnified when politics and the economy seem like a zero-sum game. It is more difficult to agitate voters with such grievances, justified or not, when they are busy having a career, seizing opportunities, and building a life in a country with a healthy economy.

### Populism seems to have many root causes: ideological, cultural, and sociological.

But whatever those are, their gravity is magnified when politics and the economy seem like a zero-sum game.

A fact that is oftentimes cited as being at odds with a purely economic account of populism is that support for populists was rising for years before the financial crisis. Furthermore, some of Europe’s wealthiest countries, such as Austria, Switzerland (not in the EU), and the Nordic states have seen support for populism rise as much as in countries that experienced much more significant economic hardships in the past years.

If this argument is compelling, it only shows how dramatically we have recalibrated our understanding of economic success. After all, real gross domestic product in both Austria and Denmark is at essentially the same levels as in 2006. However, the slow growth observed throughout the West is not just a fallout of the Great Recession.
Instead, as Swedish economists Fredrik Erixon and Björn Weigel show in their new book *The Innovation Illusion*, over the past 40 years “productivity growth has declined” and “companies increasingly [spent] less of their revenues on innovation or to invest in long-term business building.” As a result, whether you are an average Greek or Dane, the odds are that the growth of your income, consumption, and wealth has been a disappointment—and in the Greek case, a drastic one—relative to reasonable expectations a decade ago. Further, if continuous improvements in standards of living are an integral part of the social contract that gives legitimacy to democratic capitalism, it is hardly surprising that electorates are now looking for alternatives.

Once again, this is not to dismiss the alternative accounts of populism out of hand. Rather, it is to point out that conflicts, grievances, and insecurities are always magnified by poor economic performance. Consider any narrative about the factors of populism: immigration, job security, cultural change, or alienation from politics. In all these cases, the grievance in question is much more tolerable in a world of continued income growth than in an economy that behaves as a zero- or negative-sum game.

The purely cultural and sociological accounts of populism fail to address the dynamics of support for these groups. Whatever Europeans’ attitudes toward immigration or multiculturalism, it is implausible that European societies have become fundamentally more xenophobic in recent years. Rather, it appears more likely that open expressions of such attitudes are acceptable in bad economic times, when the traditional sources of political and intellectual authority come under attack for the inability to deliver good economic outcomes.

The Russian Connection

The rise of populism is not of interest only because of its first-order effects on politics in individual European countries. Although the rise of populism in Europe reflects domestic political realities, it has also become a factor in the geopolitical conflicts on the continent. As a study by the Budapest-based think tank Political Capital Institute demonstrated, pro-Russian attitudes of European far-right and far-left parties first became visible after Russia’s war against Georgia in 2008 and then again after its annexation of Crimea in 2014.

It is not a conspiracy theory to point out that the Kremlin and Europe’s populists interests are aligned. Especially in times of diplomatic isolation, Russia feels a stronger need to find political allies, whether or not they are a part of mainstream politics. Geopolitical crises provide populists with opportunities to differentiate themselves from mainstream center-right and center-left politicians by articulating an alternative foreign policy agenda, typically critical of the West and embracing Russia as a benign power. In Greece, for example, the euroskeptic Independent Greeks and the far-left Syriza not only are parts of one coalition government but also agree on pro-Kremlin foreign policy positions.

Moscow aims to undermine the Euro-Atlantic community’s unity by engaging with small countries in Central and Eastern Europe individually. The so-called Europe of Nations resonates in the Kremlin because Russia can exercise much greater diplomatic, economic, and energy-related leverage vis-à-vis individual European countries than when it faces a united European front.

The Kremlin’s Eurasian doctrine promises post-Soviet states an escape from the EU’s perceived overregulation and meddling—a return to genuine national sovereignty. These points are complemented by the portrait painted of a traditionalist, Christian, pro-family Russia against a decaying West, weakened by ill-conceived multiculturalism and liberalism.

Putin’s reformulated ideology is built on authoritarianism, a repressive police state, a substantial role of the state in the economy, and his rhetorical embrace of “traditional values” against Western multiculturalism, gay rights, and secularism. Peter Pomerantsev and Michael Weiss neatly summarize the Kremlin’s strategy toward far-left and far-right parties: “Unlike in the Cold War, when Soviets largely supported leftist groups, a fluid approach to ideology now allows the Kremlin to simultaneously back far-left and far-right
movements, greens, anti-globalists and financial elites. The aim is to exacerbate divides and create an echo chamber of Kremlin support.

Both left-wing and right-wing populism offers fertile ground for Russian propaganda. Conservative and libertarian euroskeptics, who regard the EU as the single most significant threat to individual freedom and free markets, can be tricked into believing that their enemy’s enemy is their friend. Others on the populist right easily align with Kremlin nationalism and its conspicuous though largely insincere embrace of socially and culturally conservative values, including organized religion.

France’s FN is the most influential pro-Russian party on the nationalist right. Marine Le Pen recommended that Germany develop a trilateral alliance system along the Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis and called for creating a Pan-European Union with Russian participation. The FN has long cultivated a relationship with the Kremlin and other Russian stakeholders on personal, organizational, and financial levels.

The party’s connections with Russia yield profits for both sides, a recent example of which is the conflict in eastern Ukraine where the FN not only endorsed elections in separatist territories but also acted as a “peace-broker.” In return, President Putin openly praised Le Pen for her electoral success and her commitment to conservative values and national sovereignty, instead of having a slavish devotion to Brussels. Following the FN’s endorsement of Russia’s annexation of Crimea, the FN received a sequence of loans from the now-defunct First Czech-Russian Bank.

Russia’s engagement with the far right is flexible, depending on the circumstances of particular countries and situations. The strong performance of Austria’s FPÖ in the polls—and in the country’s presidential election—has led to a formal agreement of cooperation with Vladimir Putin’s United Russia party, signed in Moscow in December 2016. Following the nomination of François Fillon, another defender of Russia, as the center-right presidential candidate in France, the relationship between the Kremlin and the FN seems to have soured, and Russian banking authorities are suing the party over the repayment of the loans, suggesting that Russia has placed its bets on Fillon rather than Le Pen.

Or, to give another example, provided that Hungary is not a Slavic country, lacks cultural ties to Russia, and cultivates the historic memory the USSR’s violent suppression of the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, the Hungarian public has traditionally distrusted Russia. However, two of the country’s most significant political parties, Fidesz and Jobbik, have actively supported Russian geopolitical interests in the region.

In Jobbik’s case the attachment is an ideological one, shaped by the influence of Russian philosopher Alexander Dugin and his neofascist doctrine of Eurasianism. Following the example of Russia, Jobbik would generally equate institutions of civil society, especially LGBT activists, feminists, and others, with foreign agents. In 2013, Dugin invited Jobbik’s chairman Gábor Vona to give a lecture at Lomonosov Moscow State University. During his visit, Vona met several Duma politicians and delivered a presentation about Russia and Europe in which he criticized the EU for eroding traditional values.

Jobbik has been fiercely loyal to the Kremlin. In the Hungarian parliament, its legislators proposed a Foreign Agents Law, modeled after the Russian example. Béla Kovács, a Jobbik member of European Parliament (MEP), served as an “independent observer” during the illegal Crimean secession referendum. In October 2015, the European Parliament lifted the parliamentary immunity for Béla Kovács, who also served as the former president of Jobbik’s foreign affairs cabinet and co-chair of the Russia-EU Inter-Parliamentary Working Group, to allow an investigation of his alleged spying on EU institutions on Russia’s behalf.

A more recent example of the Kremlin’s covert operations in Europe involves Mateusz Piskorski, the leader of the Polish pro-Kremlin Change (Zmiana) party, and former activists of the Polish Congress of the New Right (KNP), who were being investigated regarding possible espionage in Russia’s favor. According to the Polish press, interrogations of Piskorski revealed that the Kremlin has also funded Slovakia’s neo-Nazi party Kotleba—People’s Party Our Slovakia.
Despite Fidesz’s Euro-Atlanticist origins, in recent years the party has become an effective vehicle of Russia’s geopolitical agenda, too. Orbán himself has been among the most vocal critics of the EU’s sanctions on Russia after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Some of this rapprochement might be driven by political and economic pragmatism.

Hungary is dependent on Russian energy imports, and in 2014, the Fidesz government also decided to award the contract to complete the Paks II nuclear plant to Russia’s state-owned nuclear energy monopoly, Rosatom. Yet the ties likely run deeper: as early as 2010, Orbán told a group of foreign ambassadors that Christian values were the main binding factor between Russia and Hungary, as opposed to the secularism of Western Europe.

Far-left populist parties are charmed by the promise of a state-controlled economy and the Kremlin’s rhetoric directed against “Western imperialism,” which has manifested itself most recently in Ukraine and throughout the Middle East. Far-left parties are attracted by reinvigorated “comrade networks” inherited from the USSR in the form of the Kremlin-controlled Communist Party of the Russian Federation, which is a weak opposition party but an important international hub in the far-left European political network.

There is also a significant disinformation campaign about Nazi and Western imperialist interventions against oppressed people in Ukraine and Crimea, which lures European far-left parties into endorsing the Kremlin’s geopolitical agenda. Some examples include the Left in Germany and the Czech Republic’s Communists, a long-term antiestablishment party with stable support of around 15 percent of the popular vote, both of which have consistently defended Russia’s political and military actions in the media and public appearances. Czech Communists even share with the Kremlin a substantial degree of social conservatism on issues including LGBT rights, in sharp contrast to other left-wing political groups.

Brexit has provided Russia with new opportunities because the UK is a major military power, is one of the most influential countries in Europe, and has a political tradition that rejects authoritarianism.

Since the Crimean crisis erupted, the Kremlin has created a giant propaganda machine in Europe by creating scores of foreign language websites and social media pages that have been extensively exploited during the Brexit campaign and the migrant crisis, which hit Europe in 2015. One of the well-known fake news cases about migration is the Lisa-affair, in which the Kremlin tried to undermine Angela Merkel during the series of regional elections taking place in Germany through a carefully planned disinformation campaign. According to Russian propaganda websites’ portrayals, migration is part of the master plan to Islamize Europe, where the “nihilistic” and
“decadent” West is unable to defend its traditional, Christian-conservative values.

This is in line with Orbán’s and the European far right’s rhetoric. According to Orbán, the prevalence of political correctness in the EU prevents a crucial debate about immigration, which in his view threatens to destroy the Christian nature of Europe, as well as the ethnic makeup of European states. Incidentally, Orbán’s narrative is aligned with the conspiracy theory spread by Russian state-funded Russia Today about George Soros “driving the invasion.” Another Kremlin mouthpiece, Sputnik, ran a series of articles about the Jobbik-party mayor of a small Hungarian border town who accused the US of promoting “illegal migration” to Hungary.

With this self-serving reinterpretation of the migrant crisis, Russia’s main goal is to create an alternative reality in which Moscow appears as a responsible global stakeholder—serving, for example, and in spite of all available evidence, as a peacekeeper and stabilizing force in Syria. Pro-Russian narratives also deflect attention from the war in eastern Ukraine, undermine the unity of European integration, and depict Western leadership as unable to act. Moreover, by supporting the Central and Eastern Europe region’s separatist ambitions, the far right helps Russia further increase the tension between the EU’s center and periphery by exploiting the existing divisions.

How influential are pro-Russian political voices on the populist left and right? To investigate this question, one may study the share of pro-Kremlin votes on Russia-related motions in the European Parliament as presented in Figure 2. The leading pro-Kremlin group of the European Parliament is the ENF, led by Le Pen. Although it accounts for only 5 percent of all MEPs (751), by having more than 25 members, the faction is entitled to certain rights in the parliament and to a substantial budget. While the group in the European Parliament has not been a game changer in European politics, it is a valuable asset for the Kremlin. According to our data, the current ENF members’ votes were aligned with the Kremlin 91 percent of the time.

The Russian government and its cronies apply a broad range of pull factors on ENF and two other Kremlin-friendly caucuses—the far-left GUE-NGL and the anti-EU EPFD—to keep them loyal, including diplomatic support and financial and political carrots. These groups’ pro-Russian positions might be driven by ideology, integral to their rejection of the European status quo. However, their support in crisis situations such as in Crimea or Syria provided a tangible boost for the Kremlin’s agenda. They can be labeled as the “parties of no” that vote against the mainstream and the establishment.

Relatively little attention has been paid to the connections between the populist left and the Kremlin. Yet, considering the far left’s resurgence in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, these factions have become as important in European politics as the far right. Whereas in 2009 the radical left GUE-NGL group included only 4.6 percent of MEPs in 2009, in 2014 this proportion rose to 6.9 percent.

Although the GUE-NGL originally denounced Russian military aggression in Crimea, the faction followed a clear pro-Russian line after the Crimean referendum in March 2014. Its MEPs rejected the parliament’s resolution calling for a military de-escalation in Syria on the eve of the Russian intervention last year. In June 2016, a Peace and Anti-NATO conference organized by the faction accused NATO of posing a nuclear threat to Russia and the Middle East. The main difference between the ENF and the GUE-NGL is rhetoric: both the far right and the far left strongly support Putin’s geopolitical agenda, but the latter does so less openly.

Germany’s the Left, the Polish Democratic Left Alliance (itself not a member of GUE-NGL), and the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) were all named independent observers to the internationally unrecognized referendum on Crimean independence, alongside their notional political opponents from Europe’s far-right parties, including the FN, Jobbik, and the FPÖ. While their joint evaluation that the referendum was legitimate was striking enough, some went even further in providing assistance to their comrades. The Left, in particular, famously delivered humanitarian aid to the self-styled authorities of the Donetsk People’s Republic in February 2015.
Conclusion and Policy Implications

Populism is more than a source of research questions for political scientists. If the examples of Poland, Hungary, and Greece are indicative of the nature of governance that can be expected from populists, Europe might brace for new attempts to dismantle checks on political power and to weaken free media and institutions of civil society. Populism is often a vehicle of Russian propaganda and soft power in Europe. Through financial ties, personal connections, and an alignment of interests between the Kremlin and populist politicians, the latter have helped shape public views of Russia and have provided practical political assistance to Putin’s regime in the efforts to undermine a more forceful European response to his invasion of Ukraine and harassment of other countries in the EU’s neighborhood.

For many years, the canonical response of political elites to populist parties was isolation and delegitimization. Following the FPÖ’s accession to a government coalition in Austria in 1999, other EU countries formed a cordon sanitaire around Austria by refusing to engage its leaders beyond the mere minimum required by European treaties. In domestic politics it has been common for mainstream politicians not to appear in joint debates with extremists and not engage directly with their agendas.

However, in recent months the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction, with many mainstream politicians adopting elements of populist agendas, whether on trade, immigration, or government control of the economy. Larry Summers’ call for a “responsible capitalism”70 and UK Prime Minister Theresa May’s speech at the Conservative Party Conference in October 201671 are examples of trying to defeat populists using their own tools.

However, such attempts can backfire. Populism certainly speaks to real concerns, but the solutions populists propose are often economically damaging. Worse yet, their implementation might concentrate political power at the expense of checks and balances and institutions of civil society, which normally constrain government and public policy.

To the extent to which mainstream politicians in Europe compete with populists for votes, they ought
to compete by offering real, credible solutions to public policy problems. For one, the historical record suggests that support for populists rises after financial crises, which typically results in sluggish economic recoveries. Therefore, efforts to restore economic dynamism, growth, and job creation should be at the forefront of mainstream politicians’ efforts if they are to keep the populists at bay.

Such efforts often require doing the opposite of what their instincts might suggest: pursuing potentially unpopular structural reforms instead of caving in to interest groups, stepping up the efforts to liberalize trade and investment flows instead of embracing protectionism and economic nationalism, and opening up space for innovation and entrepreneurship instead of burdening them with new regulations aimed to appease the discontents (or powerful vested interests). Because support for both left-wing and right-wing populists is responsive to measures of institutional quality, particularly the presence of corruption, it is imperative that policymakers demonstrate their commitment to transparent, honest governance and the rule of law.72

Nobody, not even America, can solve any of these problems for Europeans. However, the rise of populism underlines the role that the United States has played historically—albeit much less so in the past eight years—especially in holding their friends and allies to high standards of democracy and rule of law. Membership in NATO and close ties with America are not based just on cold power politics. More importantly, they reflect a commitment to shared values. For that reason, US policymakers should be the first ones to point to instances of democratic backsliding, as observed in some Central and Eastern European countries.

In practical terms, US government-funded broadcasting and support for high-quality journalism can play a pivotal role in countering the subversive effects that Russian propaganda, especially when allied with domestically grown antiestablishment movement, has had on political discourse across European countries. Neither should the United States step back from its traditional agenda of trade liberalization—creating an integrated, competitive transatlantic marketplace can spur economic dynamism and help turn European economies and societies into positive-sum games.73

There is, of course, no guarantee that economic liberalization, structural reforms, and stronger American engagement will put an end to the ongoing onslaught of populism sweeping across Europe. However, it is even less likely that the problem will simply disappear on its own.

About the Authors

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Edit Zgut is a foreign policy analyst at Political Capital, a think tank based in Budapest, where she studies European integration, cooperation between the Visegrád countries, Russian influence in Central and Eastern Europe, and the rise authoritarian populism in Europe. She is also a visiting lecturer at Pázmány Péter Catholic University in Budapest.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Danielle Pletka, Kirsten Madison, and Gary Schmitt for helpful comments.
### Table A1. Overview of Leading Populist Parties in EU Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Ideology</th>
<th>EP Group</th>
<th>Year Founded</th>
<th>Share of Votes (Election Year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Freedom Party of Austria</td>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>ENF</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>20.5 percent (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flemish Interest</td>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>ENF</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>3.7 percent (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Workers’ Party of Belgium</td>
<td>Far left</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>3.7 percent (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Attack</td>
<td>Neo-Nazism</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>4.5 percent (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria</td>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>7.3 percent (2014, part of a coalition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bulgarian National Movement</td>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>ECR</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>7.3 percent (2014, part of a coalition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>Croatian Democratic Alliance</td>
<td>Regionalism</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1.4 percent (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of Slavonia and Baranja Human Shield</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>4.2 percent (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>National Popular Front</td>
<td>Far right</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3.7 percent (2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Communist Party of Bohemia</td>
<td>Far left</td>
<td>GUE-NGL</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>14.9 percent (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and Moravia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dawn–National Coalition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Red-Green Alliance</td>
<td>Far left</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>7.8 percent (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Finns Party</td>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>ECR</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>17.7 percent (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Left Alliance</td>
<td>Far left</td>
<td>GUE-NGL</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>7.1 percent (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>National Front</td>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>ENF</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>13.6 percent (2012, first round)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Left Front</td>
<td>Far left</td>
<td>GUE-NGL</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>6.9 percent (2012, first round)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Alternative for Germany</td>
<td>Euroskepticism</td>
<td>ENF</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>4.7 percent (2013 – below threshold)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Left</td>
<td>Far left</td>
<td>GUE-NGL</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>8.2 percent (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Syriza</td>
<td>Far left</td>
<td>GUE-NGL</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>36.3 percent (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communist Party of Greece</td>
<td>Marxism-Leninism</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>5.5 percent (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent Greeks</td>
<td>Euroskepticism</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>3.7 percent (2015)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A1. Overview of Leading Populist Parties in EU Countries (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Ideology</th>
<th>EP Group</th>
<th>Year Founded</th>
<th>Share of Votes (Election Year)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Jobbik</td>
<td>Far right</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>20.2 percent (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fidesz</td>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>EPP</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>44.9 percent (2014)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Socialist Party/Anti-Austerity Alliance</td>
<td>Far left</td>
<td>GUE-NGL</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>3.9 percent (2016, part of a coalition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People Before Profit Alliance</td>
<td>Far left</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3.9 percent (2016, part of a coalition)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Five Star Movement</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>EFDD</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>25.5 percent (2013)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North League</td>
<td>Regionalism</td>
<td>ENF</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>29.1 percent (2013, part of a coalition)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brothers of Italy–National Alliance</td>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>National Alliance</td>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>ECR</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>16.6 percent (2014)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>Order and Justice</td>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>7.3 percent (2012)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>The Left</td>
<td>Far left</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>4.9 percent (2013)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Party for Freedom</td>
<td>Far right</td>
<td>ENF</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>10.1 percent (2012)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reformed Political Party</td>
<td>Theocracy</td>
<td>ECR</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>2.1 percent (2012)</td>
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<td>Poland</td>
<td>Law and Justice</td>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>ECR</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>37.6 percent (2015)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kukiz’15</td>
<td>Far right</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>8.8 percent (2015)</td>
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<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Left Bloc</td>
<td>Far left</td>
<td>GUE-NGL</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>10.2 percent (2015)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Portuguese Communist Party</td>
<td>Marxist-Leninism</td>
<td>GUE-NGL</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>8.3 percent (2015, part of a coalition)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>Slovak National Party</td>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>8.6 percent (2016)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kotleba—People’s Party Our Slovakia</td>
<td>Neo-Nazism</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>8.0 percent (2016)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>We Are Family—Boris Kollár</td>
<td>Far right</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>6.6 percent (2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>We Can (Podemos)</td>
<td>Far left</td>
<td>GUE-NGL</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>24.5 percent (2016, part of a coalition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communist Party of Spain</td>
<td>Marxism-Leninism</td>
<td>GUE-NGL</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>24.5 percent (2016, part of a coalition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Sweden Democrats</td>
<td>Far right</td>
<td>EFDD</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>12.9 percent (2014)</td>
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<td>Left Party</td>
<td>Far left</td>
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<td>1917</td>
<td>5.7 percent (2014)</td>
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<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>United Kingdom Independence Party</td>
<td>Euroskepticism</td>
<td>EFDD</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>12.7 percent (2015)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes

1. The campaign Labour Leave, led by Kate Hoey, was a part of the Vote Leave campaign ahead of the June referendum. While the Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn stated his support of the UK’s continued membership, he refused to campaign openly in favor of Remain. See, for example, Chris Spillane, “Corbyn Hit with Claims of Brexit Sabotage,” Politico, June 26, 2016, http://www.politico.eu/article/corbyn-hit-with-claims-of-brexit-sabotage-labour/.

2. In this spirit, although without mentioning specific policies, former US Secretary of Treasury Lawrence Summers called recently for a new agenda of “responsible nationalism—an approach where it is understood that countries are expected to pursue their citizens’ economic welfare as a primary objective.” See Lawrence Summer, “Voters Deserve Responsible Nationalism Not Reflex Globalism,” Financial Times, July 10, 2016, https://www.ft.com/content/15598db8-4456-11e6-9b66-0712b3873ae1.


7. Exceptions exist—for example, Hungary’s Fidesz belongs to European People’s Party, and Poland’s Law and Justice is part of the European Conservatives and Reformists.


11. However, Austria’s net immigration rates have long been low and are declining.


20. For examples of legal statutes adopted to help specific individuals or corporations, see ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
40. See Dalibor Rohac, Andreas Johansson Heinö, and Sahana Kumar, “Corruption and Populism.”
44. Fredrik Ersson and Bjorn Weigel, The Innovation Illusion: How So Little Is Created by So Many Working So Hard (New Haven, CT:
Yale University Press, 2016).


59. Pro-Russian outlets in Germany alleged that a 13-year-old ethnic Russian girl was raped by immigrants in Berlin in January 2016. The accusation was quickly picked up by Russian media, as well as Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who accused German authorities of hushing up the case. Russian diaspora living in Germany even staged multiple protests, one in front of the German Chancellery building, against Merkel’s migration policy. The incident now appears to have been somehow provoked or organized by the Kremlin because the German police investigation could not substantiate any claims of the girl or her family. See Arne Delfs and Henry Meyer, “Putin’s Propaganda Machine Is Meddling with European Elections,” Bloomberg, April 20, 2016, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-04-20/from-rape-claim-to-brexit-putin-machine-tears-at-europe-s-seams.


64. “No” in every case means either voting against a resolution critical of Russia (e.g., condemning the murder of Nemtsov), or against a measure that runs counter to Kremlin interests (e.g., the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement).


70. Summers, “Voters Deserve Responsible Nationalism Not Reflex Globalism.”


72. Polyakova, The Dark Side of European Integration; and Rohac, et al., “Corruption and POPULISM.”