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Origins of Populist Politics: The Comparative Case of the United States and Turkey

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for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

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Abstract

The rising tide of right-wing populist governments or groups all across the world that is set to disrupt consolidated democracies or hinder democratic progress in developing nations has become a subject of intense debate, particularly after the victory of Donald Trump in the U.S. in 2016. Since these movements seek to acquire power through legitimate means such as elections, the danger is obvious. They use a wide variety of tools to undermine democratic institutions, manipulate information and consolidate their bases by divisive populist rhetoric. In the past, populism erupted in various regions. For the first time, it is spreading across the world.

There have been past cycles of populist upheaval in the past, but the rise of Donald Trump and his movement is the biggest in history with profound consequences. We defined populism not as a discursive rhetorical style or political practice but as an ideology that requires 1) an enemy 2) a leader.

Most studies about populism tried to frame it under few theories. One of the most important theories is a Losers of Modernization Theory – an idea that left-behinds and losers of modernization in the 50s and 60s joined populist movements (today globalization). Constructivists claimed that populism is a political tool and a discursive style. Counter-Silent Revolution theory claims that populist movements emerged as a response to Silent Revolution of Hippies and Leftists in the 1970s. Some scholars argue that the lack of institutionalization was a major reason why people felt disillusioned about the government and underrepresented. People wanted to channel their frustration through

outside powers, this theory claimed.

Past studies also argue that populist movements emerge simply because some populist politicians are deploying certain rhetoric as a tactical instrumentalization – basically exploiting the people for their own political goals. Others suggest that populist movements emerge to achieve one overarching, time-limited goal. It has a beginning and an end. It is a political project.

In this thesis, I hypothesized that people follow populist leaders when they feel financially and culturally insecure. Fear of losing one's job is the main driving force behind a populist movement. People who would gladly follow a populist leader usually think that open borders, immigration, multiculturalism, globalization, the Wall Street, Washington Establishment, biased media, other countries that are trying to take advantage, automation, environment, restrictive regulations, unpatriotic leaders, special interest groups are major actors that would put them in a financially difficult position and threaten their privileged white and Christian identity. To test the hypothesis, I surveyed partisan literature and campaign speeches of leaders in Turkey and the U.S. to see how economic insecurity and nationalism brought votes and kept these movements consolidated.

I found that there is a strong correlation between people fearing of losing their financial footing and cultural status and voting for populist leaders who would protect their jobs and cultural superiority.

Dedication

I want to dedicate this research to all democracy activists all around the world, who are defying against all odds to either preserve freedoms or eliminate barriers to democracy. Populist leaders are posing threat to rights and freedoms today, but thanks to their noble fight, the future is bright.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank to all my instructors, advisors and professors at Harvard, who have gone into an extra length to teach us every tidbits of International Relations and made us better people and intellectually wealthier. My biggest debt is to my wife, Ayşe, and our children, Burak, Tarık and Betül, whom I have neglected unforgivably during my commute to the university as well as while writing this dissertation. They allowed me to spend many months away and put up with my absences and always welcomed me back home. They have always been my biggest source of inspiration to make this world a better place for them and their generation.

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Chapter I.

Background

Buoyed by the election of President Donald J. Trump in the U.S., most right-wing movements, groups and political parties around the world were encouraged to push forward with their agendas, most of which include xenophobic and nationalist policy items, and made successful attempts to secure governments or become part of governments.¹

The rise of the right in Europe has started well before the victory of President Trump in the U.S. The right-wing politics received a major impetus during the refugee crisis in 2015,² when over a million refugees started pouring into Europe. These incidents reinforced right-wing politicians' programs that envisioned a Europe with strong borders and strict immigration policies. Most of these refugees were admitted by Germany, costing German Chancellor Angela Merkel a substantial parliamentary majority in 2017 elections.³ Berlin spearheaded E.U. talks with Turkey to curb irregular migration in exchange for

¹ Kim Hjelmgaard, "Donald Trump's populist wave sweeps through Europe," *USA Today*, November 13, 2016, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2016/11/13/donald-trump-victory-hailed-europe-populists/93580556/>.

² Nick Robins-Early, "How The Refugee Crisis Is Fueling The Rise Of Europe's Right," *Huffington Post*, January 3, 2017 https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/europe-right-wing-refugees_us_562e9e64e4b06317990f1922.

³ Emily Schultheis, "Angela Merkel's latest migration headache," *Politico*, November 6, 2017, <https://www.politico.eu/article/refugee-question-threatens-german-coalition-talks-angela-merkel-greens-fdp-jamaica/>.

generous donations.⁴ Populist movements, as it is obvious from this particular incident, can include followers that share a wide variety of backgrounds and can represent a widely diverse political, social, and economic class. They usually come together in a shared distaste of “others” who pose an economic and cultural challenge. The refugee crisis in 2015 was a perfect storm – millions of culturally different people are flocking to capitals in Europe in the midst of economic difficulties. This refugee crisis has become an appropriate political fodder for right-wing and populist groups across Europe and empowered populist parties to win election after election in Europe.⁵

In the summer of 2016, right-wing populists received another boost with the unexpected victory of Brexit supporters in the United Kingdom. To everyone’s surprise, politicians promoting Brexit, most of whom were fringe figures until then, entered into the mainstream politics.⁶ Brexit vote revealed that populist rhetoric reverberates among the public, no matter whether or not a campaign is conducted through misleading information and outright lies. Unprecedented numbers of campaign flyers, slogans and promotional materials of political discourse unevenly targeted immigrants and refugees, especially those that arrived into Europe a year before, not even the U.K. But it was enough political

⁴ Matthew Karnitschnig, Matthew and Jacopo Barigazzi, “EU and Turkey reach refugee deal,” *Politico*, March 20, 2016, <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-and-turkey-finalize-refugee-deal/>.

⁵ "The Migrant Crisis and the rise of Populism in Europe," ESRI, <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=d63ba0dce8c346bab133ca055180e455>.

⁶ Bentham Martin, and Charlotte McDonald-Gibson, “'Damn': EU referendum result shocks world leaders as Britain backs Brexit,” *Evening Standard*, June 24, 2016, <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/damn-eu-referendum-result-shocks-world-leaders-as-britain-backs-brexite-a3280031.html>.

material for pro-Leave groups in Britain to rally with it.⁷

The campaign to break the U.K. from Europe exploited sensitivities in the society, especially xenophobic ones, and presented a dystopian future in the scenario the U.K. does not divorce from the European bloc. It used false and misleading information -- on social media, traditional media and billboards -- to rally people around an idea that Brexit is an answer to all of Britain's ills, including its economic woes.⁸ British people felt that they were misled and that the referendum in 2016 was not the one that was fairly campaigned. A demand for a second referendum was trending in 2019, almost three years after the Leave campaign won. When Leave campaign declared victory, it encouraged similar-minded movements across the world that it is possible to enter into the mainstream politics.⁹

Candidate Trump was one of them. He promised during the electoral campaign that the Americans will see "another Brexit."¹⁰ His unexpected victory in 2016 rang alarm bells across the world and raised concerns that the populist tide could be unstoppable. His victory also came as a complementary element to Brexit and other small-scale victories in Europe

⁷ Neil T. Gavin, "Media definitely do matter: Brexit, immigration, climate change and beyond," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 20, no. 4 (2018): 827.

⁸ Jon Stone, "Brexit lies: The demonstrably false claims of the EU referendum campaign." *The Independent*, www.independent.co.uk/infact/brexit-second-referendum-false-claims-eu-referendum-campaign-lies-fake-news-a8113381.html.

⁹ Dina Pardijs, "Brexit has inspired Europe's minority parties to shake up the European Union." *Independent*. June 29, 2016. www.independent.co.uk/voices/brexit-eu-referendum-results-europe-s-minority-parties-shake-up-european-union-a7109591.html.

¹⁰ Nic Robertson, "Trump predicted 'Brexit plus plus plus,' and he was right." *CNN*, November 9, 2016, <https://www.cnn.com/2016/11/09/politics/donald-trump-farage-us-election-brexit/index.html>.

and across the world. It was a negative omen for most pro-democracy movements, immediately raised concerns about the direction of the world politics and vindicated pro-Trump and pro-populist movements that “rightful owners” of governments will take back what is theirs. To reinforce their ideology of “no immigration, homeland first”, they also shared a view that globalism only benefits special interest groups and minorities, hurt national companies and challenged their country’s historical and cultural dominance in the regional order and in the global order (in the case of the U.S.).¹¹

In France, right-wing politician Marine Le Pen broadened her fan base in 2017 elections that brought Emmanuel Macron to power. It was the biggest victory of far-right politics in France and will undoubtedly help shape French politics as a significantly stronger opposition.¹² In Austria, a party founded by neo-Nazis after the World War II has become a government coalition partner after Sebastian Kurz was elected as the chancellor in 2017 elections.¹³ The right-wing Freedom Party is the senior partner in the coalition government and its leader had become Vice-Chancellor.¹⁴

In the Netherlands, Islamophobic Geert Wilders’ Freedom Party, hoping to make

¹¹ Alfred McCoy, "Donald Trump's Election War Part of a Startling Global Trend in 2016," *The Nation*, April 3, 2017, <https://www.thenation.com/article/donald-trumps-election-was-part-of-a-startling-global-trend-in-2016/>.

¹² Emily Schultheis, “Marine Le Pen's Real Victory.” *The Atlantic*, May 7, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/05/le-pen-national-front-macron-france-election/525759/>.

¹³ “Austrian far-right joins coalition led by PM Sebastian Kurz,” December 16, 2017, www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42374693.

¹⁴ Simon Shuster, "Austria's Young Chancellor Sebastian Kurz Is Bringing the Far-Right Into the Mainstream," *Time*, November 29 2018, <https://time.com/5466497/sebastian-kurz/>.

electoral breakthrough, came second in 2017 elections, securing significant number of seats.¹⁵ To blunt Wilders' thunder, front-runner Mark Rutte (who later became the prime minister) had to use a populist and anti-immigrant rhetoric. In Germany, Alternative for Germany (AfD), a far-right party with disturbing neo-Nazi links, gained seats in the Parliament for the first time and upset coalition talks with Chancellor Angela Merkel. The AfD has become the most popular second party in Germany by early 2018.¹⁶

In Italy, the economy had been faring poorly for over a decade and the unemployment figure was around 11 percent. This number was even worse (at 18 percent) in the more impoverished Southern districts. Youth unemployment was the highest in Europe, which was around 47 percent. When Five-Star party promised for unemployment benefits, people voted for them en masse. Almost one-third of all votes went to populist Five-Star and anti-migrant League Party received 17 percent. It is led by another populist anti-migrant politician Matteo Salvini.¹⁷

These populist victories came after Italy was going downward with a slow-motion economic decline. While eurozone, especially countries like France and Germany, posted

¹⁵ Stephanie Marsh, "'This Is Exactly What He Wants': How Geert Wilders Won by Losing," *The Atlantic*, March 16, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/03/geert-wilders-won-by-losing-netherlands-vote/519834/>.

¹⁶ "Far-Right AfD Becomes Second Most Popular Party in Germany," *The Globe Post*, February 19, 2018, <https://www.theglobepost.com/2018/02/19/germany-far-right/>.

¹⁷ Indre Anskaityte, "2018 Italian Elections: Another Populist Government in Europe?" *The Globe Post*, March 12, 2018, <https://theglobepost.com/2018/03/12/italian-elections-populist/>.

strong economic growth, Italy's economy shrank by 7.2 percent.¹⁸

The Arab Spring and events following the turmoil in North Africa also fueled an enormous amount of refugee influx, using Sicily and Southern Italy as a gateway to Europe. This has in turn created a strain on Italian politics, stoking anti-migrant political discourse that easily translated into votes. People voted for anti-elite, right-wing, and populist candidates. In Poland and Hungary, populist ruling parties have already put the European values at test, pushing the limits of European standards. Their xenophobic, nationalist and euroskeptic policies have also taken a toll on these countries' democratic progress. These government have stepped in to control the judiciary and intimidate the media.¹⁹

Europe is not the only place that is plagued with populist menace. In the Philippines, populist leader Rodrigo Duterte, enjoying high-level popularity, has been conducting a campaign of extrajudicial killings in the country despite international condemnation.²⁰ In India, Narendra Modi is another populist politician whose approval ratings are high and pose threat to the world's largest democracy.²¹

¹⁸ "Debt and populism test Italy's bedraggled polity," Editorial, *Financial Times*, June 5, 2019.

¹⁹ Dalibor Rohac, "Hungary and Poland Aren't Democratic. They're Authoritarian," *Foreign Policy*, May 2, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/02/05/hungary-and-poland-arent-democratic-theyre-authoritarian/>.

²⁰ Adrian Chen, "When a Populist Demagogue Takes Power," *New Yorker*, November 21, 2016, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/11/21/when-a-populist-demagogue-takes-power>.

²¹ Rodion Ebbighausen, "Narendra Modi - India's prime minister and populist," *Deutsche Welle*, December 13, 2017, www.dw.com/en/narendra-modi-indias-prime-minister-and-populist/a-41782803.

In Turkey, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan continues to exploit every page in a populist playbook to consolidate his power, to crack down on critics and to transform the society in his mold.²²

Most of these ominous developments were aided by President Trump's incessant attacks on the media and his rhetoric that undermines democratic institutions. It is not surprising that world's most autocratic leaders have been repeating Trump's "fake news" line to attack critics and the media.²³

The recent upsurge of right-wing populist governments or groups all across the world has alarmed many pro-democracy groups and governments around the world.²⁴ The rise and increasingly louder voice of right-wing groups, movements, parties and interest groups in the world, but particularly in advanced Western democracies, has now become a source of concern.²⁵ Limited cycles of populist upheavals had in the past shaken political

²² Ishan Tharoor, "The political trend that's more important than 'populism'," *Washington Post*, February 16, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/02/16/the-political-trend-thats-more-important-than-populism/?utm_term=.711aff0a3087.

²³ Meg Kelly, "President Trump cries 'fake news' and the world follows," *Washington Post*, February 6, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2018/02/06/president-trump-cries-fake-news-and-the-world-follows/?utm_term=.12a3bd8cc570.

²⁴ Griff Witte, Emily Rauhala, and Daum Phillips, "Trump's win may be just the beginning of a global populist wave," *Washington Post*, November 13, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/trumps-win-may-be-just-the-beginning-of-a-global-populist-wave/2016/11/13/477c3b26-a6ba-11e6-ba46-53db57f0e351_story.html?utm_term=.7af6bec3b91b.

²⁵ Kenneth Roth, "Defending Human Rights Worldwide. World Report: The Dangerous Rise of Populism," *Human Rights Watch*, 2017, <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/dangerous-rise-of-populism>.

systems from time to time in many regions, but the current tide and especially its conquest of the U.S. politics is so far the biggest one with profound and unpredictable consequences.

The current wave of populism has raised suspicions over its ability to disrupt consolidated democracies or hinder democratic progress in developing nations.²⁶ Scholars, decision-makers or public policy observers are puzzled over how to address the recent spike in populist mobilization.²⁷ While populists claim that their movement is a force for good and a way to take back corrupt establishment and give them back to the people,²⁸ their critics ring alarm bells over the fate of democracy.²⁹

Hardly anyone has a right answer to how to address this populist surge in politics. To get it right, the first step should be to understand the origins of a populist uprising. Since different scholars regard populism not as an ideology or a political practice but rather a discursive and rhetorical style to achieve a certain political goal, they claim that its cause is an intention by politicians to exploit certain sentiments for certain political agendas.³⁰

²⁶ William A. Galston, "Is Populism a Threat to Democracy?" *Wall Street Journal*, October 17, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/is-populism-a-threat-to-democracy-1508281039>.

²⁷ Richard Maher, "Populism is still a threat to Europe -- here's how to contain it." *The Conversation*, June 6, 2017, theconversation.com/populism-is-still-a-threat-to-europe-heres-how-to-contain-it-78821.

²⁸ Donald Trump, "The Inaugural Address," *White House*, January 20, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/the-inaugural-address/>.

²⁹ Kenneth Roth, "Defending Human Rights Worldwide. World Report: The Dangerous Rise of Populism," *Human Rights Watch*, 2017, <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/dangerous-rise-of-populism>.

³⁰ Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

Populism, for these researchers, is a political tool that could be deployed at any time. This type of explanation solely puts emphasis on the character of a populist leader. It is true that for populist movements to emerge and get louder, a leader with a populist rhetoric is essential. But that leader is not necessarily only exploiting sensitivities of people who otherwise possess different types of ideologies. Those leaders are whipping up already dormant anti-elite sentiments and drive up anti-establishment anger among them. I investigate what causes a populist uprising and under what circumstances populist leaders achieve effective populist mobilizations.

This problem is significant because the revival of populist politics is not only hindering democratic progress in developing nations, but it also stabs at the heart of advanced democracies like the United States and many countries in Europe. It poses a threat to institutions, both bureaucratic and civil society, that make democracies enduring and stable.

These populist movements seek to acquire power through means offered in free democracies, such as media and elections, but also target the very institutions that empowered them politically.³¹ They have suspicions of, and hostility towards the establishment and everything they represent, be it linked to the government or not.³²

The surge of populist autocracies and newfound sympathy for strongmen is not merely a pause of democratic consolidation in developing countries. It also threatens to undermine advanced democracies. Populist autocrats in democratic countries do not seize

³¹David Frum, *Trumpocracy: The Corruption of the American Republic* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2018).

³² Fareed Zakaria, "Populism on the March," *Foreign Affairs*, December 2016.

power through tanks or revolutions. They do it through democratic tools that are available to them – through free and fair elections.³³

They use a wide variety of tools to undermine democratic institutions, manipulate the free flow of information and consolidate their bases. Simply put, they are using democratic institutions like elections or media to end their democracies. It has become vital for the health of democratic institutions to understand the origins of these populist reawakening. For the first time since the World War II, people in democratic countries are questioning democracy as the only viable option in the Western world.³⁴ With the U.S. in retreat, new patrons and role models for developing countries are now China and Russia.³⁵ For this reason, it is significant to understand, identify, explain and address this problem.

³³ William A. Galston, "The Populist Challenge to Liberal Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 2, (2018): 5-19.

³⁴ Roberto Foa, and Yascha Mounk, "Are Americans losing faith in democracy?" *Vox*, December 18, 2015, <https://www.vox.com/polyarchy/2015/12/18/9360663/is-democracy-in-trouble>.

³⁵ Simon Denyer, "Move over, America. China now presents itself as the model 'blazing a new trail' for the world," *Washington Post*, October 19, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/10/19/move-over-america-china-now-presents-itself-as-the-model-blazing-a-new-trail-for-the-world/?utm_term=.ec7577619af6.

Chapter II.

What We Know About Populism

Studying populism has usually been a challenge for scholars because every generation of researchers has completely altered the explanation and characteristics of populist mobilization.³⁶ Researchers didn't have full consensus with previous findings and only few built their research on past studies. Every generation of scholars tried to refute the previous findings and even changed the definition of populism, much less its nature or origins.³⁷

A theory is usually a framework that explains a certain phenomenon and mostly remains valid across space and time. Some scholars, however, tried to explain populism based on certain circumstances that existed in a certain period. Researchers on populism attempted to explain its emergence through certain political and social developments. Almost none of these explanations succeeded in adequately explaining various cycles of populism that is valid across time and space.³⁸

Sociologists, mass psychology scholars and political scientists have been researching the populist phenomenon for over five decades. But most of them were

³⁶ Pinar Dinc, "Mapping Populism: Definitions, Cases, and Challenges to Democracy." *Istanbul Policy Center at Sabanci University*. (October 2016).

³⁷ Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikowski, "Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda," *Weatherhead Working Paper Series* No. 13-0004 (2013).

³⁸ Cas Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist," *Government and Opposition* 39, no. 4, (2004): 542–563.

consumed with research that attempted to identify what populism is – an ideology, a discursive rhetorical style or a political practice?

Structuralists pointed to “losers of modernization” in developing countries as a major cause of populist mobilization. This theory³⁹ has been widely used today, especially in the popular media, with globalization and its byproducts such as trade deals and multiculturalism being regarded as the main culprit.⁴⁰ When a populist leader exploited sentiments of these so-called left-behinds, the argument goes, people answered.

In addition to structuralists, constructivists tried to explain populism through leaders and actors. According to them, populism is a political tool and a discursive style that helps leaders mobilize their fan base by tapping into their sentiments, anger, and emotions.⁴¹ When populist movements started to re-emerge in the 1990s, they inspired another wave of studies of the phenomenon. This time, some scholars argued that the reincarnation of populist parties is a “counter-silent revolution” in response to “silent revolution” of the post-materialistic world that helped generate left-wing parties such as Greens.⁴²

The early 2000s also witnessed studies that blamed the lack of institutionalization

³⁹ Hans-Georg Betz, *Radical right-wing populism in Western Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

⁴⁰ Gavin Davies, “How should we compensate the losers from globalization?” *Financial Times*. <https://www.ft.com/content/9cc98d1b-0d67-3951-af75-b5f92121bcf8>.

⁴¹ Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005).

⁴² Paul Ignazi, “The silent counter-revolution: Hypotheses in the emergence of extreme right-wing parties in Europe,” *European Journal of Political Research* 22 (1992): 3-34.

for resurfacing of populism.⁴³ Because institutions did not function properly, the argument went, people sought to channel their frustration through outsiders and chose to vote for populist leaders.

All these studies had their limitations. Most of them have a smaller scope, inspired by circumstances that dominated their era. Structuralists, who claim that populist mobilization is the result of modernization, globalization, and industrialization, cannot fully explain the eruption of populist outbursts since not everyone who follows populist leaders are “losers.” While a significant segment of people in populist mobilization is left-behinds, a big chunk of the fan base of populist leaders have jobs (albeit insecure) or feel culturally insecure. Modernization or globalization falls short in explaining the populist movements since they are squarely focusing on “losers.” It also focuses on the least developed or developing countries. Today’s populist phenomenon, however, mostly takes place in advanced Western democracies, though not limited to.

Arguments that pointed to lack of institutionalization in developing countries as a cause behind populist movements are also misleading. The rise of far-right parties in Europe and the victory of President Trump in the U.S. are an indication that populist groups can thrive in countries where institutionalization and party politics has been a long tradition. Regardless of vast research studying populism, there have only been few attempts to explain its causes and primary factors driving the populist phenomenon. Most research focused on its definition and nature. Those that studied its origins failed to verify its validity in other cases.

⁴³ Kurt Weyland, “Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics,” *Comparative Politics* 34, no. 1 (2001): 1-22.

In past decades, populism erupted in various parts of the world. But this is the first time that it is spreading all around the world, from the Philippines to Turkey and the U.S. It is a global phenomenon, and it requires a cross-country examination. It is a movement that plagued various countries, different cultures and distinct people with varying degrees of prosperity. Past studies researching populist groups focused on a few cases like Latin America and Europe.⁴⁴⁴⁵

Up until today, researchers argued that populist mobilization takes place either because a) industrialization creates “losers” b) leftist movements create backlash c) the lack of institutional representation d) politicians’ tactical instrumentalization or e) politicians’ political project.

My hypothesis was that people follow populist leaders when they feel financially and culturally insecure. People are mobilized around a populist agenda over the fear to lose one’s job, not actually losing it. Not every person who is voting for populist leaders or following them is doing so because they were a “loser” or “xenophobic” but because they feel that their perceived cultural superiority is either challenged or might be challenged and that their financial situation has either gone worse or is on the line. In short, economic insecurity and cultural anxiety are becoming ingredients for a populist mobilization.

The closest my hypothesis comes is to the modernization losers theory. But this is not an extension of this theory. Evidence suggests that losers are only one part of these

⁴⁴ Paul Cammack, “The Resurgence of Populism in Latin America,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 19, no. 2 (April 2000): 149-161.

⁴⁵ Carlos de la Torre, "Populism in Latin American Politics," *Research in Political Sociology* 22 (2014): 79-100.

movements. Not only do disadvantaged people join these populist groups but also those who feel financially insecure and culturally “besieged.”⁴⁶

This hypothesis was also not a repetition of Ignazi’s “counter-silent revolution” argument,⁴⁷ in which he claims that populist mobilization is largely a reaction to Inglehart’s post-materialistic world that created left parties such as Greens.⁴⁸ Most populist groups, particularly the one spearheaded by Donald Trump in the U.S., highlight creating jobs for native people as the primary goal or the endgame.⁴⁹ Populist leaders’ stress on jobs resonates well among disadvantaged workers. Their fear of losing cultural superiority is mostly linked to their fear that they may lose jobs to foreigners. Some supporters of populist leaders also fear that they might be losing their cultural superiority.⁵⁰

The stunning electoral success of populist movement led by Trump in the U.S. encouraged and enabled populist groups across the world, embracing President Trump’s

⁴⁶ Nicholas Carnes, and Noam Lupu, “It’s time to bust the myth: Most Trump voters were not working class,” *Washington Post*, May 6, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/06/05/its-time-to-bust-the-myth-most-trump-voters-were-not-working-class/?utm_term=.8577122fa299.

⁴⁷ Paul Ignazi, “The silent counter-revolution: Hypotheses in the emergence of extreme right-wing parties in Europe,” *European Journal of Political Research* 22 (1992): 3-34.

⁴⁸ Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

⁴⁹ “Trump Promises “Jobs, Jobs, Jobs,”” *CBS News*, October 24, 2017, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-participates-in-the-minority-enterprise-development-week-awards-ceremony-live-stream/>.

⁵⁰ Sam Altman, “I’m a Silicon Valley liberal, and I traveled across the country to interview 100 Trump supporters — here’s what I learned,” *Business Insider*, February 23, 2017, www.businessinsider.com/sam-altman-interview-trump-supporters-2017-2.

“fake news”⁵¹ or “America First”⁵² mantra as their favored slogans. The current study examined the global upsurge of populist movements and the common thread that knit them together.

To test this theory, I picked two countries where populist leaders are currently rulers: the U.S. and Turkey. With cross-country examination, I tried to test how economic insecurity and nationalism brought votes and kept these movements consolidated. I reviewed partisan literature in both countries and how the populist rhetoric found a receptive audience among their fan base.

Since populism is distinct from other ideologies (it requires a leader⁵³ and an enemy⁵⁴), I tried to show how current populist mobilizations in the U.S. and Turkey are using state or party resources to further their agenda and vice versa. I reviewed economic indicators, leaders’ business-friendly attitudes, the confidence of business for these leaders and how they were translated into votes. In addition, I also reviewed how leaders could keep populism alive by invoking their cultural and ethnic superiority.

⁵¹ Meg Kelly, “President Trump cries 'fake news' and the world follows.” *Washington Post*, February 6, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2018/02/06/president-trump-cries-fake-news-and-the-world-follows/?utm_term=.12a3bd8cc570.

⁵² “‘France first’, far right's Marechal-Le Pen says in comeback speech,” *Reuters*, February 22, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-politics-conservatives-france/france-first-far-rights-marechal-le-pen-says-in-comeback-speech-idUSKCN1G62QZ>.

⁵³ Lorenzo Viviani, “A political sociology of populism and leadership,” *Societa Mutamento Politica* 8, no. 15 (2017): 279-303.

⁵⁴ Francisco Panizza, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy* (London: Verso, 2005).

Chapter III.

Definitions

Populism has been the focus of a number of studies over the years, but investigation into other aspects of political systems dwarfs any research devoted to populism. Sociology largely ignored studying populism,⁵⁵ and there is an overwhelming confusion as to how to even define populism – either as an ideology, a political mobilization or a discursive style. Scholars had a hard time defining what populism is, let alone identifying its origins and causes.⁵⁶

Spanning to a period of 50 years, researchers have tried to identify what unites a group of people behind a leader using a specific rhetoric that challenges the status quo.

Not everyone agrees that populism is an ideology, let alone a set of beliefs that bind people together. Ernesto Laclau argues that populism is a political logic that could be used by any political force in the political continuum.⁵⁷ He claims that populism is a form of political discourse that pits an “underdog” against the “power.” He notes that the rhetoric used by populist leaders set forth a specific kind of demand that create a barrier between the people and the perceived elite. In this vein, roots of populist movements are ever-present -- it remains to leaders to instrumentalize grievances and unite people behind a

⁵⁵ Robert S. Jansen, “Populist Mobilization: A New Theoretical Approach to Populism,” *Sociological Theory* 29, no. 2 (2011): 75–96.

⁵⁶ Noam Gidron, and Bart Bonikowski, “Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda,” *Weatherhead Working Paper Series* No. 13-0004 (2013).

⁵⁷ Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005).

certain discourse.

John Judis makes a similar argument in his *Populist Explosion*, claiming that the populist discourse is a logic that is employed by both left and right.⁵⁸

Michael Kazin contends that populism, more an impulse than an ideology, is too elastic and promiscuous to be the basis for an allegiance like ideologies. He notes that populist politicians in the U.S. employed populism as a flexible mode of persuasion. “They used traditional kinds of expressions, tropes, themes, and images to convince large numbers of Americans to join their side or to endorse their views on particular issues,” he argues.⁵⁹

Gidron and Bonikowski say it is hard to find a common ideological denominator that connects the various ostensibly populist movements, “particularly when the classification of political actors relies on the expansive lay understanding of the concept.”⁶⁰

Richard Hofstadter argues in his *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* that the American society is compatible for populist leaders to exploit and frames populism as a discursive political mode of expression. “[I]n a populist culture like ours,” Hofstadter notes, “which seems to lack a responsible elite with political and moral autonomy, and in which it is possible to exploit the wildest currents of public sentiment for private purposes, it is at least conceivable that a highly organized, vocal, active and well-financed minority could create a political climate in which the rational pursuit of our well-being and safety

⁵⁸ John Judis, “The Populist Explosion: How the Great Recession Transformed American and European Politics,” *Columbia Global Reports* (2016).

⁵⁹ Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

⁶⁰ Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikowski, “Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda,” *Weatherhead Working Paper Series* No. 13-0004 (2013).

would become impossible.”⁶¹

On the other hand, Jan-Werner Muller argues in *What is Populism?* that it is a form of identity politics and is positioned to imperil democracy.⁶²

Cas Mudde defines populism as an ideology that “considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people. Mudde notes that what is often clearer is who and what populists are *against*. He claims that the populist heartland becomes active only when there are special circumstances: most notably, the combination of persisting political resentment, a (perceived) serious challenge to ‘our way of life’, and the presence of an attractive populist leader. However, what sets the populist heartland apart from other protest-prone groups is their reactivity; they generally have to be mobilized by a populist actor, rather than taking the initiative themselves, he contends.⁶³

Another approach to define populism is to describe it as a political movement, repeatedly highlighted by President Donald Trump, during his partisan speeches.⁶⁴ Jansen argues that this approach conceptualizes populism as a mode of political practice – as

⁶¹ Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964).

⁶² Jan Muller, *What is Populism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

⁶³ Cas Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist,” *Government and Opposition* 39, no. 4 (2004): 542–563.

⁶⁴ Ben Schreckinger, “Donald Trump: ‘This is a movement,’” *Politico*, August 29, 2015, <https://www.politico.com/story/2015/08/donald-trump-2016-movement-213160>.

populist mobilization. Populist mobilization, according to Jansen, “is a political means that can be undertaken by challengers and incumbents of various stripes in pursuit of a wide range of social, political, and economic agendas. This implies that populism should no longer be reified as a movement or regime type, but rather understood as a flexible way of animating political support.” He urged investigating populism as a mode of political practice—as a specific set of actions that politicians and their supporters do—rather than as a type of movement, party, regime, or ideology. Jansen says he defines as a project of populist mobilization any sustained, large-scale political project that mobilizes ordinarily marginalized social sectors into publicly visible and contentious political action, while articulating an anti-elite, nationalist rhetoric that valorizes ordinary people.⁶⁵

Reviewing various attempts to define the populism also helps identifying the unit of analysis and in turn, their causal relationship. Vast research on populism attempted to define its nature, its most fundamental characteristics, and rhetorical discourse it is using to achieve its ends. Only few, if any, scholarship is devoted to the study of its origins.

In the 1960 and 70s, the first generation of scholars who studied far-right parties considered modernization as the primary contextual condition that gave rise to these movements and groups. Scientists in the 1960s who looked into populist movements regarded modernization as one of the most significant factors driving these right-wing sentiments. The idea was that modernization in developing countries also created losers,

⁶⁵ Robert S. Jansen, “Populist Mobilization: A New Theoretical Approach to Populism,” *Sociological Theory* 29, no. 2 (2011): 75–96.

whose sentiments were exploited by populist leaders.⁶⁶ Although Scheuch and Klingemann did not explicitly define those right-wing parties as populists, Hans-Georg Betz refined this theory in 1994 and coined modernization losers theory.⁶⁷

Ronald Inglehart claimed that material satisfaction in the Western world will make people align themselves more with intangible policies such as environment and LQBT rights.⁶⁸ His post-materialistic period – silent revolution – has stimulated a reaction on the right side of the political continuum, Piero Ignazi argued. According to Ignazi, the emergence of the new set of non-materialist values (such as freedom, participation, self-realization) has given rise to a new materialist/post-materialist dimension which is shaping political attitudes in the West in the mold of populist politics.⁶⁹

Research in the 2000s, which mostly focused on Latin America's populist movements, claiming that lack of institutionalization contributed to the emergence and proliferation of populist groups since people could express themselves through these

⁶⁶ Erwin Scheuch, and Hans Klingemann, "Theorie des Rechtsradikalismus in westlichen Industriegesellschaften," *Hamburger Jahrbuch für Wirtschafts und Sozialpolitik* 12 (1967): 11–19.

⁶⁷ Hans-Georg Betz, *Radical right-wing populism in Western Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

⁶⁸ Ronald Inglehard, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

⁶⁹ Paul Ignazi, "The silent counter-revolution: Hypotheses in the emergence of extreme right-wing parties in Europe," *European Journal of Political Research* 22 (1992): 3-34.

mechanisms, if not through political parties.⁷⁰

But the recent rise of populist movements and groups in Western democracies, including the U.S., where party systems are very strong, suggest that further empirical study needs to be conducted to reveal origins and causes of the surge of populist movements across the world.

⁷⁰ Kurt Weyland, “Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics,” *Comparative Politics* 34, no.1 (2001): 1-22.

Chapter IV.

Threat to Democracy

The democratic backsliding around the world is not a new phenomenon. It has been going on for more than a decade now. Democracy watchdogs such as Freedom House have many years warned against strong signs that many countries have turned away from democracy since 2007 after a strong growth in the number and quality of democracies following the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁷¹

Larry Diamond called the past decade a “Democratic Recession,”⁷² and some scholars warned against the rise of fascism.⁷³ But the election of Donald Trump as the U.S. president was a stronger wake-up call that has revived debates over the direction of democracies.

Most of these democratic backsliding coincided with the election of strongmen in countries such as Turkey and Hungary, where leaders’ rhetoric is a textbook populist propaganda.

Between 1946 until 1999, empirical data shows⁷⁴ democracies were interrupted in

⁷¹ "Freedom in the World 2018: Democracy in Crisis," *Freedom House*, 2018, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2018>.

⁷² Larry Diamond, “Facing Up to the Democratic Recession,” *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 1 (2015): 141-155.

⁷³ Tim Snyder, *On Tyranny* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2017).

⁷⁴ Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz, “Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: A New Data Set,” *Perspectives on Politics* 12, no. 2 (2014): 313-331.

64 percent of cases because of insurgencies such as military coup d'etat. Between 2000 and 2010, however, slow-motion consolidation of autocratic rule had been rising. Almost 40 percent of all democratic backsliding was a typical populist-fueled authoritarian transformation. "If current trends persist, populist-fueled authoritarianization will soon become the most common pathway to autocracy."⁷⁵ Unlike past breakdowns of democracies, post-Cold War authoritarian trends, spearheaded by democratically elected leaders, have become the "predominant form of backsliding," with a little over half of all cases propelled by democratically elected leaders.⁷⁶

The drift toward strong leaders able to assure prosperity and security, David Andelman maintains, is a most dangerous challenge to American principles that have prevailed since the framing of our constitution more than two centuries ago.⁷⁷

A recent study on populism and its impact on democracy suggests that populism has a lasting and more damaging transformation of political system for illiberalism. The study finds that populist leaders on average stay twice as longer in office than their democratic counterparts. Populists also have the skillset to survive in an office for more than a decade five times more than non-populist democratic leaders. The study reveals that once populist leaders are elected in free and fair elections, they usually and hardly

⁷⁵ Andrea Kendall-Taylor, and Erica Frantz, "How Democracies Fall Apart," *Foreign Affairs*, December 5, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-12-05/how-democracies-fall-apart>.

⁷⁶ Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York: Crown, 2018).

⁷⁷ David Andelman, "The global move from democracy to autocracy," *CNN*, June 24, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/24/opinions/trump-end-to-democracy-opinion-andelman/index.html>.

leave in a normal fashion. 34 percent of populist leaders leave office in elections. The rest are either forced to resign or impeached or take necessary measures to bury term limits or consolidate their power to stay longer. Out of the 47 times that a populist leader assumed office between 1990 and 2014, the study found, in only eight cases (17 percent) did the leader step down after losing free and fair elections. 3 percent of populist leaders cause “significant democratic backsliding” compared to 6 percent of non-populist leaders. They are four times more likely to undermine democratic institutions than democratically elected leaders. More than half of populist leaders amend or rewrite their countries’ constitutions for the worse. Most of these changes include regressive and illiberal articles such as lifting term limits, weakening judiciary, and other checks on executive power. Countries led by populist leaders, the study shows, have significant drops in international corruption rankings and 40 percent of these leaders are themselves indicted on corruption charges. Under populist leaders, freedom of the press declined by 7 percent, civil liberties by 8 percent and political rights by 13 percent.⁷⁸

In the 1930s, democratic progress and its opposite was clear. Today, hardly is any leader challenging the concept democracy. But their understanding of democracy is vastly different from liberal values espoused by the Western advanced democracies.⁷⁹ They are frank about the “dangers” of liberalism, open borders and globalization. They

⁷⁸ Jordan Kyle and Yascha Mounk, “The Populist Harm to Democracy: An Empirical Assessment,” *Tony Blair Institute for Global Change* (2018).

⁷⁹ Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, (November/December 1997): 22-43.

claim that they are true supporters of democracy since they defend the rights of “rightful people” to “take back what was theirs” – the entrenched government that was transformed into a “swamp” at the hands of “few aristocratic elite.”⁸⁰

“It is important to sharply distinguish democracy from liberalism – two value-laden words that, in recent years, have become almost hopelessly conflated and confused, especially in the work of social scientists and western political pundits who fret that western liberal democracy, once the ‘promised land’, has become ‘the enemy’ in places like Hungary,”⁸¹ James Miller argues.

Not everyone agrees that populist upheaval is a bad thing. Chantal Mouffe thinks that politics has become impassioned, confrontational, angry and unpredictable, dispensing with all the rules and expectations that have governed liberal democracies since the 1970s.⁸² In his review of his book, William Davies argues that if the distinction between left and right has become foggier, this is partly because a similar set of forces are being unleashed on both sides, including “devotion to leaders, suspicion of the media,

⁸⁰ Peter Overby, "Trump's Efforts to 'Drain the Swamp' Lagging Behind His Campaign Rhetoric," *NPR*, April 26, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/04/26/525551816/trumps-efforts-to-drain-the-swamp-lagging-behind-his-campaign-rhetoric>.

⁸¹ James Miller, “Could populism actually be good for democracy?” *The Guardian*, October 11, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/oct/11/could-populism-actually-be-good-for-democracy>.

⁸² Chantal Mouffe, “Populists are on the rise but this can be a moment for progressives too,” *The Guardian*, September 10, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/sep/10/populists-rise-progressives-radical-right>.

street-level mobilization and an emotional sense of injustice.”⁸³

Mouffe sees this “populist moment” as an invigoration of the left, which may be the voice of the people that challenges the corrupt elite. He claims that this crisis might indeed open the way for more authoritarian governments, but it can also provide the opportunity for “reclaiming and deepening the democratic institutions that have been weakened by 30 years of neoliberalism.”⁸⁴

On the other spectrum of the political fight is Steve Bannon, who is preaching his own version of populism and nationalism, citing his success with Donald Trump in the U.S. as a success. In Europe, he toured the continent and argued that nationalist and populist forces, in part inspired by Trump, are poised to claim political power in capitals from Pakistan to Japan to Australia, Brazil and Colombia.⁸⁵

“Democracy is a process, so its undoing,” David Frum wrote⁸⁶ in his bestselling book *Trumpocracy: The Corruption of the American Republic*. That vagueness is what

⁸³ William Davies, “For a Left Populism by Chantal Mouffe review - the right doesn't have to win,” *The Guardian*, July 17, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jul/07/left-populism-chantal-mouffe-leftwing-popular-movement-race-nation>.

⁸⁴ Chantal Mouffe, “Populists are on the rise but this can be a moment for progressives too,” *The Guardian*, September 10, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/sep/10/populists-rise-progressives-radical-right>,

⁸⁵ Kevin Sullivan, “A nationalist abroad: Stephen Bannon evangelizes Trump-style politics across Europe,” *The Washington Post*, September 25, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/a-nationalist-abroad-stephen-bannon-evangelizes-trump-style-politics-across-europe/2018/09/25/4f47d046-c0de-11e8-be77-516336a26305_story.html?utm_term=.3b7165ac2f0d.

⁸⁶ David Frum, *Trumpocracy: The Corruption of the American Republic* (New York: Harper Paperbacks, 2018).

scares most pro-democracy activists.

“Autocracy is making a comeback,” Griff Witte writes, “but it is a sleeker, subtler and, ultimately, more sophisticated version than its authoritarian forebears, twisting democratic structures and principles into tools of oppression and state control.”⁸⁷

“Democracies may die at the hands not of generals but of elected leaders— presidents or prime ministers who subvert the very process that brought them to power,” Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt write.⁸⁸ They say some of these leaders dismantle democracy quickly, as Hitler did in the wake of the 1933 Reichstag fire in Germany. “More often, though, democracies erode slowly, in barely visible steps.”

Mounk and Kyle argue that since tactics of populists are incremental rather than revolutionary, and usually take many years to complete, it is much more difficult today to pinpoint when a democracy dies than in the days when guns and tanks heralded democratic death. “This difficulty is compounded by the fact that populists do not hide their intention to transform the political system. Promising to deliver more ‘wins’ for the ‘true people’, they discredit those who would oppose these tactics as part of an illegitimate cartel of elites or the complaints of a bitter opposition that has failed to win at the ballot box.”⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Griff Witte, “The new autocrats,” *The Washington Post*, December 7, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/world/new-autocrats-europe/?utm_term=.be62960f4a21.

⁸⁸ Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York: Crown, 2008).

⁸⁹ Jordan Kyle, and Yascha Mounk, “The Populist Harm to Democracy: An Empirical Assessment,” *Tony Blair Institute for Global Change* (2018).

Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Erica Frantz write that the slow and gradual nature of populist-fueled democratic backsliding is difficult to counter. Because it is subtle and incremental, they claim, there is no single moment that triggers widespread resistance or creates a focal point around which an opposition can coalesce.⁹⁰

“And in cases in which vocal critics do emerge, populist leaders can easily frame them as ‘fifth columnists,’ ‘agents of the establishment,’ or other provocateurs seeking to destabilize the system. Piecemeal democratic erosion, therefore, typically provokes only fragmented resistance.”⁹¹

Nancy Bermeo claims that open-ended coups d’état, executive coups, and blatant election-day vote fraud are declining while promissory coups, executive aggrandizement and strategic electoral manipulation and harassment are increasing. She notes that contemporary forms of backsliding are especially vexing because they are legitimated by the very institutions democracy promoters prioritize but, overall, backsliding today reflects democracy’s advance and not its retreat. “The current mix of backsliding is more easily reversible than the past mix and successor dictatorships are shorter-lived and less authoritarian.”⁹²

If people retreat into private life, if critics grow quieter, if cynicism becomes

⁹⁰ Andrea Kendall-Taylor, and Erica Frantz, “How Democracies Fall Apart,” *Foreign Affairs*, December 5, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-12-05/how-democracies-fall-apart>.

⁹¹ Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Erica Frantz, “How Democracies Fall Apart,” *Foreign Affairs*, December 5, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-12-05/how-democracies-fall-apart>.

⁹² Nancy Bermeo, “On Democratic Backsliding,” *Journal of Democracy* 27, no. 1 (2016): 5-19.

endemic, David Frum warned shortly after Donald Trump was elected, the corruption will slowly become more brazen, the intimidation of opponents stronger. “Laws intended to ensure accountability or prevent graft or protect civil liberties will be weakened.” By all early indications, he wrote, the Trump presidency will corrode public integrity and the rule of law—and also do untold damage to American global leadership, the Western alliance, and democratic norms around the world. “The damage has already begun, and it will not be soon or easily undone.” The American democracy is especially relied on checks and balances. Founding Fathers made sure to establish institutional mechanisms such as the Congress to rein in on any executive power that seeks to expand its discretion and authority. “More than any president in U.S. history since at least the time of Andrew Jackson, Donald Trump seeks to subvert those institutions,” Frum wrote.⁹³

In Egypt, for instance, Mohammed Morsi tried to overturn country’s secular laws and transform the world’s most populous Arab nation into a country ruled by an Islamist government. Since his actions were so swift, the people, backed by the military and other actors, mobilized quickly and intervened to topple down the democratically elected president.⁹⁴

In Turkey, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has done more damage to Turkey’s fledgling democracy than Morsi did in a year. However, since Turkey’s democratic

⁹³ David Frum, “How to Build an Autocracy,” *The Atlantic*, March 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/03/how-to-build-an-autocracy/513872/>.

⁹⁴ Thanassis Cambanis, "Egypt's Only Democratic Leader Helped Kill Its Democracy," *The Atlantic*, June 18, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/06/mohammed-morsi-hope-flaws-egypt-revolution/591928/>.

backsliding was extremely slow (it took Erdogan 14 years to expand his executive powers), it was very difficult for democracy activists, human rights defenders and the opposition to rally people. The lack of tipping point or symbolic events largely prevented the opposition to unite. Add to that skilled oratory of President Erdogan, who is very capable of polarizing the society and consolidate his own fan base by pitting them against special interest groups and “global dark forces” who are hell-bent on destroy Turkey.⁹⁵

Newly elected populist rulers are learning from leaders like Erdogan and Viktor Orban in Hungary. The steps are pretty straightforward: construct an enemy, muzzle dissent, discredit the media and slowly undermine institutions. Popular support these leaders enjoy also make it very difficult to topple them peacefully. Since their primary claim is that the system and laws are rigged against them,⁹⁶ violating those laws and regulations will not tarnish their reputation. Donald Trump famously said that he would shoot somebody on the 5th Avenue (popular street in New York City) and his popularity would not go down.⁹⁷

“Post–Cold War populists such as Chávez, Putin, and Erdogan took a slow and steady approach to dismantling democracy,” Kendall and Frantz argue. “These leaders

⁹⁵ Sibel Hurtas, "Turkey's lone 'she-wolf' leaves opposition fractured," *Al Monitor*, April 17, 2018, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/04/turkey-elections-she-wolf-versus-erdogan.html>.

⁹⁶ “Trump: The System is Rigged,” *CNN*, December 9, 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2017/12/09/trump-rally-pensacola-rigged-system-sot.cnn>.

⁹⁷ Colin Dwyer, “Donald Trump: 'I Could ... Shoot Somebody, And I Wouldn't Lose Any Voters',” *NPR*, January 23, 2016, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/01/23/464129029/donald-trump-i-could-shoot-somebody-and-i-wouldnt-lose-any-voters>.

first come to power through democratic elections and subsequently harness widespread discontent to gradually undermine institutional constraints on their rule, marginalize the opposition, and erode civil society.” According to the scholars, the playbook is consistent and straightforward:

1. Deliberately install loyalists in key positions of power (particularly in the judiciary and security services)
2. Neutralize the media by buying it, legislating against it, and enforcing censorship.

This strategy, they contend, makes it hard to “discern when the break with democracy actually occurs, and its insidiousness poses one of the most significant threats to democracy in the twenty-first century.”⁹⁸

That is why, they reason, the threat of populism to democratic development should not be underestimated. In more advanced democracies such as Europe the wave of populism may not be as destructive as it is in weak and emerging democracies.

Hungary has been especially a challenging case. Hardly can any scholars of political science frame the political system of Hungary, which has all the tenets of democracy but somehow the opposition is increasingly feeling the heat by the authorities. “According to standard conceptions of democracy — which focus on violations of civil liberties, including freedom of speech, assembly and the press — Hungary’s status as an

⁹⁸ Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Erica Frantz, “How Democracies Fall Apart,” *Foreign Affairs*, December 5, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-12-05/how-democracies-fall-apart>.

autocracy is ambiguous.”⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Lucan A. Way, and Steven Levitsky, “How autocrats can rig the game and damage democracy,” *The Washington Post*, January 4, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2019/01/04/how-do-you-know-when-a-democracy-has-slipped-over-into-autocracy/?utm_term=.47759363fddd.

Chapter V.

Populism: What It Needs to Emerge

Unlike other ideologies, like socialism or liberalism, populism can only emerge when the right circumstances and ingredients come together. Two essential ingredients of a typical populist movements are a “leader” and an “enemy.”¹⁰⁰

No populist movement can be successful unless it has a leader who can skillfully use extraordinary oratory to rally his or her people around anti-elite, anti-establishment agenda.¹⁰¹ This becomes particularly easy at a time when traditional politicians fail to address rising problems in the society, especially those that seemingly result due to circumstances that could be put under control such as trade deals, open borders, immigration and automation. Most governments in advanced Western democracies are facing a crisis that gives more visibility, publicity to marginal, nationalist groups who claim that at the epicenter of societal woes lies incompetence of traditional politicians and the establishment.¹⁰²

With their confidence in the future shaken, as William A. Galston claims in *Journal*

¹⁰⁰ Moises Naim, "How to be a Populist," *The Atlantic*, April 21, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/04/trump-populism-lepen/523491/>.

¹⁰¹ Alessandro Nai and M. Ferran i Coma, "The personality of populists: provocateurs, charismatic leaders, or drunken dinner guests?" *West European Politics* 42, no. 7 (2019): 1337-1367.

¹⁰² Matthijs Rooduijn, "Why is populism suddenly all the rage?" *The Guardian*, November 20, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/political-science/2018/nov/20/why-is-populism-suddenly-so-sexy-the-reasons-are-many>.

of *Democracy*, popular demand for strong leaders grows, rising political actors are beginning to question key liberal-democratic principles such as the rule of law, freedom of the press, and minority rights. He noted that populist leaders claim that they alone represent the people, “the only legitimate force in society.” As their modus operandi, Galston argues that populist leaders attack “enemies of the people” in moralistic terms, as “corrupt, self-seeking, and given to conspiracies against ordinary citizens, often in collaboration with foreigners.”¹⁰³

Kishore Mahbubani highlights the fact that a wave of strongmen rulers has been elected in the past couple of years, many of whom have clear non-Western identities. He notes that people of those countries, many of them humiliated at the hands of the West, like Turkey and Russia, are now voting for strongmen who could stand up against Western countries. He says the rise of these leaders may reflect a “new chapter in history.”¹⁰⁴ These leaders are exploiting nationalist sentiments and rally people behind their political agenda through anti-Western discourse.

According to a recent voter study group held by Lee Drutman, Larry Diamond and Joe Goldman, 23 percent of Americans are open to a strong leader who does not have to bother with Congress and elections.¹⁰⁵ Galston notes that gridlock in the society frustrates

¹⁰³ Galston A. William, “The Populist Challenge to Liberal Democracy,” *Journal of Democracy* no. 2 (2018): 5-19.

¹⁰⁴ Kishore Mahbubani, “How Strongmen Co-opted Democracy,” *The New York Times*, September 13, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/13/opinion/strongman-world-democracy.html>.

¹⁰⁵ Lee Drutman, Larry Diamond, and Joe Goldman, “Follow the Leader: Exploring American Support for Democracy and Authoritarianism,” *Democracy Fund Voter Study Group* (March 2018).

ordinary citizens and makes them more open to leaders who are willing to break the rules in order to get things done.¹⁰⁶

Ruchir Sharma, a Chief Global Strategist at Morgan Stanley Investment Management, says that the retreat of democracy is entering into a new phase, driven by voters “embracing a strongman rule.” The trend in the past couple of years indicate that countries continue electing strongmen irrespective of their economic situations.¹⁰⁷ Some of them are electing leaders that speak of economy in dystopian terms despite record-breaking economic growth and still get elected (such as Donald Trump in the U.S.). In countries like Germany and France, where economy is growing and robust, leaders are losing credibility and approval rating. Sharma argues that in Germany, France and Britain, support is rising for parties that show a strongman's impulse to address economic distress by command: shut borders, deport foreigners, stifle dissent.¹⁰⁸ Leaders now come to believe that strong economic indicators do not translate into votes, because people have different concerns: the future. A globalist future that could steal away their economic status – forcing leaders to take a nationalist tone and anti-migrant public rhetoric. In short, an economic anxiety is demanding a leader that would ensure a future stability, which they believe rest

¹⁰⁶ William A. Galston, "The Populist Challenge to Liberal Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* no. 2 (2018): 5-19.

¹⁰⁷ Ruchir Sharma, “A Strong Economy Won't Make You Popular These Days,” *The New York Times*, April 24, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/24/opinion/trump-macron-merkel-economy.html>.

¹⁰⁸ Ruchir Sharma, “Beware the Economic Allure of the Strongman,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 9, 2016, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/beware-the-economic-allure-of-the-strongman-1465425446>.

on shutting the borders and protecting national economic interests.¹⁰⁹

“From Moscow to Manila, Beijing to Budapest, Ankara to Delhi, the nationalist ‘strongman’ leader is back in fashion,” Gideon Rachman of *Financial Times* wrote a week before Trump was elected. “If the US elects Donald Trump next week, it would be following an international trend, not leading it,” he said.¹¹⁰ Most of these countries are either wealthy or have no major economic troubles. Yet the fear that people may lose their current economic status creates a demand for strong leaders, the frustration with the political system and the establishment puts in front leaders with populist, nationalist and anti-globalist rhetoric. That, coupled with construction of enemies – real and imagined – is becoming a major and essential ingredient of populist movements.¹¹¹

Rachman observes that the Russian and Turkish leaders portray the outside world as full of hostile forces, conspiring against their nations. They point to “enemies within”, he argues, often allegedly working with outside enemies. “Mr Putin and Mr Erdogan, like Mr Xi, also promise to lead national revivals that will avenge previous humiliations at the hands of foreigners,” he wrote, pointing to cultural insecurity that is one of sources of populist uprisings.

That cultural insecurity feeds majority of ordinary citizens into a what James Miller

¹⁰⁹ Ruchir Sharma, “Beware the Economic Allure of the Strongman,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 9, 2016, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/beware-the-economic-allure-of-the-strongman-1465425446>.

¹¹⁰ Gideon Rachman, “Trump, Putin, Xi and the cult of the strongman leader,” *Financial Times*, <https://www.ft.com/content/39da343a-9f4b-11e6-891e-abe238dee8e2>.

¹¹¹ Dani Rodrik, “What's Driving Populism,” *Project Syndicate*, July 9, 2019, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/economic-and-cultural-explanations-of-right-wing-populism-by-dani-rodrik-2019-07>.

calls “narrow conception of solidarity” that make them rally around a leader who claims to “embody the will of such a closed community.”¹¹²

For a populist movement to emerge, a skillful leader is so important that he or she must be excellent at creating real or imagined enemies both at home and abroad. Without a clear enemy, populist movements do not get bigger. And without a skilled leader, enemies cannot be created.¹¹³

“The most successful populist leaders are masters at exacerbating socio-cultural division and conflict,” Naim claims, adding, “They use differences in income, race, religion, region, nationality, or any other rift in society to drive a wedge between different groups and foment indignation and political outrage.” He argues, “Populists are not afraid to fuel social conflict—in fact, they thrive on it.” He writes that the “‘us’ that embodies the nation, represented by the populist leader who promises to confront ‘them’” are wo “indispensible ingredients” of “populist recipe.”¹¹⁴

Chuanxing Wang argues that American nationalism is based on a culture with its own nature of exclusiveness, which makes American populism very compatible due to its

¹¹² James Miller, “Could populism actually be good for democracy?” *The Guardian*, October 11, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/oct/11/could-populism-actually-be-good-for-democracy>.

¹¹³ Lee Drutman, Larry Diamond, and Joe Goldman, “Follow the Leader: Exploring American Support for Democracy and Authoritarianism,” *Democracy Fund Voter Study Group* (March 2018).

¹¹⁴ Moises Naim, “How to be a Populist,” *The Atlantic*, April 21, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/04/trump-populism-lepen/523491/>.

“enemy complex.”¹¹⁵ “To put it bluntly, the need of an ‘enemy’ in American populism satisfies with the culture-based American nationalism owing to its emphasis on establishing the United States as a closed and exclusive society,” Wang wrote.

At the heart of the problem, populists would argue, is the elite and its relationship with special interest groups. Being against them becomes a policy agenda.¹¹⁶ According to Nils Gilman, populists are generally far more articulate and passionate about what they’re “against than what they’re for.”¹¹⁷ Populism needs an enemy, says Mark Brewer, and in many instances that enemy is engaged in a “conspiracy to harm the people, to take from them what is rightfully theirs and destroy their way of life.” He notes that if there is one thing that appears to connect all of the elements of American populism, it is that “populism requires an enemy.” He characterized it as “absolutely essential” for American populism to have something and/or someone to be against, often viscerally against. “Hatred may be too strong of a word to use here, but this question is certainly open to debate.”¹¹⁸

Populists do not respect laws and institutional mechanisms – because they think that both are part of the “system” that has turned into a machine that does not look out for

¹¹⁵ Chuanxing Wang, “The ‘Enemy’ Complex of Populism in American Ethnic Politics and Its Implications to Trump’s Foreign Policy,” *Chinese Political Science Review* 2, no. 345 (2017).

¹¹⁶ Peter Baker, “‘We the people’: the battle to define populism,” *The Guardian*, January 10, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/jan/10/we-the-people-the-battle-to-define-populism>.

¹¹⁷ Nils Gilman, “Revisiting Hofstadter's Populism,” *The American Interest*, May 2, 2018, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2018/05/02/revisiting-hofstadters-populism/>.

¹¹⁸ Mark Brewer, “Populism in American Politics,” *The Forum* 14, no. 3, (2016): 249-264.

the interests of ordinary people. “The logic of populist articulation is anti-institutional; it is based on the construction of an enemy; and in equivalential terms that lead to the rupture of the system because individual demands cannot be processed,” Carlos de la Torre argued in his book *The Promise and Perils of Populism*.¹¹⁹

It is difficult to differentiate between leaders and the construction of enemies. Both of them go hand-in-hand. Populist leaders come as saviors for those who think that the established way of politics is no longer serving them and that it needs to be replaced. Federico Finchelstein believes that the populist leaders replaced old politics, impersonating the people and doing the thinking and deciding for them. “The notion of a leader who was smarter and much better than his or her people defines the history of populism in power.”¹²⁰ History shows that, according to Finchelstein, populism without leadership remains “an incomplete form.” He portrayed the need for enemies as a fundamental for populism: populists desperately need enemies of the people to confirm the fiction that they speak and act in the name of the national community.

Michael Ignatieff, former leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, eloquently said that "we are increasingly seeing what happens when a politics of enemies supplants a politics of adversaries." The new crop of populists, he contends, who have stormed the political stage over the last decades should a lot of the blame for this, highlighting how populists

¹¹⁹ Carlos De la Torre, Ed. *The Promise and Perils of Populism: Global Perspectives* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014).

¹²⁰ Federico Finchelstein, *From Fascism to Populism in History* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).

increased the heat in politics through their signature finger-pointing "enemies" rhetoric.¹²¹

The Economist summarized well how populist leaders are ending democracies. It says this process has four stages. One of them is electing strong leaders and two of them are part of "identifying and fighting against enemies" conspiracy:

Put crudely, newish democracies are typically dismantled in four stages. First comes a genuine popular grievance with the status quo and, often, with the liberal elites who are in charge. Hungarians were buffeted by the financial crisis and then terrified by hordes of Syrian refugees passing through en route to Germany. Turkey's pious Muslim majority felt sidelined by secular elites. Second, would-be strongmen identify enemies for angry voters to blame. Mr Putin talks of a Western conspiracy to humiliate Russia. President Nicolás Maduro blames America for Venezuela's troubles; Hungary's prime minister, Viktor Orbán, blames George Soros for his country's. Third, having won power by exploiting fear or discontent, strongmen chisel away at a free press, an impartial justice system and other institutions that form the "liberal" part of liberal democracy—all in the name of thwarting the enemies of the people. They accuse honest judges of malfeasance and replace them with stooges, or unleash tax inspectors on independent television stations and force their owners to sell.¹²²

¹²¹ Yascha Mounk, *The People Vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

¹²² "Lessons from the rise of strongmen in weak states," *The Economist*, June 16, 2016, <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2018/06/16/lessons-from-the-rise-of-strongmen-in-weak-states>.

In the fourth stage, which *The Economist* brands as “illiberal democracy”, where individual rights and the rule of law are undermined, strongmen can still pretend to be democrats since they win free-ish elections. Eventually, it argues, the erosion of liberal institutions leads to the death of democracy in all but name.¹²³

As noted in the beginning, unlike other ideologies, populism cannot present itself without a charismatic leader. That leader is usually making up one-liners and slogans, most of which are divisive, confrontational and tap to the fears of people of losing economic and cultural status. “Populism requires constant combat against these enemies and the forces they represent,” Galston said.¹²⁴

¹²³ “Lessons from the rise of strongmen in weak states,” *The Economist*, June 16, 2016, <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2018/06/16/lessons-from-the-rise-of-strongmen-in-weak-states>.

¹²⁴ William A. Galston, "The Populist Challenge to Liberal Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* no. 2 (2018): 5-19.

Chapter VI.

Economic Anxiety in the U.S.

When do we beat Mexico at the border? They're laughing at us, at our stupidity. And now they are beating us economically. They are not our friend, believe me. But they're killing us economically. The U.S. has become a dumping ground for everybody else's problems.¹²⁵

These words by Donald J. Trump are from his speech in which he announced the candidacy for the Office of the President of the U.S., a monologue that is awash with polarizing rhetoric that labeled Mexicans as “rapists and criminals” and warned against foreigners stealing American jobs. It was a prelude to what would be known as the most polarizing presidential elections campaign in modern history. In hundreds of other occasions, Donald Trump would utter similar phrases and warnings and tap into the fears of Americans regarding their economic and cultural status.

Despite some studies that suggested people who lost their jobs voted for Trump,¹²⁶ 2018 study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, authors found that those who voted for Trump in 2016 elections were not largely swayed by what happened in the past, but “rather fear of what may come.” “White, Christian and male

¹²⁵ “Here's Donald Trump's Presidential Announcement Speech,” *Time*, June 16, 2015, <https://www.time.com/3923128/donald-trump-announcement-speech/>.

¹²⁶ Eduardo Porter, “Where Were Trump's Votes? Where the Jobs Weren't,” *The New York Times*, December 13, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/13/business/economy/jobs-economy-voters.html>.

voters, the study suggests, turned to Mr. Trump because they felt their status was at risk.”¹²⁷

In fact, manufacturing jobs in Rust Belt states that catapulted Trump into the presidency slightly increased since 2010 following decades of stagnation and decline.¹²⁸

Adam Serwer argued that a closer look at the demographics of the 2016 electorate shows something "more complex than a working-class revolt sparked by prolonged suffering." He found that Clinton defeated Trump handily among Americans making less than \$50,000 a year.¹²⁹

A cross-examination of surveys showed that racism and sexism actually was a better predictor of voting for Trump rather than economic dissatisfaction. "While the economic variables in our models were significantly associated with vote choice, those effects were dwarfed by the relationship between hostile sexism and denial of racism and voting for Trump." The study found that change in people's household income, for better or the worse, had a minimal impact on how they vote.¹³⁰

Diana Mutz summarized the threat to future status theory well:

The 2016 election was a result of anxiety about dominant groups' future

¹²⁷ Niraj Chokshi, "Trump Voters Driven by Fear of Losing Status, Not Economic Anxiety, Study Finds," *The New York Times*, April 24, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/24/us/politics/trump-economic-anxiety.html>.

¹²⁸ Mark Muro, and Siddarth Kulkarni, "Voter anger explained -- in one chart," *Brookings Institutions*, March 15, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2016/03/15/voter-anger-explained-in-one-chart/>.

¹²⁹ Adam Serwer, "The Nationalist's Delusion," *The Atlantic*, November 20, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/11/the-nationalists-delusion/546356/>.

¹³⁰ Brian Schaffner, Matthew MacWilliams, and Tathise Nteta, "Understanding white polarization in the 2016 vote for president: The sobering role of racism and sexism," *Political Science Quarterly* 133, no.1 (2017).

status rather than a result of being overlooked in the past. In many ways, a sense of group threat is a much tougher opponent than an economic downturn, because it is a psychological mindset rather than an actual event or misfortune.¹³¹

Mutz's explanation of what type of sentiments drove people to ballot boxes to vote for Trump during the 2016 elections attracted enormous amount of media attention. From *The New York Times* to left-wing news outlets, liberal media seized on this study to highlight that it was not the economy that shaped minds of Trump voters, but "racism and cultural superiority."¹³²

While it is largely true that cultural insecurity was an essential part of the decision-making in supporting Trump, also part of my hypothesis in this paper, it was not the only one. Academic studies were published to counter Mutz's argument that the economy didn't play an important role in the emergence of populist movement spearheaded by President Donald Trump.¹³³

Ben Casselman made an exhaustive case against Mutz's argument that it was only the cultural insecurity that shaped Trump voters' mind. In "Stop Saying Trump's Win Had Nothing To Do With Economics," Casselman says the evidence suggests that anxiety did

¹³¹ Diana Mutz, "Status threat, not economic hardship, explains the 2016 presidential vote," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115 (2018).

¹³² Niraj Chokshi, "Trump Voters Driven by Fear of Losing Status, Not Economic Anxiety, Study Finds," *The New York Times*, April 24, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/24/us/politics/trump-economic-anxiety.html>.

¹³³ Stephen L. Morgan, "Status Threat, Material Interests, and the 2016 Presidential Vote," *Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 4 (2018): 1-17.

play a key role in Trump's victory, though it was by no means the only factor. Most media outlets, including Mutz, mischaracterized the difference between economic hardship and economic anxiety. Casselman provides an illuminating definition that this paper completely agrees with:

What's the difference between hardship and anxiety? Hardship, as I'm using it here, refers to a person's present-day economic struggles: poverty, joblessness, falling wages, foreclosure, bankruptcy. Anxiety is all about what lies ahead — concerns about saving for retirement or college, worry of a potential layoff, fears that your children's prospects aren't as bright as your own were.¹³⁴

Casselmann says that Clinton easily won most low-income areas. "But anxiety is a different story." Trump actually won counties that were vulnerable to losing jobs due to outsourcing and automation.¹³⁵ The hardship in finding a job, slower job growth, and low credit score indicated that there is a chance that these people would lose jobs to either trade deals, outsourcing or to low-skilled immigrants. Casselman reminds a visit he made to Scott County, Iowa, where the unemployment rate was 4.3 percent and 4.1 on the Election Day. "Nearly all the people I spoke to there were satisfied with their immediate economic situation. But when the conversation turned to the future, they were far more

¹³⁴ Ben Casselman, "Stop Saying Trump's Win Had Nothing To Do With Economics," *Thirty Five Eight*, January 9, 2017, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/stop-saying-trumps-win-had-nothing-to-do-with-economics/>.

¹³⁵ Jed Kolko, "Trump Was Stronger Where The Economy Is Weaker," *Five Thirty Eight*, November 10, 2016, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/trump-was-stronger-where-the-economy-is-weaker/>.

pessimistic.”¹³⁶

Non-college degree voters also voted for Trump, largely because the economic prospect for a candidate without a university degree to find a job is slimmer than those that have a college degree.¹³⁷

A recent study by PRRI and *The Atlantic*, based on surveys conducted before and after the 2016 election, tried to test why the white working class is overwhelmingly voting for Trump. It found that people experiencing economic hardship are mostly voting for Clinton. But those people who spoke of economic fatalism and were pessimistic about their economic future voted for Trump. Few white working-class Americans who voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election “feel buoyed about the future prospects for their community.” The survey found that nearly half (47 percent) of white working-class Americans say even after the election they expect the quality of life in their community will stay about the same, and roughly one in five (19 percent) say it will likely get worse.¹³⁸

The economic insecurity -- the idea that the lack of college degree, outsourcing, automation, low-skilled immigrants, trade deals, environmental regulations will steal jobs -- was a major drive in this populist movement. Surveying Trump's campaign speech will

¹³⁶ Ben Casselman, “Stop Saying Trump’s Win Had Nothing To Do With Economics,” *Thirty Five Eight*, January 9, 2017, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/stop-saying-trumps-win-had-nothing-to-do-with-economics/>.

¹³⁷ Nate Silver, "Education, Not Income, Predicted Who Would Vote for Trump," *Five Thirty Eight*, November 22, 2016, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/education-not-income-predicted-who-would-vote-for-trump/>.

¹³⁸ Daniel Cox, Rachel Lienesch, and Robert Jones, “Beyond Economics: Fears of Cultural Displacement Pushed the White Working Class to Trump,” *PRRI/The Atlantic Report*, May 9, 2017, <https://www.prrri.org/research/white-working-class-attitudes-economy-trade-immigration-election-donald-trump/>.

reveal how strongly he played that card.

In his first foreign policy speech as a candidate, Trump accused former President Barack Obama of allowing China to continue its economic assault on American jobs and wealth, “refusing to enforce trade deals and apply leverage on China necessary to rein in North Korea.” He railed against NAFTA, describing it as a “total disaster for the United States” that has emptied states of manufacturing and jobs. “And I’ve just gotten to see it. I’ve toured Pennsylvania. I’ve toured New York. I’ve toured so many of the states. They have been cleaned out. Their manufacturing is gone.” He promised that it will never happen again. “Only the reverse will happen.” He vowed to keep jobs and bring in new ones. He threatened companies that ship jobs overseas with consequences: “They fire the people. They take advantage of the United States. There will be consequences for those companies. Never again.”¹³⁹

A recent study revealed that Americans value the well-being of other Americans more than that of people outside their own country. Rather than maximize total gains, the authors found, Americans choose policies that maximize in-group well-being. “This tendency is exacerbated by a sense of national superiority; Americans favor their national in-group to a greater extent if they perceive Americans to be more deserving,” the author’s of the study wrote. A second type of in-group favoritism in America was that high levels of perceived intergroup competition lead some Americans to prefer trade policies that benefit the in-group and hurt the out-group over policies that help both their own country

¹³⁹ “Donald Trump's Foreign Policy Speech,” *New York Times*, April 28, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/28/us/politics/transcript-trump-foreign-policy.html>.

and the trading partner country. For a policy to elicit support, the study argued, it is important not only that the US benefits, but also that the trading partner country loses so that the US achieves a greater relative advantage.¹⁴⁰

The rise of China, which has been a recurring theme in U.S. television networks, created a climate of fear among American workers, who believe that as Chinese get wealthier, it will hurt American economy and jobs.¹⁴¹

In a survey that conducted few months after Donald Trump was elected as president by Pew Research Center, 65 percent of respondents in America said China is either an adversary (22 percent) or a serious problem (43 percent), while only about a third (31 percent) said China is not a problem. Trump's promise to get tough on China and the fact that Chinese are taking advantage of the U.S. because of the "stupid American leadership" translated into votes. During the decade between 2006 and 2016, China's favorability rating dropped 26 percent.¹⁴²

Another Pew Research Center survey found that in October, 2016, just weeks before the presidential elections, just 45 percent expressed positive opinions of free trade agreements. Views of free trade deals are below than they were in May 2015, when 58

¹⁴⁰ Diana Mutz, and Eunji Kim, "The Impact of In-group Favoritism on Trade Preferences," *International Organization* 71, no. 4 (2017): 827-850.

¹⁴¹ Chi Wang, "When Americans fear China, what are they really afraid of?" *South China Morning Post*, December 19, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/united-states/article/2178545/when-americans-fear-china-what-are-they-really>.

¹⁴² Dorothy Manevich, "Americans have grown more negative toward China over the past decade," *Pew Research Center*, February 10, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/02/10/americans-have-grown-more-negative-toward-china-over-past-decade/>.

percent said these agreements benefitted the U.S. Positive views of free trade plummeted during the presidential contest among Republican voters, the survey found. In October, 29 percent of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents said free trade agreements have been good for the U.S., down from 56 percent just a year-and-a-half earlier. Viewing the free trade agreements as negative is an indication that people think these free trade deals would hurt them financially. Voting for Donald Trump, who made burying current free trade deals his central campaign promise, ensured that the U.S. would get rid of these trade agreements.¹⁴³

In his early days as a candidate, Trump started to cast himself as someone who believes that American jobs are being shipped overseas and that he is the only one who can prevent them from going overseas and close down borders to stop foreigners stealing American jobs. “I’m the only one — believe me, I know them all, I’m the only one that knows how to fix it,” Trump said to a roaring applause during the same speech.¹⁴⁴

As Donald Trump started winning primaries, he introduced the term “America First,” a phrase that was used by American Nazi party and isolationists before and during

¹⁴³ Bradlye Jones, “Support for free trade agreements rebounds modestly, but wide partisan differences remain,” *Pew Research Center*, April 25, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/25/support-for-free-trade-agreements-rebounds-modestly-but-wide-partisan-differences-remain/>.

¹⁴⁴ David Lawler, and Nick Allen, “Five things we learnt from Donald Trump's foreign policy speech,” *The Telegraph*, April 27, 2016, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/04/27/five-things-we-learnt-from-donald-trumps-foreign-policy-speech/>.

the World War II.¹⁴⁵ That phrase has turned into one of the most memorable campaign slogans throughout Trump's candidacy. During his speech after winning the primary in New Jersey, Trump said "America First" means protecting the jobs, wages, and security of American workers. "Whether first or tenth generation, no matter who you are, we're going to protect your job because, let me tell you, our jobs are being stripped from our country like we're babies."¹⁴⁶

Following the attack on Orlando Pulse nightclub, President Trump made an inflammatory statement, denouncing Muslims and immigrants, as well as the American immigration system that allows them into the country. At one point in his speech, he falsely claimed that America has already admitted four times more immigrants than any country on earth and that "we continue to admit millions more with no real checks or scrutiny." He went on to say that it is not surprising that wages for American workers have not budged in many years, a sign that immigrants have been stealing American jobs. "So whether it's matter of national security, or financial security, we can't afford to keep on going like this. We owe \$19 trillion in debt, and no longer have options," Trump said. To stress that American jobs and security in under threat, Trump said all communities in the U.S. are ready for some relief. "This is not an act of offense against anyone; it is an act of

¹⁴⁵ Eric Rauchway, "President Trump's 'America First' slogan was popularized by Nazi sympathizers," *Washington Post*, January 20, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/01/20/president-trumps-america-first-slogan-was-popularized-by-nazi-sympathizers/>.

¹⁴⁶ "Donald Trump's Subdued Victory Speech After Winning New Jersey," *Time*, June 8, 2016, <https://www.time.com/4360872/donald-trump-new-jersey-victory-speech-transcript/>.

defense.”¹⁴⁷

A few weeks later, Trump went to New York to talk about Hillary Clinton, his frontrunner challenger, and portrayed a dystopian picture under her leadership if she were elected a president. He said he was running for President to end the unfairness and “to put you, the American worker, first.” He noted that the U.S. switched from a policy of Americanism – focusing on what’s good for America’s middle class – to a policy of globalism, focusing on how to make money for large corporations who can move their wealth and workers to foreign countries all to the detriment of the American worker and the American economy. He claimed that the U.S. is rewarding companies for offshoring and that Washington is punishing companies for doing business in America. “This is not a rising tide that lifts all boats. This is a wave of globalization that wipes out our middle class and our jobs.” As Trump had been doing in many of his speeches, he again reminded that he had visited cities and towns across America and “seen the devastation caused by the trade policies of Bill and Hillary Clinton.” If she were elected president, Trump warned, she would adopt the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and Americans would lose millions of jobs and economic independence for good. “She will do this, just as she has betrayed the American worker on trade at every single stage of her career – and it will be even worse than the Clintons' NAFTA deal.” He continued reminding people that workers’ real wages have not been raised for 18 years, which will be reversed if he is elected president. In the

¹⁴⁷ Tara Golshan, “Read Donald Trump's most inflammatory speech yet on Muslims & immigration,” *Vox*, June 13, 2016, <https://www.vox.com/2016/6/13/11925122/trump-orlando-foreign-policy-transcript>.

other scenario, however, “Hillary's massive taxation, regulation and open borders will destroy jobs and drive down wages for everyone.”¹⁴⁸

In his address to veterans, Trump continued lambasting the incumbent government for failing veterans and instead giving the priority to migrants when it came to jobs. Every year, Trump said, large corporations bring in many thousands of low-wage workers from overseas, and across the border, to fill jobs that could easily be filled by the Veterans. “Veterans should come first in the country they fought to protect, and under a Trump Administration they will -- America First, Veterans First.”¹⁴⁹

In order to assure people that his presidency will not allow American jobs from shipping abroad, President Trump kept threatening businesses who consider doing so. “There are consequences when you fire thousands of people and move to another country and then think you're going to... your product and sell it in here. There are consequences. And those consequences are going to keep companies in our country. It's very simple. And everybody here knows what the consequences are....” While introducing former Indiana Governor Mike Pence as a Vice President pick, Trump went on to talk about a plant builder of his friend who is not building any manufacturing facilities in the U.S. but in Mexico. He claimed that all manufacturing jobs in the Midwest were drained, but he will protect mine

¹⁴⁸ “Donald Trump NYC speech on stakes of the election,” *Politico*, June 2016, <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/06/transcript-trump-speech-on-the-stakes-of-the-election-224654>.

¹⁴⁹ “Donald Trump Remarks on Veterans' Issues,” *C-Span*, July 11, 2016, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?412560-1/donald-trump-delivers-remarks-veterans-issues>.

workers and steelworkers.¹⁵⁰

During the Republican Convention in Cleveland, where Trump's nomination would be officially announced, Trump laid out his strategy if he is elected president. During his speech, he repeatedly highlighted that American jobs are disappearing. In fact, it was the opposite. The U.S. was posting record-breaking job growth for dozens of months in a row, yet Trump's statement, "I have visited the laid-off factory workers, and the communities crushed by our horrible and unfair trade deals," resonated among his fan base. Trump's stress on jobs found a receptive audience not because U.S. job picture was bleak, but because people feared that they could lose their jobs. And they linked that possibility to several things:

- 1 - Open borders
- 2 - Elites
- 3 - Special interest groups
- 4 - The establishment
- 5 - Other countries that take advantage of the U.S.
- 6 - Companies that ship jobs overseas
- 7 - and the media that ignored their plight

“These are the forgotten men and women of our country. And they are forgotten, but they're not going to be forgotten long. People who work hard but no longer have a

¹⁵⁰ “Trump Introduces Mike Pence as VP Pick,” *CNN*, www.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1607/16/se.02.html.

voice. I am your voice!” Trump said to the thundering applause during the Convention. He then went on to directly linking “decades of record immigration” to lower wages and higher unemployment. “We are going to have an immigration system that works, but one that works for the American people,” Trump added. His “different vision for our workers” begins with a new, fair trade policy that protects jobs and stands up to countries that cheat. “It's been a signature message of my campaign from day one, and it will be a signature feature of my presidency from the moment I take the oath of office.” He promised that he is going to bring jobs back to "Ohio and Pennsylvania and New York and Michigan and all of America – and I am not going to let companies move to other countries, firing their employees along the way, without consequences. Not going to happen anymore." these words were music to ears of the people who feared of losing their jobs due to globalization, trade deals, open borders and the government in Washington D.C. that turned a blind eye to their grievances. One of the recurring themes of Trump's campaign speeches was to draw a dystopian scenario in which his opponent won. “My opponent, on the other hand, has supported virtually every trade agreement that has been destroying our middle class,” Trump said, adding that she supported the job-killing trade deal with South Korea, and Trans-Pacific Partnership. My opponent, Trump continued, wants to put the great miners and steelworkers out of work and out of business – that will never happen with Donald Trump as President. "Our steelworkers and our miners are going back to work again."¹⁵¹

Speaking about his poll numbers, Trump said that people have a lot of confidence

¹⁵¹ “Donald Trump 2016 RNC Draft Speech Transcript,” *Politico*, July 21, 2016, <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/07/full-transcript-donald-trump-nomination-acceptance-speech-at-rnc-225974>.

in him because he is bringing back jobs: “because I see Carrier and I see Ford and I see all of these companies leaving and going to Mexico like there's nothing to it. And then they make their product, they sell it back to the United States, no tax, no nothing, we get nothing except unemployment.”¹⁵²

When Trump was unveiling his economic vision and plan during his presidential electoral campaign, Trump promised to bring jobs back, protect them and put more money in the pockets of American. He also lambasted his contender by warning against electing her: "She supports the high taxes and radical regulation that forced jobs out of your community... and the crime policies that have made you less safe... and the immigration policies that have strained local budgets... and the trade deals like NAFTA, signed by her husband, that have shipped your jobs to Mexico and other countries... and she supports the education policies that deny your students choice, freedom and opportunity.” Trump said Hillary Clinton had spent her career voting for tax increases and planned another "massive job-killing \$1.3 trillion-dollar tax increase." Her plan, Trump argued, would tax many small businesses by almost fifty percent. He described Obama's current and Clinton's future economic policies as "job-killing, tax-raising, poverty-inducing Obama-Clinton agenda." "Hillary Clinton has supported the trade deals stripping this city, and this country, of its jobs and wealth," Trump said.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Phillip Bump, “Donald Trump's falsehood-laden press conference, annotated,” *The Washington Post*, July 27, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/07/27/donald-trumps-falsehood-laden-press-conference-annotated/?utm_term=.6bedb8b5b81a.

¹⁵³ Brian Charles, “Transcript of Donald Trump's economic policy speech to Detroit Economic Club,” *Hill*, August 8, 2016, <https://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/campaign/290777-transcript-of-donald-trumps-economic-policy-speech-to-detroit>.

As the presidential campaign geared ahead, Trump intensified his attacks on his opponent by ripping her apart in her economic agenda. "If we lower our taxes, remove destructive regulations, unleash the vast treasure of American energy, and negotiate trade deals that put America First, then there is no limit to the number of jobs we can create and the amount of prosperity we can unleash." He added that America will truly be the greatest place in the world to invest, hire, grow and to create new jobs, new technologies, and entire new industries. "Instead of driving jobs and wealth away, America will become the world's great magnet for innovation and job creation." My opponent's plan, Trump said, rejects this optimism. "She offers only more taxing, regulating, more spending and more wealth redistribution – a future of slow growth, declining incomes, and dwindling prosperity." Trump argued that in Hillary Clinton's America, the U.S. had surrendered its status as the world's great economy and surrendered its middle class to the "whims of foreign countries. Another campaign promise of Trump was rolling back on regulations that crippled economy, restricted businesses and hence killed jobs. He said one of the keys to unlocking growth is scaling-back years of "disastrous regulations unilaterally imposed by our out-of-control bureaucracy." He described regulations as "a massive, job-killing industry." He cited a recent study by conservative Heritage Foundation, which predicted that by 2030, President Obama's energy restrictions would eliminate another half a million manufacturing jobs, reduce economic output by \$2.5 trillion, and reduce incomes by \$7,000 per person. "Hillary Clinton wants to go even further, and her plan could cost the economy \$5 trillion dollars," Trump added.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ "Read Donald Trump's Speech on Jobs and the Economy," *Time*, September 15, 2016, time.com/4495507/donald-trump-economy-speech-transcript/.

Chapter VII.

Cultural Insecurity in the U.S.

There is no denying that the American people voted for President Donald Trump partially because they wanted to re-assert their what they perceived “lost status.” Immediately after his surprising victory, media in the U.S. characterized his unlikely win as a “whitelash” – a backlash by white, male Christians who felt threatened by minorities and the establishment in Washington.¹⁵⁵

There was no surprise that after two-term presidency of Barack Obama, in which the country had been on a sluggish trend of economic recovery, millions of white, non-college educated Americans went to polls to support a man they thought channeled their views. The economy definitely played a major role – not the current status but the prospect of it – and cultural anxiety or insecurity was another major driving force that formed the world’s most successful populist movement. "It’s now pretty clear," Olga Khazan opined, "that many Trump supporters feel threatened, frustrated, and marginalized—not on an economic, but on an existential level."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Janell Ross, "After calling their votes a ‘whitelash,’ Van Jones finds a new role reaching out to Trump supporters," *The Washington Post*, March 20, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/fromwhitelash-to-calling-trumps-speech-an-extraordinary-moment-in-american-politics-thats-van-jones/2017/03/20/240c4aa4-0287-11e7-a391-651727e77fc0_story.html.

¹⁵⁶ Olga Khazan, “People Voted for Trump Because They Were Anxious, Not Poor,” *The Atlantic*, April 2018,

As was mentioned before, perhaps the most famous study of 2016 elections that highlighted the fact that people voted for Trump because of cultural insecurity was Diana Mutz’s research. She argued that the evidence pointed overwhelmingly to perceived status threat among high-status groups (white, Christian and male) as the key motivation underlying Trump support. She claimed that white Americans’ declining numerical dominance in the United States together with the rising status of African Americans and American insecurity about whether the United States is still the dominant global economic superpower combined “to prompt a classic defensive reaction among members of dominant groups.”¹⁵⁷

That was the reason why Donald Trump continuously raised the issue of migration and illegal immigration, highlighted what he claimed to be immigrants’ violent nature and promised to put an end to the influx of immigrants to protect Americans. It sounded like music to his fan base’s ears, and it installed fear in the hearts of those who felt threatened.¹⁵⁸

“We’re going to make you and your family safe, secure, and prosperous, prosperous again. Together we will put the American people first again. First again.”¹⁵⁹

He seized every opportunity – terrorist attacks in San Bernardino, Nice, Orlando or

<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/04/existential-anxiety-not-poverty-motivates-trump-support/558674/>.

¹⁵⁷ Diana Mutz, “Status threat, not economic hardship, explains the 2016 presidential vote,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115 (2018).

¹⁵⁸ “In familiar refrain, Trump relies on fear to sell immigration message,” *PBS News Hour*, January 8, 2019, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/in-oval-office-address-trump-seeks-a-nations-hearts-minds-and-fears>.

¹⁵⁹ “Donald Trump's Subdued Victory Speech After Winning New Jersey,” *Time*, June 8, 2016, <https://www.time.com/4360872/donald-trump-new-jersey-victory-speech-transcript/>.

criminal activities by illegal immigrants or MS-13 gang members – to blast migrants. Following the shooting in Orlando gay nightclub, Trump said “we need to respond to this attack on America as one united people – with force, purpose and determination.” He quickly criticized the Obama administration for “crippling our ability to talk and think and act clearly” because their response is “politically correct.” Trump and his campaign team as well as his supporters throughout the campaign railed against the “political correctness,” dismissing it as a censorship and a way to restrict to what they think. It largely encouraged people’s worst impulses and revived latent racism and sexism hitherto hidden because people can’t say racist things aloud. Trump’s rhetoric encouraged them to come out and say publicly what they think. Trump said if Americans don't get tough, smart, and fast, they are not going to have a country anymore -- there will be nothing left. During his speech, Trump did not miss the chance to stress the immigrant background of the Orlando gay nightclub shooter, whose parents were Afghan immigrants. “The bottom line is that the only reason the killer was in America in the first place was because we allowed his family to come here,” Trump said, ignoring the fact that the shooter was born in the U.S. and his parents came to the U.S. way before he was even born.¹⁶⁰

For years, the media talked about how minorities are going to outnumber white people. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, US World and News reported, in 2014 there were more than 20 million children under 5 years old living in the U.S., and 50.2 percent of them were minorities. “Parents who identified their child as white with Hispanic origin were the largest minority, making up 22 percent of the 19.9 million children under age 5,

¹⁶⁰ “Read Donald Trump's Speech on the Orlando Shooting,” *Time*, June 13, 2016, time.com/4367120/orlando-shooting-donald-trump-transcript/.

followed by African American children, who make up 15 percent,” the news article read. The Census Bureau reported that more than half of the nation's children are expected to be part of a minority race or ethnic group by 2020. “The minority population is expected to rise to 56 percent of the total population in 2060, compared with 38 percent last year [2014].”¹⁶¹

A study by Clara L. Wilkins and Cheryl R. Kaiser found that whites who considered the current U.S. status hierarchy as legitimate were feeling threatened when presented with data of racial progress. They thought that they were victims of racial discrimination. In contrast, those who perceived the current status system as illegitimate didn't feel threatened due to racial progress.¹⁶²

Another study by Brenda Major, Alison Blodom and Gregory Major Blascovich written few weeks before the 2016 elections found that the changing racial demographics in the U.S. contributed to Trump's success as a presidential candidate among white Americans who considered their race and ethnicity as a central pillar of their identity. In the study, those white Americans who were presented with data that non-white ethnic groups will outnumber white population by 2042 started feeling concerned about the declining status and influence of white Americans as a group. This also caused them to report increased support for Trump and his anti-immigrant policies. They were also

¹⁶¹ Noor Wazwaz, “It's Official: The U.S. is Becoming a Minority-Majority Nation,” *U.S. News and World Report*, July 6, 2015, <https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/07/06/its-official-the-us-is-becoming-a-minority-majority-nation>.

¹⁶² Cheryl L. Wilkins, and Clara R. Kaiser, “Racial Progress as Threat to the Status Hierarchy: Implications for Perceptions of Anti-White Bias,” *Psychological Science* 25, no. 2 (2014): 439–446.

opposed to political correctness.¹⁶³

There is almost nothing anyone can do prevent the demographic trend in the U.S. Two-term presidency of Barack Obama reinforced “fears” that minorities are taking over America. Buoyed by Trump’s brazen and frank attacks on minorities, Obama (he started the birther movement, claiming that Barack Obama was born in Kenya and that he was not a “real American”) and the country’s immigration system, supporters of President Trump went to polls to overwhelmingly elect him as the president.¹⁶⁴

“We have a dysfunctional immigration system which does not permit us to know who we let into our country, and it does not permit us to protect our citizens,” Trump said while denouncing the Orlando shooting. He warned against “Radical Islam coming to our shores” and how the U.S. is “importing Radical Islamic Terrorism into the West through a failed immigration.” “If we want to remain a free and open society, then we have to control our borders.” He repeatedly attacked his challenger Hillary Clinton for allegedly supporting policies that “bring the threat of Radical Islam into America, and allow it to grow overseas.” In fact, Trump continued, Hillary Clinton’s “catastrophic immigration plan” will bring vastly more Radical Islamic immigration into this country, threatening not

¹⁶³ Brenda Major, Alison Blodorn, and Gregory Major Blascovich, “The threat of increasing diversity: Why many White Americans support Trump in the 2016 presidential election,” *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 21, no. 6 (2018): 931–940.

¹⁶⁴ Tom Jacobs, "Fear of coming minority status drives white opposition to welfare," *Pacific Standard*, June 4, 2018, <https://psmag.com/social-justice/fear-of-coming-minority-status-drives-white-opposition-to-welfare>.

only “our security but our way of life.”¹⁶⁵

“How is it that the same American public that elected an African American to two terms as US President subsequently elected a president known to have publicly made what many consider to be racist and sexist statements?” Diana Mutz asked. “A possible explanation,” she responded, is dominant group status threat. She argued that when members of a dominant group feel threatened, several well-established reactions help these groups regain a sense of dominance and wellbeing.¹⁶⁶

A 2017 Voter Study Group found that even before the 2016 election, there was increasing alignment between race and partisanship and that non-college educated white voters increasingly were picking the Republican Party. Unlike economic distress and hardship, attitudes related to immigration, religion and race played a role in decision-making process in 2016 elections more than in 2012. Between two parties, there is a deep partisan divide on how Americans feel about immigrants and Muslims in particular. Most Americans believe that everyone can be an American if certain criteria are met. But they disagree on whether or not somebody could be an American without being Christian. And this difference of opinion is divided along partisan lines. There are also divided opinions about positive and negative consequences to the demographic changes that would make the U.S. a majority-minority country. The cross-examination between 2012 and 2016 surveys suggest that, compared to the 2012 election, the 2016 election was “distinctively

¹⁶⁵ Tara Golshan, “Read Donald Trump's most inflammatory speech yet on Muslims & immigration,” *Vox*, June 13, 2016, <https://www.vox.com/2016/6/13/11925122/trump-orlando-foreign-policy-transcript>.

¹⁶⁶ Diana Mutz, “Status threat, not economic hardship, explains the 2016 presidential vote,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115 (2018).

about attitudes related to racial, ethnic, and religious minorities.”¹⁶⁷

In their study published in *Sociology of Religion*, Andrew L. Whitehead, Samuel L. Perry and Joseph O. Baker found that "voting for Trump was, at least for many Americans, a symbolic defense of the United States' perceived Christian heritage."¹⁶⁸

While introducing Mike Pence, now the Vice President, Trump recalled a conversation he had with one of the “great, great gentleman that everybody knows,” but whose name he wouldn’t reveal, who said “we live in fear in our churches and our synagogues. We live in fear that we're going to lose our tax-exempt status if we say anything that's even slightly political.” Trump, as he narrated, pointed to people from Trump Tower in New York City, who were walking down the street and said: “Well, they have the right to speak, but you don't. That means they're more powerful than you are. We have to do something about it.”¹⁶⁹

In fact, the precise reason why Trump picked former Indiana Governor Mike Pence to be his running mate was to get the backing of evangelical Christians, without whom, Trump said, he would not secure the nomination.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ John Sides, “Race, religion, and immigration in 2016: How the debate over American identity shaped the election and what it means for a Trump presidency,” *Voter Study Group* (2017).

¹⁶⁸ Andrew Whitehead, Samuel Perry, and Joseph Baker, “Make America Christian Again: Christian Nationalism and Voting for Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election,” *Sociology of Religion* 79, no. 2 (Summer 2018): 147–171.

¹⁶⁹ “Trump Introduces Mike Pence as VP Pick,” *CNN*, 2016, www.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1607/16/se.02.html.

¹⁷⁰ Julie Zauzmer, “By picking Mike Pence, Trump sends conservative evangelicals a mixed message,” *The Washington Post*, July 14, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/07/14/pence-defines->

Dan Cox, research director of the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), said in 2018 that the percentage of white Christians in the U.S. is declining precipitously. “This sort of fear of tectonic changes that are occurring, that are roiling our political environment, and I think that is what has people up in arms. If you look at what animated voters to Trump, particularly among white, working class, it was these cultural concerns, much more than the economic,” Cox said.¹⁷¹

Another study by Brian F. Schaffner, Matthew MacWilliams, and Tatishe Nteta researched 2012 and 2016 elections to understand what swayed voters' decision-making. The data showed that there was a significant difference in the presidential vote choices of whites with and without college degrees between 2012 and 2016. In fact, so many non-college educated white people voted for the Republican party in 2016, it was the largest in modern U.S. history. The authors found that racism and sexism attitudes were strongly associated with vote choice in 2016, even after accounting for partisanship, ideology, and other standard factors. They said these factors were more important in 2016 than in 2012, "suggesting that the explicitly racial and gendered rhetoric of the 2016 campaign served to activate these attitudes in the minds of many voters." The research concluded that attitudes toward racism and sexism composed of two-thirds of the education gap in vote preferences

himself-as-a-christian-above-all-else-do-christians-want-him-for-
vp/?utm_term=.92919111c803.

¹⁷¹ Matthew Sheffield, “Researchers: Fear of America losing Christian identity motivates many Trump voters,” *The Hill*, August 10, 2018, <https://thehill.com/hilltv/what-americas-thinking/401323-pollster-fear-of-america-losing-christian-identity-motivates>.

in 2016.¹⁷²

When a video surfaced showing Donald Trump bragging about his unwanted sexual advances on women, many thought it would significantly damage his presidential aspirations. It didn't quite turn out to be that way. "Many men, in fact, see Trump as the candidate who can restore men's status in society," Olga Khazan wrote in *The Atlantic*. Recent several analysis showed that nearly half of men feel that American culture has become "too soft and feminine" and that men are suffering as a result. "Many seem to find comfort in Trump's talk of male dominance and success," Khazan added.¹⁷³

A survey by *The Atlantic* and PRRI revealed that Trump supporters were increasingly feeling that the public had been punishing men for acting like men.¹⁷⁴

Derek Thomspson argued in *The Atlantic* that to many white Trump voters, the problem was not Hillary Clinton's economic stance, but the larger vision – "a multi-ethnic social democracy" -- that it was a part of.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Brian Schaffner, Matthew MacWilliams, and Tathise Nteta, "Understanding white polarization in the 2016 vote for president: The sobering role of racism and sexism," *Political Science Quarterly* 133, no. 1 (2017).

¹⁷³ Olga Khazan, "The Precarious Masculinity of 2016 Voters," *The Atlantic*, October 12, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/10/male-trump-voters-masculinity/503741/>.

¹⁷⁴ Robert Jones, "Hillary Clinton opens up a commanding 11-point lead over Donald Trump," *PRRI/The Atlantic Survey*, October 11, 2016, <https://www.prii.org/research/prri-atlantic-oct-11-poll-politics-election-clinton-leads-trump/>.

¹⁷⁵ Derek Thompson, "The Dangerous Myth That Hillary Clinton Ignored the Working Class," *The Atlantic*, December 5, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/12/hillary-clinton-working-class/509477/>.

One way to understand the surprising public acceptance of “openly disrespectful statements about women, minorities, and foreigners is as manifestations of preexisting racist and sexist views;” Diana Mutz wrote, the 2016 election “raised the salience of people’s preexisting views on these topics, so that they mattered more to presidential vote choice in 2016.”¹⁷⁶

John R. Hibbing wrote in *The Washington Post* that some people attend and respond more to potential dangers in the world and therefore “are attracted to policies and candidates that they think will offer protection from threats.” The study conducted by the professor and his team found that threat-sensitive people gravitate toward policies and candidates they think will protect them from threats. “The relevance of this account to 2016 is not difficult to imagine. Whether by design or happenstance, Trump speaks the language of threat-sensitive individuals in a way that candidates such as Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and Mitt Romney do not.”¹⁷⁷

A recent study by PRRI and *The Atlantic*, based on surveys conducted before and after the 2016 election, tried to test why the white working class is overwhelmingly voting for Trump. The analysis found that “fears about immigrants and cultural displacement” played a more powerful role than economic concerns in vote choices among white working-class voters. The study found five factors that had a major impact on how white

¹⁷⁶ Diana Mutz, “Status threat, not economic hardship, explains the 2016 presidential vote,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115 (2018).

¹⁷⁷ John Hibbing, “How people’s sensitivity to threats illuminates the rise of Donald Trump,” *The Washington Post*, December 23, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/12/23/how-peoples-sensitivity-to-threats-illuminates-the-rise-of-donald-trump/?utm_term=.0732f27da8be.

working-class Americans voted.

1 - Identification with the Republican Party. Partisanship was the biggest indicator and predictor of who would vote how. Those who identified as a Republican were 11 times more likely to vote for Trump.

2 - Fears about cultural displacement. Those constituents who say that they often feel like a "stranger in their own land" and who believe that the U.S. needs to protect itself against foreign influence were 3.5 more likely to vote for Trump.

3 - Support for deporting immigrants living in the country illegally. Voters who thought that the U.S. should deport immigrants living in the country illegally were more than 3 times more likely to favor Trump.

4 - Economic fatalism. White-class working people who thought that investing in a college was a "risky gamble" that would less likely to pay off in the future mostly voted for Trump than those who viewed the college education as a smart investment.

5 - Economic hardship. White-class working constituents who were in fair or poor financial condition were 1.7 times more likely to favor Clinton than Trump.¹⁷⁸

A detailed look into statements by Donald Trump during the presidential campaign reveals how he is playing the race and jobs card to signal that he is the right choice to restore the lost status of being privileged in the U.S. as well as he is the right candidate

¹⁷⁸ Daniel Cox, Rachel Lienesch, and Robert Jones, "Beyond Economics: Fears of Cultural Displacement Pushed the White Working Class to Trump," *PRRI/The Atlantic Report*, May 9, 2017, <https://www.prii.org/research/white-working-class-attitudes-economy-trade-immigration-election-donald-trump/>.

who would prevent jobs from shipping abroad.

In New York City, Trump charged Hillary Clinton for supports a radical 550 percent increase in Syrian refugees coming into the United States, and alleged that under her plan, the U.S. would admit hundreds of thousands of refugees from the most dangerous countries on Earth – “with no way to screen who they are or what they believe.” He said hundreds of recent immigrants and their children have been convicted of terrorist activity inside the U.S., including the father of the Orlando shooter who was a Taliban supporter from Afghanistan, “one of the most repressive anti-gay and anti-women regimes on Earth.” “I only want to admit people who share our values and love our people,” Trump said, adding that Hillary Clinton wants “to bring in people who believe women should be enslaved and gays put to death.” To pander to his supporters’ longing for American superiority, Trump said the Americans are the people that tamed the West, that dug out the Panama Canal, that sent satellites across the solar system that built the great dams, and so much more. “Then we started thinking small. We stopped believing in what America could do, and became reliant on other countries, other people, and other institutions. We lost our sense of purpose, and daring. But that’s not who we are. Come this November, we can bring America back – bigger and better, and stronger than ever.”¹⁷⁹

During Republican Convention in Cleveland, Trump spoke of a “moment of crisis for our nation.” “The attacks on our police, and the terrorism in our cities, threaten our very

¹⁷⁹ “Donald Trump NYC speech on stakes of the election,” *Politico*, June 22, 2016, <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/06/transcript-trump-speech-on-the-stakes-of-the-election-224654>.

way of life. Any politician who does not grasp this danger is not fit to lead our country,” he said. He extensively started talking about “recent images of violence in our streets” and the “chaos in our communities.” “I have a message for all of you: the crime and violence that today afflicts our nation will soon – and I mean very soon – come to an end. Beginning on January 20th of 2017, safety will be restored.” Trump also didn’t forget to stress the perceived international humiliation Americans have to endure. In addition to “domestic disaster,” Trump said, Americans have lived through one international humiliation after another. “We all remember the images of our sailors being forced to their knees by their Iranian captors at gunpoint.” After reminding the signing of the Iran deal, which he claimed gave back to Iran \$150 billion and “gave us absolutely nothing,” Trump said it would go down in history as “one of the worst deals ever negotiated.” He said another humiliation came when president Obama drew a red line in Syria – “and the whole world knew it meant absolutely nothing.” Speaking about Libya, he said the American consulate, which he said was the symbol of American prestige around the globe, was “brought down in flames.” Catering to anti-migrant fears of his large fan base, Trump said the U.S. must immediately suspend immigration from any nation that has been compromised by terrorism “until such time as proven vetting mechanisms have been put in place. We don't want them in our country.”¹⁸⁰

When asked why his message had been resonating among his supporters, Trump said because people have “confidence on me at the border, if they don't want people

¹⁸⁰ “Donald Trump 2016 RNC Draft Speech Transcript,” *Politico*, July 21, 2016, <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/07/full-transcript-donald-trump-nomination-acceptance-speech-at-rnc-225974>.

pouring into our country.”¹⁸¹

In Wisconsin, Trump said there are people who are coming to the U.S. that should not be coming and there are “thousands and thousands of people from certain terrorist states.” “And Hillary wants thousands more to come in over and above Obama. Right?” Trump said before the cheering crowd. “Hillary wants to open our borders, just open them up because her special interests and donors want it that way.”¹⁸²

Serwer argued that in his own stumbling manner, Trump has pursued the race-based agenda promoted during his campaign. “As the president continues to pursue a program that places the social and political hegemony of white Christians at its core, his supporters have shown few signs of abandoning him.”¹⁸³

One of the most essential ingredients of populism is to portray other politicians as elite working in cahoots with the establishment against “the people.” Trump repeatedly seized on Clinton’s gaffe in which she characterized Trump supporters as a “basket of deplorables.” “Politicians have heaped scorn and disdain on these wonderful Americans. My opponent described tens of millions of American citizens as deplorable and

¹⁸¹ Phillip Bump, “Donald Trump's falsehood-laden press conference, annotated,” *The Washington Post*, July 27, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/07/27/donald-trumps-falsehood-laden-press-conference-annotated/?utm_term=.6bedb8b5b81a.

¹⁸² “Remarks at the KI Convention Center in Green Bay, Wisconsin,” UCSB Documents, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-ki-convention-center-green-bay-wisconsin>.

¹⁸³ Adam Serwer, “The Nationalist's Delusion,” *The Atlantic*, November 20, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/11/the-nationalists-delusion/546356/>.

irredeemable – how can Hillary Clinton seek to lead this country when she considers its citizens beyond redemption?” He said these are the forgotten men and women of America. People who work hard but don't have a voice. “I am running to be their voice, and to fight to bring prosperity to every part of this country.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ “Read Donald Trump's Speech on Jobs and the Economy,” *Time*, September 15, 2016, time.com/4495507/donald-trump-economy-speech-transcript/.

Chapter VIII.

Economic Anxiety in Turkey

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) of Recep Tayyip Erdogan is considering itself as an antidote to Turkey's ills.¹⁸⁵ It is constantly pitting its conservative base against what Erdogan keeps calling "*bunlar*" (them), referring to secularist, elite past governments and the opposition as well as the military establishment that called the shots in the country for a long time.¹⁸⁶

Erdogan and his inner circle, despite their 17 years of rule and 15 victories in polls since 2002, keep deploying the type of rhetoric that blames "dark circles" with "global links." President Erdogan and his team are using phrases such as "interest lobby," accusations that border on anti-Semitism to describe Turkey's economic woes. Almost always, they are playing the victim card. Anything that goes wrong in Turkey is because, according to their way of thinking, Turkey is "getting stronger" and that there are forces that "can't stomach Turkey's growth."¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Diego Cupolo, "The Decline and Fall of Turkish Democracy," *The Atlantic*, April 13, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/04/turkey-referendum-erdogan-kurds/522894/>.

¹⁸⁶ Kaya Genc, "Erdogan's Way," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2019, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2019-08-12/erdogans-way>.

¹⁸⁷ Joe Parkinson, "Dismay Over Turkish Rates," *The Wall Street Journal*, January 12, 2012, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204124204577154353478071244>.

It is typical political rhetoric ripped right from populist leaders' playbook and resonates well among the Turkish society when it is done in the right fashion by someone who is one of the greatest communicators, and orators in the country.¹⁸⁸ Hailing from "among the people," Erdogan, once the champion of underdogs, is the most successful Turkish politician since Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Turkish Republic, thanks to his unparalleled ability to speak directly to the conservative people and connect well with them.¹⁸⁹

In his recently article, Julius M. Rogenhofer said Erdogan's use of "right-wing, religiously legitimated populism" was instrumental for the transformation of Turkey from a modern, promising and emerging democracy to an authoritarian country. He wrote that Erdogan's government systematically undermined the institutions of democracy by polarizing society, capturing the public discourse and disregarding constitutional principles.¹⁹⁰

The advent of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his AKP (which was created 16 months before its victory in 2002) to the Turkish political scene was enormous luck. When two parties (Genc Party and DYP) garnered a significant amount of votes but failed to reach

¹⁸⁸ Shadi Hamid, "How Much Can One Strongman Change a Country? *The Atlantic*, June 26, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/06/erdogan-turkey-islamist/531609/>.

¹⁸⁹ Bethan McKernan, "From reformer to 'New Sultan': Erdogan's populist evolution," *The Guardian*, March 11, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/11/from-reformer-to-new-sultan-erdogans-populist-evolution>.

¹⁹⁰ Julius Rogenhofer, "Antidemocratic Populism in Turkey after the July 2016 Coup Attempt," *Populism* 1, no. 2 (2018).

the threshold of 10 percent, all those votes were transferred to the AKP. 10 percent threshold is designed by the military establishment in Turkey to keep Kurdish parties out of the Parliament, and it helped AKP to become a majority party that could form a single-party government, a rarity for Turkey.¹⁹¹

Since 1990, Turkey had witnessed 11 governments and had gone through two devastating and crushing economic crises as well as a number of political low points, chaos, crime waves and criminal and political scandals. In short, people were fed up. They were yearning for a stable government that would promise political and economic stability. When Erdogan's AKP was voted in in 2002, the single-party government significantly transformed the country.¹⁹²

Then-Prime Minister Erdogan, who had been mayor of Istanbul and knows very well how to transform and manage cities (biggest vote generator in Turkey), preserved the financial discipline installed by former Economy Minister Kemal Dervis. Along with a recovering economy, Erdogan's government also privatized \$63 billion worth of state assets, investing that money in infrastructure projects, creating more jobs and jump-starting the economy.¹⁹³

Robust financial standing and strong banking sector in Turkey effectively

¹⁹¹ "2002: Ezber Bozan Secim," *Bianet*, May 26, 2015, bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/164720-2002-ezber-bozan-secim.

¹⁹² Erdal T. Karagol, "The Turkish Economy During the Justice and Development Party Decade," *Insight Turkey* 15, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 115-129.

¹⁹³ Mustafa Sonmez, "What left to sell after \$54 billion of privatization," *Hurriyet Daily News*, July 27, 2013, www.hurriyetdailynews.com/what-left-to-sell-after-54-billion-of-privatization-51486.

weathered financial meltdown in world markets that wreck havoc in the U.S. and around the world. When the crisis hit hard Western markets, Erdogan promised that the financial crisis would "bypass Turkey." "In the U.S., banks are going through hard times. They are sinking. In Turkey, no bank experienced any difficulty... We are not claiming that the crisis is past us, but I am saying that we will be the country that would hit us the least," Erdogan told reporters in 2009.¹⁹⁴

A month later, Erdogan complained that he was under fire for saying that the economic crisis would bypass Turkey. "I am reiterating this again. I didn't say it won't affect us. I said it would hit us the least. Bypassing doesn't mean it won't affect or is currently affecting. It means it will just scratch. It will hurt only a little bit."¹⁹⁵

As the worst part of the financial crisis was coming to an end in the U.S., Turkey was still feeling the pain. While speaking in the Parliament, Erdogan said the economic crisis in 2001 took place because Turkey was being managed poorly. 2009 economic crisis, however, is a result of the world managing financial markets poorly. "I repeat it again. It is bypassing and it will bypass," Erdogan stressed.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Seda Ozkaya, "Erdogan, tanim yeniledi: Kriz 'surtunup' gececek," *Hurriyet*, May 21, 2009, www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/erdogan-tanim-yeniledi-kriz-surtunup-gececek-11692778.

¹⁹⁵ "Kriz teget geđti dedim, etkilemedi demedim," *CNNTurk*, April 3, 2009, <https://www.cnnturk.com/2009/ekonomi/dunya/04/03/kriz.teget.gecti.dedim.etkilemedi.demedim/520810.0/index.html>.

¹⁹⁶ "Erdođan: Bu krizi IMF'siz kendimiz yonettik, yine soyluyorum teget geciyor *Radikal*," December 15, 2009, www.radikal.com.tr/ekonomi/erdogan-bu-krizi-imfsiz-kendimiz-yonettik-yine-soyluyorum-teget-geciyor-969331/.

In April 2009, Erdogan went further to characterize the economic crisis as a "psychological [warfare]." "This global crisis will bypass us. Those who are claiming otherwise are making efforts to negatively affect this psychological process. Those people are expecting an economic crisis in Turkey, which will, in turn, transform into a social and then a political crisis."¹⁹⁷

Despite economic tightening, which usually should have reflected on election results, Erdogan's AKP only dropped 3 percent in local elections in March 2009¹⁹⁸, compared to previous local elections in 2004.¹⁹⁹

In 2010 referendum on constitutional changes, people overwhelmingly gave a green pass to the government to abolish the military stranglehold on the politics and judiciary, eliminating military's powerful role in politics. AKP-backed referendum changes got whopping 58 percent of the votes.²⁰⁰

2011 general elections, which came during the recovery and devastating economic crisis in Europe, was the most successful one for Erdogan. He increased his already record-

¹⁹⁷ "Basbakan Erdogan: Yargiyi rahat birakin," *T24*, April 21, 2009, <https://t24.com.tr/haber/basbakan-erdogan-yargiyi-rahata-birakin,42297>.

¹⁹⁸ "2009 Türkiye yerel seçimleri," *Wikipedia*, [https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/2009_Türkiye_yerel_seçimleri](https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/2009_T%C3%BCrkiye_yerel_se%C7imleri).

¹⁹⁹ "2004 Türkiye yerel seçimleri," *Wikipedia*, [https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004_Türkiye_yerel_seçimleri](https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004_T%C3%BCrkiye_yerel_se%C7imleri).

²⁰⁰ "2010 Turkish constitutional referendum," *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010_Turkish_constitutional_referendum.

breaking electoral outcome in 2007 by 3.25 percent to almost 50 percent.²⁰¹

These electoral outcomes are a strong indication that despite economic downturn, people still bet on AKP because they viewed the incumbent government, both on local and national level, as a safe choice that would guarantee the status they earned since they came to power. During the economic crisis between 2007 and 2010, Erdogan did whatever it takes to ensure the public that he and his party represents economic stability and that the Turkish people's economic future is safe and secured.²⁰²

In the U.S., those who feared that they might more likely lose their economic status turned to Trump in 2016 presidential elections. In Turkey, President Erdogan repeatedly recalled "dark days of the 1990s" during electoral rallies, reminded 2001 economic crisis and assured the public that they shouldn't worry about losing their economic status from now on. In the Turkish case, people time and again voted for Erdogan and his party over fears that the alternative may again plunge Turkey into an economic black hole. Few months after the 2011 elections, in which the Erdogan's party won a resounding victory, the economy started to sour again. In a country where governments changed hands very quickly due to fluctuating unemployment, Turkish people usually voted along employment

²⁰¹ "2011 Türkiye genel seçimleri," *Wikipedia*, https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Türkiye_genel_seçimleri.

²⁰² Ellyatt Holly, "Turkey's Erdogan suffers election blow, sparking hope for change," *CNBC*, June 24, 2019, <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/06/24/turkeys-erdogan-suffers-election-blow-but-vote-sparks-hope-for-change.html>.

figures²⁰³ rather than inflation.²⁰⁴

As a center-right, Erdogan always believed that unstoppable growth can create employment and the government can take measures to tame inflation at the same time, an economic paradox that Erdogan claims doesn't exist. Early in 2012, Erdogan fabricated the term "interest rate lobby", referring to demands that the Central Bank should raise interest rates to control inflation and depreciating local currency. Whenever the economy went south, Erdogan blamed "global interest lobby" or "Western financiers."²⁰⁵

Fast forward to 2013, the Turkish economy rebounded. In May 2013, Erdogan was bragging about paying off the entire debt to IMF, borrowed during the 2001 financial crisis. Dealing with the IMF has become synonymous to an economic crisis in Turkey. Closing a chapter with the world's biggest financial organization meant that Turkey is growing at a pace that was unseen in the past several decades.²⁰⁶

Coincidentally, May 2013 was also the starting point of nationwide protests. What

²⁰³ Peter Goodman, "The West Hoped for Democracy in Turkey. Erdogan Had Other Ideas," *The New York Times*, August 18, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/18/business/west-democracy-turkey-erdogan-financial-crisis.html>.

²⁰⁴ "2014 Turkish Presidential Elections," *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_Turkish_presidential_election#targetText=Presidentia1%20elections%20were%20held%20in,off%20for%2024%20August%20unnecessary.

²⁰⁵ Joe Parkinson, "Dismay Over Turkish Rates," *The Wall Street Journal*, January 12, 2012, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204124204577154353478071244>.

²⁰⁶ "Erdogan: Turkiye IMF'ye olan borcunu kapatti," *CNNTurk*, May 14, 2013, <https://www.cnnturk.com/2013/ekonomi/genel/05/14/erdogan.turkiye.imfye.olan.borcunu.kapatti/707858.0/index.html>.

had started as a modest environmental sit-in had morphed into nationwide demonstrations after police brutality and the government's indifference to demands. The currency tanked and Turkish markets plummeted. Since economic stability is the single most important achievement that the Turkish government is sitting on, Erdogan started conspiracy spree, accusing the West, Israel and, again, interest-rate lobby for attacking Turkey's economy.²⁰⁷ For Erdogan, these protests couldn't be a coincidence that they erupted at the same time when Turkey paid off its debt to the IMF. In dozens of parallel demonstrations he held, Erdogan suggested international conspiracy with financial interests that were behind the protests.²⁰⁸

One of Erdogan's chief economic advisers even suggested that Germany's flagship airlines Lufthansa was behind the anti-government protests across Turkey as part of an international conspiracy to prevent Erdogan from building a large airport outside of Istanbul.²⁰⁹

Following a referendum in Turkey, the rationale of an Erdogan supporter summarized well why his base still continue voting for him despite his iron fist rule. He told The New York Times that the current crises in the Turkish economy validate rather

²⁰⁷ Piotr Zalewski, "Protocols of the Interest Rate Lobby," *Foreign Policy*, June 27, 2013, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/06/27/protocols-of-the-interest-rate-lobby/>.

²⁰⁸ James Reynolds, "Turkey's PM Erdogan and opponents hold mass rallies," *BBC*, June 16, 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-23017083>.

²⁰⁹ Mark Champion, "Does Erdogan Really Believe In an Interest-Rate Lobby?" *Bloomberg*, June 28, 2013, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2013-06-28/does-erdogan-really-believe-in-an-interest-rate-lobby->.

than undermine the decision "to grant more power to Mr. Erdogan. In Mr. Ozdemir's view, the president would have been able to turn the economy around by now but had been restricted by the actions of the political opposition."²¹⁰

An analysis by a research center showed that many people are worried that all economic progress will go away if Erdogan loses the government. "Many worry that all these social and economic advances will be reversed if Erdogan leaves office, reversing the country's drift towards passive secularism buoyed by welfare policies and improvements in people's living standards."²¹¹

The most recent survey by Pew Research Center in Turkey revealed that people are most concerned about rising prices (61 percent). The gap between rich and poor (55 percent), lack of employment opportunities (51 percent) were top concerns as well.²¹²

In December 2016, the Turkish local currency lira again started freefalling. It plunged into record lows, reinforcing concerns that inflation is going up and the economy is headed into a worse direction. As it was the case in the past, Erdogan again used his oldest political trick by attacking "others" who "targeted Turkey" to create this economic

²¹⁰ Patrick Kingsley, "In Supporting Erdogan, Turks Cite Economic and Religious Gains," *The New York Times*, April 17, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/17/world/europe/turkey-referendum-erdogan.html>.

²¹¹ Leo Kabouche, "Explaining Erdogan's persistent popularity," *Global Risk Insights*, February, 2018, <https://globalriskinsights.com/2018/02/erdogan-popular-support-turkey/>.

²¹² "Deep Divisions in Turkey as Election Nears," *Pew Research Center*, October 15, 2015, <https://www.pewglobal.org/2015/10/15/deep-divisions-in-turkey-as-election-nears/turkey-report-08-2/>.

mess.²¹³

"Whatever you have in foreign currency, exchange them into Turkish lira. That way you would disrupt others' plot. Remember they did similar things in the past. They did the same thing before. They did it in 2007-08. What did I say then? I would bypass. And again I am saying the same thing. It will bypass."²¹⁴

Turkey borrowed heavily after 2008-09 financial crisis thanks to U.S. Federal Reserve's zero interest rates. But a strong recovery in the U.S. hit Turkish local currency lira hard, causing high inflation in food and fuel.²¹⁵

"This is a classical case of populism," Jacob F. Kirkegaard, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington told *The New York Times*. "It can get you growth for some time, but there's a bill that comes due. And when the bill comes due, populists tend to get more authoritarian and oppressive." Another economist, Selva Demiralp, who is a lecturer at Koc University in Istanbul said the increase in unemployment put more pressure on Erdogan to "press his growth agenda and his

²¹³ "Erdogan'dan kriz aciklamasi: Yine teget gececek," Cumhuriyet, May 21, 2016, www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/639147/Erdogan_dan_kriz_aciklamasi__Yine_teg_et_gececek.html.

²¹⁴ "Erdoğan'dan 'Dolarınızı bozdurun' çağrısı," *BBC*, December 2, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-38179921>.

²¹⁵ "What went wrong for Turkey? Its economy is 'in the midst of a perfect storm,'" *CNBC*, August 13, 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/08/13/turkey-crisis-economy-faces-weak-lira-inflation-debt-and-tariffs.html>.

populism.”²¹⁶

In August 2018, President Trump sent out a couple of tweets, denouncing Turkey for refusing to free Pastor Andrew Brunson and imposing sanctions on Turkey's exports.²¹⁷ The currency immediately plunged.

Erdogan and his government unsurprisingly portrayed the economic meltdown as an economic war waged by the West.

"I am telling you: Let's get dollars, euros, gold and exchange them for Turkish lira. Let's wage our independence and prosperity war in this field against them. Because they [Western powers] only understand this language. They threaten us."²¹⁸

Throughout summer 2018, Erdogan described the currency free-fall as an attack against Turkey. "We know very well that things are not about dollars, euros or gold. These are bullets, ammunition, missiles of the economic war opened against our country," Erdogan said.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ Peter Goodman, "The West Hoped for Democracy in Turkey. Erdogan Had Other Ideas," *The New York Times*, August 18, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/18/business/west-democracy-turkey-erdogan-financial-crisis.html>.

²¹⁷ "Why Trump is attacking Turkey with sanctions and tariffs," *CNBC*, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/08/10/why-trump-is-attacking-turkey-with-sanctions-and-tariffs.html>.

²¹⁸ "Erdoğan: NATO ortağınızı bir papaza deđiřiyorsunuz," *Deutsche Welle*, November 8, 2018, <https://www.dw.com/tr/erdođan-nato-ortađınızı-bir-papaza-deđiřiyorsunuz/a-45046893>.

²¹⁹ "Avrupa'ya dolar cagrisi," *Hurriyet*, December 8, 2018, www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/avrupaya-dolar-cagrisi-40925888.

Chapter IX.

Cultural Insecurity in Turkey

One of the biggest characteristics of a populist leader, as was discussed in this paper previously, is confrontation – the construction of real or imagined enemies. It is also one of the most essential ingredients in a populism recipe. Turkish President Erdogan is no stranger to this.²²⁰

Attacking political opponents, journalists, the establishment, imaginary enemies both at home and abroad have been his signature policy item for more than a decade now. That is largely aided by a receptive audience, which has always harbored negative opinion about foreign powers. According to the 2015 Pew Research Center survey, when asked about their opinion regarding different countries, Turkish people were largely skeptical about them. Even European Union, a bloc that Turkey wanted to join for decades has 49 percent of unfavorability rating. Only 29 percent of respondents in Turkey have favorable view of the U.S., Turkey's chief ally, and 23 percent for NATO.²²¹

In a country where kids were taught in an elementary school that their country is surrounded either by seas or enemies, there is no wonder that populist leaders can seize

²²⁰ Francisco Panizza, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*. (London: Verso, 2005)

²²¹ “Turks Share Dismal Views of Foreign Powers,” *Pew Research Center*, October 15, 2015, <https://www.pewglobal.org/2015/10/15/deep-divisions-in-turkey-as-election-nears/turkey-report-11-2/>

this opportunity to create enemies and pit their electorate against them to score political points.

In the case of Turkey, Erdogan's case is not without a reason or a rationale. For decades, Turkey's democracy had been interrupted in every ten years through a military intervention. The military establishment was so powerful that no judge could independently rule in matters that the military deemed as a red line. That was true for media publications as well.²²² Most of the time, it was the conservative people or governments that paid the price. One of them was Recep Tayyip Erdogan.²²³

When he was mayor of Istanbul, representing one of the Islamist governments, Erdogan was sent to prison for reciting a poem that disturbed military-backed judiciary in 1997. His imprisonment was an epitome for a country that censored anyone who spoke up against the military or hinted a religious revival. His government led by Islamist and late Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan were forced to resign by the military.²²⁴

The next coalition government, led by three incompetent ministers, was such a failure that a small spat between President Ahmet Necdet Sezer and Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit sent Turkish markets into a crushing financial crash. Turkey's wealth halved overnight. It was such a devastating economic crisis that 19 banks had to declare

²²² Umit Cizre, "The Anatomy of the Turkish Military's Political Autonomy," *Comparative Politics* 29, no. 2 (January 1997): 151-166.

²²³ "Istanbul Mayor, an Islamist, Is Given 10-Month Jail Term," *New York Times*, April 22, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/04/22/world/istanbul-mayor-an-islamist-is-given-10-month-jail-term.html>.

²²⁴ Deborah Sontag, "The Erdogan Experiment," *The New York Times Magazine*, May 11, 2003, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/11/magazine/the-erdogan-experiment.html>.

bankruptcy. That economic crisis, coupled with the prime minister's deteriorating health, sent the country to early elections, paving the way for Erdogan to win.²²⁵

To give the appropriate context, Erdogan came to power against the backdrop of such a backward country – recovering from a financial crisis and a military coup, political chaos. When Erdogan came to power, the military, judiciary and the media were extremely hostile. It would take a political maverick like Erdogan to survive all types of threats. Erdogan and his new government understood that having elected in a popular voting didn't mean anything in Turkey unless you avoided disturbing the powerful military, which forced his government to resign just few years ago. To avoid a similar scenario, the Erdogan government started EU accession negotiations.²²⁶ The membership talks required Turkey to tame its military and limit its role in politics. That process ended in 2010 referendum, in which the AKP government, backed by 58 percent of the votes, changed the Constitution and transformed the country into largely civilian political system and bureaucracy.²²⁷ Erdogan would later exploit this freedom and lack of checks on his power

²²⁵ Chris Morris, "Turkey suffers as leaders fight on," *The Guardian*, February 21, 2001, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/feb/21/3>.

²²⁶ David Gow and Helena Smith, "EU puts Turkey on a long road to accession," *The Guardian*, October 7, 2004, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/oct/07/turkey.eu>.

²²⁷ "Erdogan pulls it off," Editorial, *The Economist*, September 13, 2010. <https://www.economist.com/newsbook/2010/09/13/erdogan-pulls-it-off>.

and weaken judiciary, stifle dissent and co-opt the opposition.²²⁸

Erdogan's fan base have a first-hand experience in 1990s what it means to have coalition governments, political turmoil and economic troubles. They also know that Erdogan had to survive through thick and thin to assert his authority. Having this background will make it much easier for Erdogan to exploit this "victimhood" for his favor.²²⁹

The conservative people in Turkey, which make up more than half of Erdogan's electorate, gained such a dignity, recognition, freedoms and rights that were unimaginable just a decade ago. Until 2008, for example, women who wore an Islamic veil were not allowed to enter into a university. Until 2013, they were not allowed to serve in the government.²³⁰

This social, political and economic progress that conservative people enjoy is such a high status that they keep voting for Erdogan not to lose them. In almost every election, Erdogan keeps reminding conservative Turkish people that they can lose what they gained under his leadership. A closer look at Erdogan's rhetoric, campaign speeches and partisan

²²⁸ Steven A. Cook, "How Erdogan Made Turkey Authoritarian Again," *The Atlantic*, July, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/07/how-erdogan-made-turkey-authoritarian-again/492374/>.

²²⁹ "Erdogan, magdur edebiyati yapıyor," *Evrensel*, May 20, 2015, <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/113218/erdogan-magdur-edebiyati-yapiyor>

²³⁰ Roff Smith, "Why Turkey Lifted Its Ban on the Islamic Headscarf," *National Geographic*, October 13, 2013, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/10/131011-hijab-ban-turkey-islamic-headscarf-ataturk/>.

literature will reveal that he is using every trick in his populist playbook to install fear into the hearts and minds of his supporters, cast others as a threat to their status and way of life.²³¹

When *The New York Times* talked to one of the voters following 2017 referendum on constitutional changes, she said Erdogan had expanded certain democratic freedoms in Turkey — in particular, freedom of religion. “Ten years ago, Ms. Arslan was unable to attend a Turkish university because women like her who wore head scarves were barred from studying there, a result of rules established by Mr. Erdogan’s predecessors, who were seen as enforcing a repressive form of secularism.” The issue of headscarf is such a politically explosive matter that Erdogan brings it up at every turn during electoral campaigns. “For a large, pious section of the population, Mr. Erdogan therefore represents freedom from a kind of oppression that characterized Turkey throughout most of the 20th century,” Patrick Kingsley writes. “I don’t want to go back to that era,” Ms. Arslan, with whom *The New York Times* spoke, said as she justified her support for Erdogan in the referendum.²³²

Before every election, Erdogan usually ramped up his nationalistic rhetoric for a better showing at the polls. Only in 2015 elections, Erdogan was supporting a Kurdish peace initiative and those peace negotiations cost him parliamentary elections. His

²³¹ "Bilincli bir şekilde toplumu kutuplastiriyor," *Birgun*, April 4, 2018, <https://www.birgun.net/haber/bilincli-bir-sekilde-toplumu-kutuplastiriyor-210667>.

²³² Patrick Kingsley, “In Supporting Erdogan, Turks Cite Economic and Religious Gains,” *The New York Times*, April 17, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/17/world/europe/turkey-referendum-erdogan.html>.

government refused to form a coalition government for two months, refused to continue peace talks with Kurds, violated the ceasefire and called for an early elections. Few months later, Erdogan's party recouped all the lost votes and again become a single-party majority in the Parliament.²³³

“Mr. Erdogan's nationalism contributes to his popularity, too. Western observers were horrified by his recent spats with Europe, in which Mr. Erdogan accused Dutch and German politicians of Nazism for refusing permission for aides to campaign there for the Turkish referendum. He has also picked fights with Kurdish militants when it suited his purposes,” *The New York Times* reported in 2017.²³⁴

For the majority of Turkey's rural electorate (with the exception of the Kurdish southeast, also largely rural, which opposed the referendum), Kabouche argues, Erdogan embodies political stability, religious freedom and a more than a decade of economic success. “For a large, pious section of the population, Erdogan represents a defender against the assertive secularism that had been dominant in Turkey throughout most of the 20th century.”²³⁵

²³³ Ilhan Tasci, "Sure azaliyor, hukümet kurulamıyor," *BBC*, August 15, 2015, https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2015/08/150805_koalisyon_sure_azaliyor.

²³⁴ Patrick Kingsley, “In Supporting Erdogan, Turks Cite Economic and Religious Gains,” *The New York Times*, April 17, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/17/world/europe/turkey-referendum-erdogan.html>.

²³⁵ Leo Kabouche, “Explaining Erdogan's persistent popularity,” *Global Risk Insights*, February 14, 2018, <https://globalriskinsights.com/2018/02/erdogan-popular-support-turkey/>.

Chapter X.

Discussion

The victory of Donald Trump in the U.S. presidential elections in 2016, followed by a surprising defeat of Remain campaign in the U.K. a few months earlier, has raised alarm bells among liberal and pro-democracy circles in the U.S. and around the world. Donald Trump kept highlighting the “movement” he started and warned time is up for the elite, the establishment and special interest groups.

Hillary Clinton, Trump’s challenger, was criticized for ignoring blue collar workers that led to her defeat. Instead of denouncing her poor showing in the polls and the lack of messaging for jobs during the campaign (which was not the case), many journalists preferred to find a relationship between Trump’s victory and racism and sexism that was prevalent among Trump’s supporters. A day after the elections, liberal media started characterizing Trump’s victory as a “whitelash” (backlash by white voters) rather than a message about jobs and the economy.

A number of studies, research papers and surveys dug deeper into Trump country and supporters to understand who drove those people to vote for the Republican candidate. The economy was doing well. So it could not be the economy. Clinton did better among poor demographics. So it could not be the jobs.

Researchers found a strong link between voting for Trump and being non-college educated, white, Christian and male. These people were not poor. These people did not lose their jobs (not most of them at least). These people were not at a disadvantaged position. The only thing they feared was the future. Economic fatalism – the idea that the

future looks bleak in financial perspective and cultural insecurity – the idea that racial progress is a threat to privileged white and Christian identity were two driving factors that attracted white working-class male Americans to Trump.

Most of these findings, unfortunately, were manipulated by the liberal, mainstream media. They were trying to make a point that Trump supporters are racists, sexists and a bunch of Christian evangelicals who feared that demographics was not going to be in their favor. While this was largely true, most media reports on origins of Trump's victory missed the economic aspect of it.

The primary reason why the economic side of the story was overlooked was because the economy was booming, unemployment was in record lows and businesses were thriving. What they missed to see was that those who felt both cultural and financially insecure voted for Trump. Most of these people were:

- 1 – White (Feared that racial progress was a threat to privileged white identity)
- 2 – Male (Feared that the American culture was being too feminine)
- 3 – Christian (Feared that Christianity was under siege)
- 4 – Non-college education (Feared that most unskilled jobs will be automated/outsourced)
- 5 – Low credit score (Feared that it would hurt financially in the long run)
- 6 – Worked in environmentally polluting jobs like steel, oil or coal

Trump represented a safe bet. Trump promised them that he would curb immigration (protect the white majority), eliminate free trade deals (protect their jobs), prevent jobs from leaving the U.S. (eliminate outsourcing), get rid of environmental regulations (protect oil, steel and coal jobs), put America First (end America's

international humiliation).

The studies and surveys were so consistent that there is almost no doubt that millions of white working-class and non-college educated, rural Americans voted for Trump because they saw their economic future as bleak and felt cultural insecure and threatened. Trump's divisive, populist rhetoric was music to their ears. Trump was a "leader" who encouraged them to abandon "political correctness" and created "enemies" for them to fight against (elite groups, special interest groups, minorities, undocumented immigrants, the establishment) – two main ingredients that make up a populist movement.

In Turkey, the situation was not different in a major way. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is a typical populist leader – charismatic and successful politician who can easily consolidate his fan base and create "appropriate enemies" to fight against. Erdogan is particularly dangerous because he has a solid track record and the establishment in Turkey in fact did fight against his government and Islamist-tinged ideology.

In Erdogan's Turkey, we see a recurring theme during every election in which Erdogan is warning against returning to "dark old days in 1990s." That period is characterized with two devastating economic crises and a prolonged political turmoil. Erdogan came to power against this background and constantly scare his constituents by reminding the turbulence that defined the 1990s. Erdogan and his government frequently draw a dystopian scenario in which the government is gone and the alternative plunges Turkey into darkness.

In almost every election and referendum, people kept voting for the government of Erdogan – for 17 years. This is unprecedented for Turkish people, who are known for

changing their governments in every few years. Erdogan came to represent a stable political government that delivered on economic front. Afraid of losing this status, Turkish people time and again backed Erdogan and his party in elections and polls.

In Turkey, during periods of slight economic stagnation, Erdogan promised that financial crises would only bypass Turkey, assured the public that as long as he is ruling the nation, they will not experience an economic difficulty. Despite all these, people only increased the percentage of AKP's victory in every elections.

Erdogan also kept scaring people with his alternative. For him, the conservative people had to back him up because the alternative would end their tutelage, ban headscarves and make them second class citizens again. The fear of losing economic stability and all the cultural and social gains constantly motivated tens of millions of people to pick Erdogan despite many of his fallacies. The alternative, to put it simply, could be too costly.

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