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# What Determines the Political Focus of Right-Wing Populist Parties in Europe? A Case Study of Norway and Switzerland

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Undergraduate Honors Thesis

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## ***Abstract***

In the past several decades right-wing populism has reshaped European politics. The late 20th and early 21st centuries are experiencing the rise of several right-wing populist parties in countries including France, Norway, Switzerland, Finland, Poland, Britain, and many others. This rise in right-wing populism is not a new phenomenon, and many of these parties trace their roots back to the 1970s as globalization permeated Europe. In this paper, I will examine the peculiar phenomena regarding the varying levels of success these right-wing populist parties have experienced. Specifically, I focus on the success of both the Norwegian and Swiss populist parties from a historical perspective and conclude with an analysis of their most recent election cycles. By focusing on the right-wing populists' relationship with other political parties, I will establish a new analytical framework for populist politics. I conduct this research to better understand which strategies these parties are using to win elections with a specific focus on immigration and an antiestablishment posture.

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## Introduction

The conclusion of World War II (WWII) ushered in the establishment of a post-war neo-liberal democratic consensus. The neo-liberal political ideology is primarily characterized by capitalist free trade practices, as well as increased democratization and global interconnectedness. Despite the prevalence of neo-liberalism, populist politics has become increasingly prominent in the current European political order. Populist politics is distinguished by charismatic leaders who claim to be speaking as the true voice of the people. Additionally, right-wing populism typically positions the party as antiestablishment and anti-immigration-focused. European right-wing populism is proving particularly influential and is characterized by rampant success, particularly since the 1990s. The peculiarity of right-wing populism lies in the various approaches European populist parties employ to achieve electoral success. Ultimately, the European political environment provides a unique opportunity to explore the political stances of multiple populist parties. This environment is beneficial to populist research because it allows us to closely compare the successful methods right-wing populists employ.

The disparity in issue focus among successful populist parties in Europe implores further analysis. Namely, what factor determines the variation in political focus of these populist parties? Do voter passions drive them? Do they determine their political position with respect to other parties? Do they create and manipulate the salience of specific issues in hopes of gaining a political foothold? To answer these questions, we must focus on the two current frameworks right-wing populism is analyzed through. These frameworks are demand politics and supply politics.

Much of the existing research addresses the influence of voter demand. Generally, right-wing populist parties appeal to voter fears, often characterized by xenophobic stances appealing to cultural purity and nativistic sentiment. This political strategy addresses those who feel underrepresented by exploiting the fear of national identity loss. This theory is sustained in cases where anti-immigration sentiment is particularly salient within the nation due to a variety of factors. However, focusing only on anti-immigration sentiment fails to fully address all European populist parties fully. While many parties focus on cultural preservation, others choose to address different issue areas, including an antiestablishment platform. Just as there are multiple pathways for right-wing populists to succeed, there are numerous frameworks from which to analyze populist political success.

The two most authoritative schools of thought from which to analyze right-wing populism include supply-side politics versus demand-side politics. The framework analyzing the strategies which parties implement to win elections is known as supply-side politics. Demand-side politics fails to mention the power and influence parties have over people, rather than the power people have over parties. As is often the case, populist parties, like other political parties, can manipulate the salience of specific political issues. To provide a better understanding of recent events, I provide an alternative framework. The research I have conducted elaborates upon the existing understanding of right-wing populism by demonstrating the motive behind populist party strategy. I suggest that populist party strategy is based on the specific immigration positions of the party's competitors. Specifically, I will address issues that are disproportionately emphasized by populist parties including immigration, Euroscepticism, and antiestablishment politics. This research was ultimately conducted with the goal of understanding what determines the political focus of these populist parties.

My research proposes an alternative hypothesis to the current literature because it hybridizes both competing schools of thought. I simultaneously incorporate principles of voter turnout (a demand-side issue) with party strategy (a supply-side issue). My hypothesis is as follows, *“In countries which lack an immigration political consensus among the largest mainstream parties, the right-wing populist party will select an immigration-focused platform to magnify the scope of voter turnout in their favor.”* This hypothesis focuses on one critical independent variable, whether or not there is a mainstream political consensus on immigration. This theory rests on the understanding that populist parties are uniquely capable of exploiting voter turnout due to their appeal to a seemingly disenfranchised political demographic. In addition, this hypothesis relies on what is described as a mainstream political party consensus on immigration. As a result of these theories’ relation to other political parties, both hypotheses can be characterized as ‘supply-side’ focused. By incorporating supply-side politics, I am addressing a much less explored school of thought. This inquiry works to provide a new framework which hybridizes both demand and supply-side politics. Amalgamation of theories occurs by incorporating the manipulation of political issues and strategy of populist parties, coupled with the necessity of voter turnout

My hypothesis relies on the foundations of an immigration consensus by the mainstream political parties. The presence of this consensus is then coupled with the effect of voter turnout in European countries. On the one hand, I propose countries’ lacking a mainstream immigration political consensus incentivize populist parties to focus on immigration. Inversely, this hypothesis is strengthened when also analyzing countries where there *is* a mainstream political consensus regarding immigration. In turn, the presence of a political consensus by the

mainstream parties is expected to influence the right-wing populist strategy and thus discourage an immigration-focused platform.

Over the course of the analysis, I have collected data from case studies exploring populist parties across Europe. I have narrowed down the populist successes to the two parties who have been most influential and successful, The Progress Party of Norway (FrP) and Swiss People's Party (SVP) of Switzerland. This incorporation of two comparative populist successes thus makes the research generalizable and applicable to other nations. Using process tracing as a means of verifying results, I collected sample selections and data sources directly from party manifestos as well as other research to provide an accurate determination.

I begin my thesis with a background of right-wing populism as it relates to globalization in the 20th and 21st century. Following this, the unique political characteristics of European populist politics are incorporated in which I acknowledge the duality of anti-immigration versus antiestablishment focused politics. I then incorporate demand-side politics as I address voter turnout as an element of my hypothesis. Upon addressing the gap in the current literature, I incorporate basic assumptions which are outlined in my research design. After establishing my research design, I follow up my background information and hypothesis with two case studies analyzing the FrP and the SVP. Following this analysis, I compare the verifiability of my hypothesis with other competing theories.



## **A Tale of Two Trends: Right-Wing Populism and Globalization**

A comprehensive history of both populism and globalization begins with the creation of democracy and national borders. Following this establishment, populism and globalization have emerged as constant political trends which transcend time. Despite the historical ambiguity regarding the precise emergence of populism and globalization, recent political events assert populism exists and is certainly relevant in the current geopolitical system. Beginning with globalization, I will establish not only the correlation of these trends but also the interconnectedness of right-wing populism and globalization. The connection between these phenomena manifests itself where the rise of one trend corresponds with a rise in the other.

Globalization is anything but a new phenomenon. While historians debate the origin of globalization, there is less disagreement regarding an adequate definition. Globalization is both the deepening and widening of social, political, and economic interconnectedness beyond national boundaries in the current Westphalian system (Ruzana 2015). Historians often cite examples including the silk road from East Asia to Anatolia and into Europe as a primitive example of the roots of globalization and international trade. Currently, most globalization theory is partitioned into three phases. The first phase of globalization begins with European expansion into the Americas. The second phase begins with the second industrial revolution, scramble for Africa, and colonization of the continent as well as immigration from Europe into the United States. The third phase of globalization begins with the conclusion of WWII and continues into our modern day.

The principal motivations of globalization have shifted throughout history. Despite this, the core of this phenomena continues to emphasize economic, political, and social interconnectedness. Modern globalization is characterized by increased industrialization, free

trade initiatives, and the growth of Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs). Post-WWII globalization largely emphasizes the emergence of several neoliberal organizations including the World Trade Organization, the United Nations, and World Bank to name a few. These organizations work as promoters of a common neoliberal agenda which permeates cultures, political systems, and domestic economies to this very day (Ruzana 2015). Global IGOs are not the only bodies promoting this development. Recently, regional organizations and agreements advocating for the same principles have emerged. These bodies include the Association of Southeast Asian States (ASEAN), the European Economic Community, and both bilateral and multilateral agreements.

Other more historically rooted attributes of globalization such as migration continue to be relevant today. The migration of people into cities as well as intercontinental and international movements is one of the most relevant current examples of globalization. The influence of migration as a political issue has proven relevant despite variable movements of people (Ruzana 2015). Migration is not the only facet of globalization affecting politics. Globalization has also affected the social and cultural characteristics which provide cross-cultural distinctions. The widening and deepening of this phenomenon has penetrated many unique cultural practices and societies, including the introduction of Western characteristics into non-Western cultures. Evidence of this is witnessed with the permeation of Starbucks in Egypt or a McDonald's in Oman. Globalization does not just refer to the Western influence on the world. Unique cultural practices including types of yoga are now international phenomena, supporting the notion that culture is now traveling across borders. Adding to these cultural elements of globalization, yet another significant actor in the past several decades is the invention of the internet.

The internet has proven to be a recent but also highly influential contributor to globalization. The internet has changed the manner in which we live our daily lives by increasing the speed and interconnectedness of transnational communication (Borcuch et al 2012). The current distinction the internet provides to globalization is its instantaneous ability for global contact. The invention of the internet allows societies to receive news, monitor regions, and stay in touch with those on the other side of the world, thus speeding up the ability with which globalization can occur (Borcuch et al 2012). A prime example of this increased speed of globalization lies in the Arab spring. Following the publication of a video shot in Tunisia, an entire region was galvanized in an attempt to act on behalf of democratic principles. Despite the magnitude of globalization's rise, the permeation and prevalence throughout the world has not occurred without reservation.

The increasing prevalence of globalization has led some scholars to believe there is a connection between globalization and right-wing populism in the 20th and 21st centuries (Steenbergen and Siczek 2017). Right-wing populism and globalization are believed to be linked in a competing manner. Right-wing populism is certainly not a new phenomenon, as ancient populist successes can be seen in Julius Caesar with more recent examples including American President Andrew Jackson. Recently, right-wing populism has proved increasingly relevant as several elections in the 20th and 21st centuries were defined by populist political victories. These victories occurred across the globe in South America, Europe, the United States, and Australia. Therefore, it is no coincidence right-wing populism and globalism seem interconnected in democracies. This realization is due to the contrary nature of populist policies and globalization (Steenbergen and Siczek 2017).

Right-wing populism is a political ideology which is generally portrayed as support for the concerns of ordinary people versus elites. As is often the case within the development of political ideologies, right-wing populism has evolved throughout the centuries to maintain relevance. Modern-day right-wing populism has evolved into a political ideology built upon opposition to trends of globalization. The cornerstone of populist anti-globalization rhetoric is the need to protect the perceived losers of globalization. Populist politics targets globalization advocates by stating the right-wing populists are the only political party protecting the voters against globalization shortcomings (Mughan, Bean, and McCallister 2003).

Right-wing populists often combat globalization in the economic realm as well. They proclaim laissez-faire attitudes toward domestic economic policies. In the international arena, however, many both right and left-wing populists reject free trade as it is often portrayed as taking advantage of and exploiting the working class (Mughan, Bean, and McCallister 2003). This style of populism can be witnessed in many of the South American countries in the late 20th century, most notably in Argentina under populist leader Juan Peron. This region is infamous for attempting import substitution industrialization policies espoused by their populist leaders. These policies were pursued as a rejection of the Global North's influence who supposedly exploited the Global South through free trade. In many other regions, populists have adopted mercantilism in economic affairs also. These protectionist practices are created with a goal of preserving unity and national economic independence. This view stems from the belief significant penetration of foreign governments into the national economy "erodes national economic independence" (Mughan, Bean, and McCallister 2003).

While both left and right-wing populists demonize foreign involvement in the domestic market, right-wing populists often couple this platform with ethnocentric and culturally

authoritarian rhetoric to garner political support. The causal mechanism describing the correlation between domestic market independence and cultural preservation stems from the nature of globalization. To protect the domestic economy, right-wing populists leverage job insecurity of the working class to win elections. They do so by targeting jobs which are assumed by foreign, often cheaper labor (Mughan, Bean, and McCallister 2003). Over time, a connection between foreigners and job loss becomes emerges whether reality or not. This notion is augmented by constant populist rhetoric grouping both foreign governments and citizens as outsiders. This connection provides one explanation for the often-exclusionary attitudes of right-wing populist parties.

In sum, globalization and right-wing populism are two undeniably connected themes impacting the current geopolitical system. The relationship between globalization and right-wing populism continues to be one of the most relevant political issues to this day. While right-wing populism is currently penetrating many parts of the globe, one of the regions most affected by its reach includes Western and Northern Europe. In recent decades, several countries have experienced significant populist political successes. To understand the basis for this success, it is necessary to understand the contribution globalization makes to right-wing populism. Now that a connection has been established, the current role of right-wing populism in Europe will be explored.

## **Right-Wing Populist Politics: A European Focus**

Right-wing populism is a phenomenon which has influenced nearly every democratic country in the world with varying degrees of success. In other regions, right-wing populists have seized power including Duterte in the Philippines and Trump in the United States. Despite many commonalities, European right-wing populism differentiates itself from other forms because it is built upon comparatively different characteristics, most notably the incorporation of Eurosceptic mobilization. The specific set of issues populist parties can exploit in Europe are vastly different than other populist circumstances largely in part because of the European Union. Additionally, the populist roots currently penetrating Europe in different manners are a result of the political climate created out of the post-WWII era.

Until World War I, European politics was characterized as an environment consisting of numerous bilateral relationships between countries, while lacking many of the significant regional IGOs it possesses today. The majority of European countries at this time retained domestic economic control along with the power to determine immigration policy and movement of peoples (Venke 2007). The relative sovereignty of European nations was enjoyed until the conclusion of WWII. In looking for an explanation behind the destruction, many blamed the lack of interconnectedness as a contributing factor to the outbreak of war and also a means to consolidate power to combat the USSR (Venke 2007). To prevent another such catastrophe from occurring, European leaders scrambled for a solution to increase interconnectedness. The solution created by these European leaders represented the adoption of a political consensus which defines European politics to this very day. The consensus ultimately adopted was that of “one-Europe” which would be connected economically, culturally, and politically. This would, in effect, eliminate the possibility of intra-European war. This ideological framework led to the

establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (Venke 2007). However, the increasing interconnectedness of the region did not halt with coal and steel.

As the 20th century progressed, so did the deepening and widening of what was once just a coal and steel union. More European nations began to involve themselves with increasingly comprehensive agreements, including the interconnectivity of what is today the European Economic Community (Venke 2007). This economic community is defined by a common market as well as a customs union which is comprised of free trade as well as a common external tariff on states outside of the union. The increasing level of commitment necessitated by these states can be characterized as acute hyper-globalization, or in this case Europeanization.

Europeanization refers to the environment in which the economies, governments, and cultures of Western European democracy become intertwined (Venke 2007). Europeanization is similar to the globalization phenomena as it represents a restructuring of the political status quo. This period of rapid connectivity culminated in the Maastricht Agreement of 1993, establishing what is now known as the European Union. This 28-member organization is characterized by free trade, freedom of movement, and in many places a common currency. Peculiarly, the very same solution which has kept peace in Europe over the past several decades has also contributed to the rise of right-wing populism today.

Right-wing populism in Europe is undoubtedly becoming one of the most relevant political trends of the early 21st century. In the past three decades, this regional shock has penetrated nearly every corner of the Europe from Finland to Poland to France. The most significant element of European right-wing populism is the potential effect it can have on the political interconnectedness of the region. If it is indeed wholly successful, European right-wing populism possesses the capability to dismantle the organization of the European Union. The

consequence of continuing populist success in Europe is not inherently negative; however, it would likely lead to the dissolution of the second largest economy in the world, as well as fracturing of the current political order.

The rise of right-wing populism within Europe is both widely pervasive but also deeply piercing. Right-wing populism is not only a phenomenon which loosely affects every European country. Rather, it is a trend which significantly impacts every country while disproportionately affecting certain areas more than others. Nearly every European country has experienced an increase in right-wing populist political success within the last several election cycles. In addition to widespread national success, specific regions within countries often experience greater populist successes than others. In Eastern Europe, right-wing populists in Hungary and Poland control as much as 60% of the government in certain localities (Tartar 2017).

In more established and wealthier regions such as Scandinavia, right-wing populist parties have achieved roles in governing coalitions of five nations with notable successes including Norway and Sweden. This Scandinavian populist success is even more significant in Denmark where the populist party achieved the greatest percentage of parliamentary seats (Tartar 2017). Other notable populist victories have occurred in the Alps region. Both Switzerland and Austria have recently experienced rampant populist successes, with the Swiss People's Party securing the greatest vote percentage.

Additionally, the 2017 elections in France saw populist National Front Leader Marine Le Pen make it to the final round of the national election, albeit she only secured a third of the final vote. Regardless, the case of France is significant as it testifies to the regional pressure right-wing populism has placed on conventional European politics. While these parties have been recently successful, it is imperative to point out these trends are not deteriorating. Right-wing



populism continues to affect several European countries in an increasingly prevalent manner. Much of the region is experiencing increasing rates of right-wing populist success, with the most notable rises in both Scandinavia and eastern Europe (Tartar 2017).

Within the past several decades, Europe has experienced right-wing populist successes which continue to threaten the political status quo of the region. The last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw Europe adopt increased political and economic interconnectedness. However, in the last three decades, right-wing populism emanated to combat this common European ideology. Right-wing populism has emerged across Europe and has begun to rival the political ideology the region was once relatively familiar with. Whether or not these right-wing populist political successes will have long-term effects cannot yet be determined, but the current evidence is irrefutable; Europe is experiencing a rise in right-wing populism. The significance of this political change lies in the degree of interconnectivity of Europe, and the potential consequences for continuing populist success. The consequences of increased populist success cannot be understated as they directly combat the political force which has forged Europe into what it is today. Economically, Europe is currently benefiting from rampant interconnectedness. However, the success of this phenomena contributes to the controversy surrounding right-wing populism. Henceforth, the motivating factor driving the following research rests on the relevance and magnitude of continued right-wing populist success as well as the misunderstanding surrounding this phenomenon.

## Current Literature

Right-wing populist parties are often characterized by issue foci concerned primarily with immigration and nationalism. Despite this right-wing populist tradition, Europe has experienced a curious pattern of populist success built upon Euroscepticism and anti-elitism. This trend expands upon traditional populist understanding by providing yet another issue area for right-wing populist parties to campaign upon. The combination of Euroscepticism and anti-elitism couples with traditional platforms of anti-immigration and nationalism, presenting a noteworthy political environment. Thus, in the unique circumstances influencing politics of western Europe, what determines the political focus of the right-wing populist parties?

Understanding the political focus of right-wing populist parties is becoming an increasingly vital issue as they become greater political players in European countries. Additionally, the determination of the political focus is complicated by the prevalence of European specific issues such as Euroscepticism. Properly identifying what determines the political focus of these parties is the first step in understanding populist party success. Once this success is understood, the research can be used to interpret the foundation of European populist politics. The goal of my analysis is to provide a better understanding of how populist parties win elections and what tactics are employed. This is done to help all political actors decipher the complicated environment which they are operating in.

The issue of European right-wing populism is one which must be researched delicately because of the aperture in the literature concerning this theme. The gap concerning right-wing populist politics is a result of the distinct schools of thought researchers associate themselves with. The two predominant schools of thought include those who focus on supply-side politics compared with those whose research focuses solely on demand-side politics. The prevalence of

these long-established schools of thought has created a field of research which inadequately addresses the complexity of right-wing populism. Current research is often consciously or subconsciously categorized into one of these existing stances. This categorization of research is limited at best due to the disregard of contributing analysis from the alternative field. These alternative fields often fail to be incorporated with each other because the focus of either demand or supply-side politics often requires simplification of the material. To simplify the analysis, alternative variables which determine political focus are often eliminated, including those adhering to an alternative school of thought such as relevant situational factors or mainstream party strategy. This simplification is at the core of the research gap.

The primary differentiation between demand and supply-side politics is the question of who is the responsive political actor? Demand-siders state political parties respond to the wants of the voters when choosing their political focus. The demand-side research on right-wing populism often focuses on what voters want during a specific election cycle and other situational factors. Nearly every country experiences underlying concerns regarding immigration, cultural preservation, nativism, and exclusionary political rhetoric (Betz 2001). Generally, these can situationally fluctuate as a result of refugee crises and economic recessions. Regardless, there is almost always a prevalence of an underlying nativist ideology in every society. This underlying grievance is often addressed as the determining factor for those adhering to the demand-side school of thought (Oesch 2008).

A consistent underlying anti-immigration ideology lies at the core of demand-side populist politics. Right-wing populist parties seek to capitalize upon grievance mobilization, thus focusing upon the fears and anxieties of the people (Ivarsflaten 2008). However, not all demand-

side populist theories rely solely on nativist principles. Other studies have elaborated upon the voter's economic dissatisfaction to explain populist parties' political focus (Oesch 2008).

To summarize, demand-side politics focuses on the political party as the responsive actor to the wants of the people, an ideology contrasting with the alternative school of thought.

Conversely, supply-side politics states people are the responsive actor in the political system. This ideology manifests itself in the way political parties can self-select their strategy and manipulate the salience of issues (Green-Pederson 2007). The success of a party is therefore reliant on the party's ability to manipulate issues to win favor from the people. Supply-side politics is the realm of the political exchange focusing on the strategy of the party and the methods it employs to capture voters. This is done by creating (or emphasizing) an issue to achieve electoral success or gain the consideration of other parties (Green-Pederson 2007). This school of thought is considered supply-side politics because the literature focuses on the role of the political party as the determinant of issue focus. Commonly, this school addresses concerns regarding issue competition. Issue competition is a political concept which characterizes the focus of political parties by analyzing their relationship to other political parties (Green-Pederson 2007). Under these circumstances, issue competition states right-wing populist parties determine their political focus not by people's desires, but rather by campaigning upon whichever issue it theorizes can be most salient (Meguid 2005). Ultimately, success lies in addressing the issues the party prefers or believes it can differentiate itself most on. In the end, the political party determines which issue to select as their political focus, meaning the people are the responsive actor (Green-Pedersen 2007).

While there are supply-siders who focus on the smaller party as the initial actor, other research addresses the role of the larger mainstream parties. Generally, smaller parties are forced

to react to the larger conventional parties' policy positions as a result of the larger parties' increased resources. These niche parties are forced to react not to voters, but to other more established parties based on the political community they are operating in (Meguid 2005). The research addressing these special focus parties can continue to be categorized as the supply-side school of thought. Research focusing on inter-party size and relationship in the determination of political focus is still categorized as supply-side because the party is still the actor determining the issue (Meguid 2005). Supply-side research focuses on how the relationship between niche parties and more established political parties work to manipulate the salience of political issues. Regarding this school of thought, issues surrounding supply-side literature do arise. The core shortcomings of supply-side analysis are that it is under-researched, and it fails to address the role voters play in issue selection.

When research fails to address the contributions of an alternative paradigm, it ignores potentially crucial information. These are the characteristics which have emerged following populist research. Currently, a research gap has undoubtedly emerged resulting from populist research which addresses only one of the two schools of thought. Regarding right-wing populism, this void has created a perceived need to isolate voter desire and party strategy. The literature fails to recognize the symbiotic relationship occurring between voters and the parties when one school's analysis ignores the other. While demand-siders state populist parties choose to campaign upon issues the voters show interest in, it is incomplete. A solely demand-side focus fails to address the role of the political community in which these parties operate. Meanwhile, the supply-side school of thought completely ignores the significance of voter turnout in any series of elections. Therefore, supply-side politics fails to address the role which the voters contribute. I will thus work to fill this ideological vacancy.

My proposed research unites both supply and demand-side theory. I focus on the role parties play when selecting political focus as it concerns their goal of disproportionately increasing voter turnout in the right-wing populists' favor. Specifically, this means that parties are both responding to people and voter turnout, but also manipulating the salience of issues to achieve greater turnout. Under this theory, populist success is a combination of political parties acting on underlying voter anxieties while also working to supply and manipulate the weight of issues. This research is compelling because it states populist parties select their stance concerning both other political parties and those voters who would normally abstain, a feeling which stems from perceived disenfranchisement. Inevitably, this results in the hybridization of both supply and demand-side politics.

The following research will work to provide a new framework from which to analyze right-wing populism. This new school of thought is located at the convergence of supply and demand-side politics. By incorporating the specific political issue of immigration into the supply-side of politics, I reach a conclusion which applies to the populist political parties of Europe. Additionally, this conclusion can be applied to any European political environment experiencing populist success. In doing so, I will address the current academic void, thereby answering a question growing in political relevance.

## **The Two Foci of European Populist Politics**

The distinguishing factor between European right-wing populism and other regions populist trends is that Europe possesses a critical vulnerability otherwise known as the EU. European susceptibility to right-wing populism is augmented by the presence of the EU. While there are several benefits to the EU, the IGO's power adds yet another factor right-wing populists can address - Euroscepticism. The presence of Euroscepticism is significant because it alters the political community the populist parties are operating in and transforms how populist parties can act. Simultaneously, the way populist parties act can transform the European Union. In effect, parties can manipulate Eurosceptic rhetoric in addition to more commonly referenced policies such as immigration and jobs. This provides another strategy for the right-wing populists to ultimately leverage.

Established earlier, right-wing populism is combative toward globalization. In Europe, right-wing populism is growing increasingly antagonistic toward Europeanization which is an aspect of globalization (Krouwel and Abts 2007). Europeanization is, in reality, a more focused type of globalization and thus is inherently contradictory to many right-wing populist principles. The additional focus area of Europeanization provides yet another tool for right-wing populists to manipulate. In Latin America, the United States, and Southeast Asia, populist parties often achieve success by focusing on ethnocentrism and/or anti-elitism. In Europe, the populist party can incorporate ethnocentrist rhetoric in addition to anti-Europeanization policy. This alternative platform both complicates and facilitates the rise of right-wing populism in the region, especially when compared to more commonly referenced issues including ethnocentrism and nativism.

Euroscepticism is becoming an increasingly exploited issue area by right-wing populist parties across the region. Over the past two decades, nearly every country has experienced at

least a partial rise in Eurosceptic sentiment (Harmsen 2010). Some of the most notable countries whose populist parties are campaigning upon Eurosceptic platforms include Switzerland, the Netherlands, and France. Despite these successes, Euroscepticism is not necessary for a populist party to obtain victory as is the case for Poland (Bakker et al 2015). Complementing the issue of Euroscepticism is anti-elitism which can be a more focused extension of Eurosceptic sentiment manifesting itself in the dislike and distrust of traditional politics. The presence of the European Union provides even more targets for an anti-elitist stance, simply because the bureaucracy of the European Union creates more elites. In effect, anti-elitism can now manifest itself against the elites of both the domestic political scene and also the politicians of the European Parliament and European Central Bank (Krouwel and Abts 2007). Countries currently experiencing significant amounts of anti-elitist politics include France, the Netherlands, as well as Finland. Undoubtedly, it is clear Euroscepticism is becoming a political issue that could prove to be uniquely capable in transforming the EU.

The foundation of the anti-Europeanization movement by right-wing populist parties has previously been connected to the post-WWII neoliberal consensus. The vast death and destruction which plagued Europe following these conflicts ushered in need for political change. Following this war, there was no room for political dissent regarding the needed interconnectedness of European powers. Thus, nearly every mainstream political party of the original six Treaty of Rome countries adopted a pro-Europeanization stance (Vanke 2007). Pro-Europeanization stances were then characterized as positions calling for economic and political interconnectedness on an international level. Over time, these positions would evolve into the neoliberal ideology defining much of western thought to this very day. The initial consensus and



adoption of pro-Europeanization has evolved into the modern-day neo-liberal ideology which has characterized the political conditions of Europe over the past several decades.

The adoption of the Europeanization political consensus did not come without consequences. When nearly every party adopted this consensus, there were few political parties who represented an alternative opinion. Once the post-war dust settled, the lack of a political outlet for anyone intolerant of the common European consensus was left feeling inadequately represented (Mughan, Bean, and McCallister 2003). This void laid the foundation for right-wing populist parties. One result of a general ideology concerning Europeanization was the desire for alternative parties. By the 1960s and 1970s, public opinion started to yearn for parties of a different focus with a contrasting ideological base, evidenced by the emergence of populist parties across Norway (Bjerkem 2016), Switzerland (Mazzeloni and Skenderovic 2007) and other parts of Europe. Following several decades of little to no involvement from political parties who opposed Europeanization, right-wing populist parties began to emerge led by charismatic leaders calling for reform (Harmsen 2010).

Right-wing populist parties in Europe are exploiting Euroscepticism by tapping into the discontent and negative opinions surrounding Europeanization which many citizens possess (Krouwel and Abts 2007). Right-wing populists campaign against globalization and Europeanization for a variety of reasons including the desire to restrict movement of people and the need to preserve national independence. While both these reasons may be valid, the core of right-wing populism traditionally appeals to the sovereign rule of a homogenous people by a single, embodying leader. Consequently, right-wing populism is opposed to Europeanization because it represents multiple leaders ruling over multiple peoples (Krouwel and Abts 2007).

Therefore, if the homogeneity of the people becomes threatened, so does the chance for populist success.

The populist right is both distrustful and ideologically opposed to any secession of political control to a power other than the ordinary people. Not surprisingly, many successful populist parties have gained power while campaigning on Eurosceptic attitudes. Eurosceptic attitudes are often addressed because it relates the distrust of national institutions to European institutions (Krouwel and Abts 2007). Complementing this distrust of national institutions is the sentiment of inadequate representation. Populist parties have leveraged this feeling of inadequate representation by projecting the feelings onto Europe as a whole. Evidence supporting this data is seen in countries where a higher distrust of national institutions is expectantly connected to higher levels of distrust for Europeanization (Krouwel and Abts 2007). In effect, political distrust is being transferred from national institutions to the supranational institutions of Europe including the European Union. Complicating Euroscepticism is the fact there is increasing distrust of political elites across the region. Therefore, a connection is established between the distrusted political elites of a single country and further applied as distrust of the European elites dictating regional policy. Accordingly, Euroscepticism is not just a negative portrayal of Europeanization, but specifically, a criticism of the rulers who comprise it (Harmsen 2010).

To summarize, the creation of the European Union, the European Economic Community, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and every other facet of Europeanization has fueled the ongoing populist fire. The sweeping populist success across Europe is undoubtedly connected to the rise of Euroscepticism over the past several decades. Complementing this source of dissent is increasing anti-elitist attitudes, yet another source of backlash against Europeanization. In

addition to the important role of Euroscepticism in fomenting populist success, some parties continue to exploit traditional anti-immigrant platforms.

The more recurrent agenda of right-wing populism in other parts of the globe concerns the issue of immigration and ultimately cultural preservation. Immigration of different people groups has always been an issue of contentious debate. This controversy carries itself over to today with the prominence of immigration-related platforms in nearly every populist party stance throughout Europe. Recent political history sheds light on why immigration is an important platform for right-wing populist parties. In the past few years, several of the most successful right-wing populist parties in Europe have taken extreme right stances on immigration. These parties include the recently successful Austria Freedom Party which stated the country was not a party of immigration (Tartar 2017). In addition to this recent success, the Dutch, French, Danish, Swiss and Swedish populist parties have all expressed anti-immigration policies. These policies vary in goal but range from restrictive citizenship to pulling out of the Schengen area of the European Union.

Europeanization has furthered the right-wing populist exploitation of immigration. The connection between immigration and Europeanization lies in the globalist tenant of Europeanization which calls for the freedom of movement and people. Following WWII, the European consensus ushered in increased cultural interconnectedness. Promotions for both cultural and labor interconnectedness succeeded in joining the recently warring nations together (Vanke 2007). The bolstering for interconnectedness and the innate nature of people to create in-groups and out-groups began to conflict with each other. Once it was perceived countries with established borders and a homogenous culture were being challenged, right-wing populism emerged as a means to voice concern.

While Euroscepticism coincided with the rise of Europeanization, anti-immigration rhetoric has always existed. Populist parties have long manipulated the salience of immigration. Traditionally, whether or not immigration was a pertinent issue at the time has not quite mattered to the success of these parties. More importantly, these populist parties have become increasingly successful as they emphasized immigration to a greater extent (Ivarsflaten 2008). While immigration has always been cited as a political problem, modern European immigration issues emerged following WWII after the initial reconstruction of Europe was pursued.

Immediately following WWII, a pro-immigration consensus manifested itself as a means to address the labor shortage necessary to rebuild the Europe. While these pro-immigration policies were initially welcomed, a backlash began to occur in the 1950s (Kent 2017). Over time, the residency status of new immigrants began to be questioned following the planned reconstruction. Immigration thus became a contested issue as the movement of people throughout Europe threatened the ethnic homogeneity of certain areas. While these policies were established by governments, evidence has shown public perception is less optimistic about immigration rates. According to a recent Gallup poll (2017) Europe is considered a rather abiding region regarding immigration, noted for their efforts to recently aid refugees from North Africa. Furthermore, people within the EU are free to move across borders with the establishment of the Schengen zone which has abolished passport and border controls. In spite of the currently abiding nature of many European countries toward immigrants, one key takeaway is that populist parties would exploit immigration as an issue regardless of the actual immigration rates. This is an effort to appeal to the inherent fears many cultures possess of outsiders (Fitzgerald et al 2017). Again, this is a manifestation of supply-side politics which focuses less so on voter demand and situational factors as it does on party strategy.

One final distinction to make concerning anti-immigrant policies is that the overarching goal affecting these platforms is the hope for cultural preservation. The objective of anti-immigration rhetoric by populist parties is not to simply keep immigrants out of a country. Rather, once immigrants enter a country, right-wing populists espouse policy proposals to achieve cultural preservation (Bakker et al 2015). Thus, a country's populist party can succeed by advocating for other policies which may not necessarily target immigration directly. In Europe, these policies include restrictive citizenship rights for foreigners and legislated assimilation practices which also work for the goal of cultural preservation.

The success right-wing populist parties have achieved by campaigning on cultural preservation platforms cannot be understated. Anti-immigration policy has proved widely effective in Europe and is prevalent in nearly every populist party (Ivarsflaten 2008). Immigration is addressed universally because it appeals to anxieties of globalization and the challenging of a collective identity. Currently, anti-immigration populist parties undertake a variety of platforms including the following: restrictive immigration, cultural preservation, and forced assimilation. The success of these platforms has proven itself over and over again, assuredly contributing to its constant recurrence in political campaigns. In fact, when tested among seven other factors typically addressed by populist parties, it was established no right-wing populist party has proven successful without mobilizing grievances over immigration (Ivarsflaten 2008). It is this widespread grievance that has proved the cornerstone of many populist parties. Despite this, variations in political focus continue to occur.

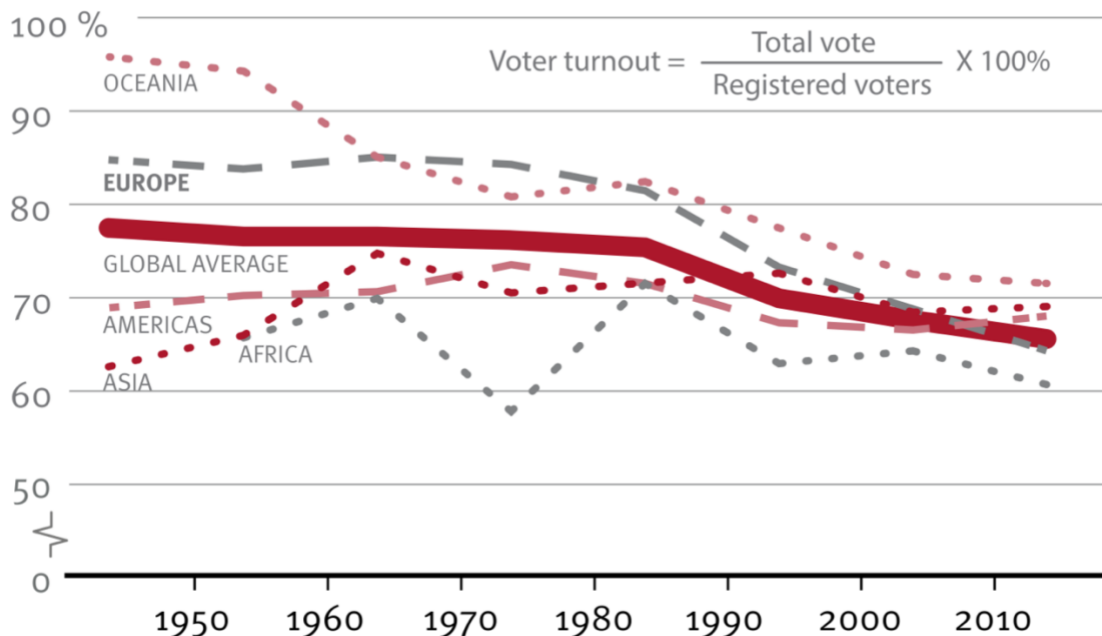
## **A Theory Built Upon Voter Mobilization**

The heart of my research addresses right-wing populist party tactics used to mobilize voter turnout in their favor. This new framework for analyzing western European right-wing populism draws from supply and demand-side political analysis by addressing the role of both the political party and the voter. I state that right-wing populist political parties are in constant competition, primarily with their less polarized counterparts. The main source of this competition for right-wing populist parties comes from the moderate right party, while the moderate left party can also be a primary competitor. While several European countries have multiple parties, the mainstream moderate right and left parties are the primary competitors for the right-wing populists because they are what right-wing populists deem the establishment. This competitive relationship creates parties who select which issues to supply to the voter to achieve electoral success. Prior literature has shown the tendency for populist parties possess to focus on either anti-immigration sentiment or Euroscepticism and anti-elitism. But what factor causes the parties to choose one platform rather than the other?

Using the above supply-side research on party relationships, I incorporate the demand-side issue of voter turnout and its prevalence in Europe, thus hybridizing existing literature. Before proceeding, it must be explicitly stated that parties are not necessarily campaigning on issues leaders in the party care most about. From the realist school of thought, it is understood that political parties campaign upon the issues they think will benefit themselves most in the election. The bottom line of any election is to win more votes than the other parties. In countries where voter turnout is a recurring problem, elections can be determined by which party turns out a disproportionate number of voters in their favor.

Europe has experienced a steady decline in voter turnout since the 1980s (Fitzgerald et al 2017). This decade marked the beginning of a steady 30-year voter participation decline for nearly every country included in the study (Voter Turnout Database 2018). In fact, the average voter turnout across the region has declined almost 17% over the past 50 years, with a brief spike in participation for 2017 (Figure 1). Based on this declining voter turnout, it is clear why capturing disenfranchised citizens can lead to disproportionate electoral success.

Figure 1: Illustrating Declining European Voter Turnout



Source: Adapted from Voter Turnout Database (2018)

Voter turnout is an issue which does not affect all parties equally. One reason contributing to poor voter turnout is political disenfranchisement or a sense of political apathy. Poor voter turnout is uniquely exploitable by right-wing populist parties if they can mobilize a voter base who feels disenfranchised and distrustful (Hooghe, Marien, and Pauwels 2011). The source of this disenfranchisement can be exploited by either focusing on anti-immigration or antiestablishment sentiment. If the right-wing populist party can determine an issue which will

mobilize this otherwise stagnant demographic, they can achieve disproportionate success based on issues which may otherwise be considered unimportant (Ivarsflaten 2008). Thus, I posit that the desire to exploit voter turnout is the motive behind why populist parties select their policy position concerning other parties. Ultimately, the greater difference in a position the right-wing populists can achieve leads to a greater likelihood of disproportionate electoral success.

Disproportionate electoral success references the non-voting population, wherein situations everyone voted, their percentage of success would likely be lower. The question, therefore, becomes how do populist parties achieve increased turnout? This is the question which my hypothesis works to solve.

Hypothesis 1 (H1) states the following.

*In countries which lack an immigration political consensus among the largest mainstream parties, the right-wing populist party will select an immigration-focused platform to magnify the scope of voter turnout in their favor.*

Thus, the populist party is incentivized to campaign on immigration following the absence of an immigration political consensus. This theory is contingent on whether or not there is a significant ideological gap between the mainstream parties regarding immigration. While the mainstream parties possess sharply distinct views, the absence of a consensus creates an environment in which immigration is neither exploited nor emphasized by the mainstream parties. In addition, this theory incorporates voter turnout as a political problem. The causal mechanism for this is the populist parties are choosing their position to leverage their party against mainstream politics, thus representing those who feel disenfranchised which has proven



to work in past cases (Hooghe, Marien, and Pauwels 2011). The right-wing populists are able to capture immigration-minded voters following the absence of a consensus, thus leveraging this grievance in their favor. Additionally, if a mainstream consensus does exist, a political environment is created where the mainstream parties converge on a relatively conservative immigration position. This convergence of the mainstream parties is more likely to satisfy disenfranchised immigration-minded voters because it satisfies the underlying predisposition against immigration (Fitzgerald et al 2017). Consequently, the potential scope of voter turnout in the right-wing populists' favor is diminished following the presence of a conservative immigration consensus. Therefore, the right-wing populists select other critical issues providing for increased differentiation including antiestablishment, Eurosceptic, and anti-elitist sentiment.

The inverse of H1 is also analyzed to strengthen the validity of my research. This inverse focuses on countries in which an immigration political consensus exists among the mainstream parties. The presence of a consensus is characterized by mainstream parties who supply ideologically similar immigration positions. The presence or absence of a political consensus concerning immigration implies a variety of elements for the political community.

When there is no political consensus among the mainstream parties, immigration-minded voters' concerns are often ignored by the mainstream parties who are unlikely to satisfy voters' ideological positions. Additionally, it is vital to note these parties are both conventional and moderate, meaning they are competing for votes with each-other in the middle of the political spectrum. They are therefore unlikely to capture any extreme leaning voters because of their moderate nature. Thus, while a difference in ideological position is evident enough to distinguish the moderate parties slightly, immigration as an issue tends to be deemphasized which is the case in Norway (Bakker et al 2015). In turn, the mainstream parties deemphasize their position on

immigration and choose to focus on other issues, because it is in these areas they are most able to distinguish themselves from the other mainstream party.

When the mainstream parties ignore the immigration issue, it permits them to focus on other issue areas which they believe are more exploitable. As a result, these parties emphasize other issues and either ignore immigration or only incorporate it as a minor facet of differentiation between the other mainstream party. This strategy by the mainstream parties is assumed because the primary competitor of one mainstream party is the other mainstream party. Curiously, it is as if three separate political battles are occurring. On the one hand, there is a battle between the mainstream parties for moderate voters. On the other hand, a battle is also occurring between the moderate right party and right-wing populist party. Finally, the right-wing populists are exploiting the 'unpopular' left-wing immigration stance of the moderate left party, using it to exploit concerned voters who are immigration-minded. The result of these separate yet interconnected political battles is an environment ripe for populist exploitation of immigration-minded voters. The right-wing populists are able to simultaneously criticize the comparatively weak stance of the moderates, while also manipulating the left-wing position to address grievances.

In sum, inversely analyzing H1 addresses countries in which an immigration consensus is present. In this environment, the populist party will select an alternative political other than immigration, a decision made to capture disenfranchised voters whose opinions are adequately addressed by the conservative-leaning consensus. By capturing these once stagnant and disenfranchised voters, the populist party is synthesizing a new political environment by cheating what was once a zero-sum game. In a country where everyone votes, one parties loss is another parties gain. However, in countries where there are people who would otherwise not vote, the

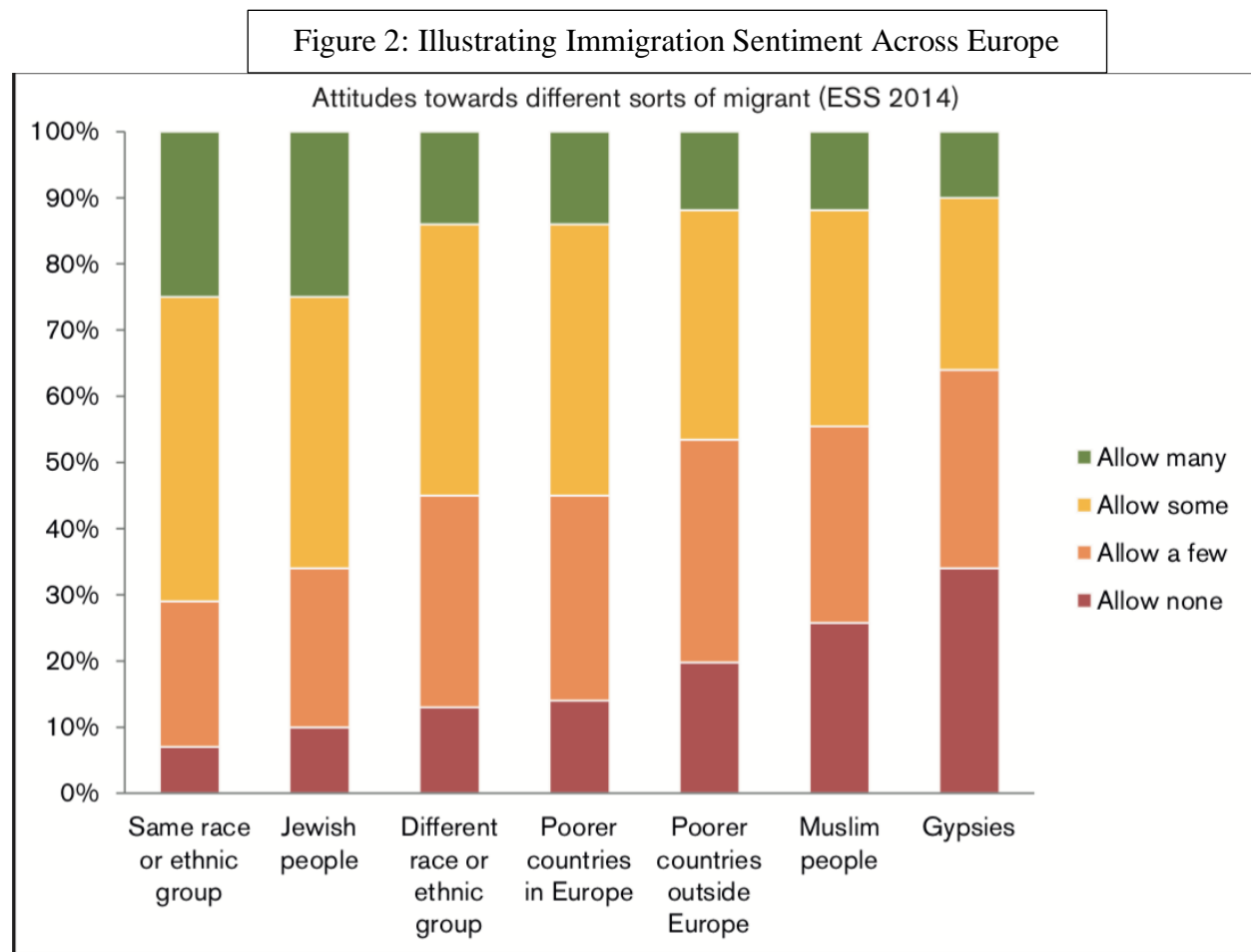
populist party is willing to lose moderate right voters and assume a radical immigration position to capture a greater amount of radical right voters.

## Research Design

Why do European right-wing populist parties select the political focuses they do during an election cycle? To begin, it must be determined the choices made by every political party in a democracy are done so to achieve the greatest electoral success. This desire to gain political power shapes the policy positions parties will focus on during an election cycle. In addition to this desire to win electorally, a distinction must be made regarding “big vs. little” politics. Just as there is a distinction between certain political issues, there is a distinction between the most lucrative political issues as well, or the ones voters care most about (Mark 2017). In politics, there is a general hierarchy of issues which voters and parties tend to focus on. In conventional politics, these issues generally include national security and the economy. In the past several years, some of the most important issues in Europe have included terrorism, immigration, and the economic problems (Mark 2017). Upon closer examination, there is also a hierarchy of issues populist parties wish to exploit. Primarily, populist parties desire to appeal to immigration due to its inherent pervasiveness and deep political roots. If the political environment is not ripe for populist exploitation of immigration, right-wing populists will address Euroscepticism and anti-elitism. However, right-wing populists often desire to campaign upon anti-immigration sentiment because of European predisposition toward conservative positions, which I will elaborate upon later. This desire to at least position themselves as anti-immigration is witnessed by Ivarsflaten (2008) who found no European right-wing populist party was successful without adopting an extremely conservative immigration position.

Europeans’ views regarding varieties of immigration is yet another factor which influences populist politics. Immigration is often a highly contested issue across the world, with the heart of the debate lying in perceived in-group vs. out-group differences. The range of

policies a country may assume concerning immigration may vary, but general societal views toward immigration are often skewed toward increasingly closed borders, as public perception illustrates today. Europe is a prime example of this phenomena. Figure two depicts this sensation and illustrates European sentiment toward immigration laws (Fitzgerald et al 2017).



Source: Adapted from the European Social Survey (2017)

Data collected in the chart above represents Europeans' predisposition toward slightly more closed borders rather than slightly more open borders. Among Europeans of the same ethnic group as immigrants, just under 50% polled favor *only partial* acceptance. This near majority is coupled with almost 30% of voters who wish to only accept a few and/or no immigrants whatsoever (Fitzgerald et al 2017). Together, these views combine for a collective

desire by 75% of the population to allow only some immigrants into their countries, and that is when the immigrants are of the *same* ethnicity. When the same question is asked regarding increasingly different people groups, hostility toward immigration is exacerbated. This tendency toward conservative elements of immigration will prove a core attribute of my theory.

Arguably the most important aspect of my research was selecting which right-wing populist parties to analyze. It was determined the cases proving most applicable would be those parties which have experienced the greatest success. The most successful populist parties were chosen for analysis (compared with those moderately/barely successful) because they are most likely to impact the current European political system. By analyzing the most successful parties, we can better understand reasons why populist parties win, why others are losing, and what mainstream parties can do about it.

Under these circumstances, it was established that the Norwegian Progress Party (FrP) and the Swiss People's Party (SVP) are the two most successful populist parties in Europe. Both the FrP and SVP can be declared successful populist parties due to their historical prevalence as well as political achievements. Both populist parties have had a foothold in parliament for several decades. The FrP was first established in the mid-1970s with libertarian roots (Bjerkem 2016), while the SVP grew out of agrarian politics of the 1950s (Mazzeloni and Skenderovic 2007). Additionally, both populist parties have achieved credible electoral success both past and present. The Norwegian FrP has been part of the governing conservative coalition for multiple elections, while the SVP is currently the largest party in the Swiss Federal Assembly.

My research incorporates predominately qualitative sources, coupled with partial quantitative analysis which was used to explain precise policy positions and compare political parties. Using mostly qualitative resources complements my research because there are many

factors affecting the focus of political parties. Due to the constantly changing environment as well as reliance on party rhetoric, quantitative sources alone prove far too narrow when determining political focus. Conversely, the reliance on qualitative sources allows a wider range of data to be observed, rather than evidence from one quantitative source which may fail to address the entirety of the issue. As a result, the literature incorporated into this qualitative analysis includes not only primary source manifestos, but also journal articles, proposed policy positions, and expert analysis. The methods of data collection emerged most significantly from academic articles as well as surveys by political scientists reported in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey.

The use of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) facilitated multiple levels of my research. The CHES (2015) is a political analysis of 337 political scientists specializing in European politics. In total, it provides policy positions on 268 European political parties including the majority of the right-wing populist parties. This data reported as recently as 2014, also interprets political trends as the studies began in 1999. The CHES was used to analyze the emphasis populist parties placed on immigration and Euroscepticism, as well as their most important issue areas. This dataset was also used to analyze the mainstream parties' positions and determine whether or not a political consensus about immigration was achieved. The source of the data provided was also significant because the analysis by several hundred experts allowed for the most accurate determination of political position.

To obtain a consistent assessment, I have established a standard deviation to conclude when a mainstream political consensus is present. Using the CHES, I characterize any standard deviation greater than 1.1 among the mainstream parties' immigration positions is representative of no political consensus. Conversely, any standard deviation less than 1.1 in the immigration

category of the CHES will categorize the mainstream parties of achieving a political consensus. The standard deviation of 1.1 was selected because it represents a wide enough range for mainstream parties to target the majority of the population and also attempt to capture some fringe voters. A standard deviation of 1.1 incorporates 70.92% of the population whom fall into the relatively moderate positions of immigration. A standard deviation greater than 1.1 implies a greater difference in immigration position.

A standard deviation of 1.1 was selected because it relates to immigrants from poorer European countries (Figure 2). Based on the European Social Survey, European immigrants from poorer European countries were moderately well-received (or the average of all demographics). The most accepted immigrants in Europe are those of the same ethnic background, in which case 64% of the population adheres to allowing some/few in, and almost 25% favor allowing many (Fitzgerald et al 2017). Conversely, only 55%-60% of Europeans favored allowing a few/many of the most rejected immigration group, while nearly 30% desired to accept any. Thus, taking the median demographic of poorer Europeans, we see roughly 70% of voters assume moderate positions of allowing a few/some immigrants in, or in this case a standard deviation of 1.1 which equates to 70.92%. This standard deviation also selectively leaves out roughly 29% of the voters who are on the more extreme ends of the political spectrum. This is an important distinction because this standard deviation only factors in the difference in policy positions of mainstream parties, not extreme voters.

The absence of a consensus among mainstream political parties is vital to the validity of my hypotheses because this phenomenon creates the foundation by which populist parties choose their position. Using this 1.1 standard deviation, I then move on to step two of my research in which I analyze the right-wing populist parties' political focus using content analysis. Finally, to



support my hypothesis, I compare the results using process tracing while also incorporating other relevant hypotheses. The implementation of process tracing is vital due to the validity it provides the hypotheses in question. By implementing these tests, the relationship between a mainstream political consensus and populist party focus can be determined.

## **Norway: A Historical Populist Success**

### **A. Progress Party History**

The Norwegian Progress Party has become a cornerstone of Norwegian politics thus earning the nickname “The Established Populist Party” for their historical prevalence in government. While this nickname addresses their current success, it also calls to attention the enduring history of the FrP. The FrP first emerged as a political force in 1973 when they acquired 5% of the seats in parliament (Bjerkem 2016). Early on, the FrP adopted a primarily libertarian anti-tax platform. This anti-taxation focused party experimented with other issues to a lesser degree, including anti-immigration and antiestablishment sentiment.

The 1970s and 80s also saw the emergence of other political issues addressed by the FrP. The Norwegian right-wing populists began to focus on criminal enforcement and welfare state reform (Bjerkem 2016). The FrP would later define their campaign by calling for increased welfare spending and, simultaneously, decreased taxes. This recipe was desired with an overall emphasis to take care of Norwegians better. To achieve this paradox without accumulating massive debt, the FrP advocated for a reformation of the Norwegian oil fund, with less money being saved each year and more being returned to the people (Bjerkem 2016). Overall, the vast array of issues is illustrative of FrP issue flexibility over their long history. FrP history, however, is not solely defined by the changing policies proposed by the party itself. Over time, the FrP has been influenced by situational factors and political parties, while also being shaped by other factors such as their founder, Anders Lange.

The foundations of the FrP’s populist roots can be witnessed through an analysis of their founder, Anders Lange. Anders Lange was a notably charismatic persona who appealed to nationalist pride and vital political reform (Bjerkem 2016). Lange was an artful politician who

not only understood how to win elections, but how to manage a political party as well. Lange recognized the need for the party platform to be an evolving ecosystem which would grow to capture more voters. As the issues concerning Norway changed, so did the focus of the Progress Party. In 1980, Lange shifted FrP focus to criminality, immigration, and care for the elderly as the core tenants of the FrP (Bjerkem 2016). Despite this flexibility, the FrP did not experience their most significant political successes until the 1990s and 2000s.

The current success of the FrP is a direct reflection of the changing Norwegian political environment. Since the 1990s, the FrP has reestablished itself as a party of Euroscepticism and anti-elitism (Ivarsflaten 2008). The reformation of the FrP helped secure the 2nd largest share of parliamentary votes in 1997, 2005, 2009, and the third largest in 2013. The success experienced since 1997 contributes to the notion that the Progress Party has discovered what many political scientists deem a “populist winning formula.” The core principles of this winning formula are a liberal socioeconomic ideology combined with a socio-cultural authoritarian stance (Bjerkem 2016). The junction of these two ideologies provides a unique opportunity for FrP success. Despite this success, however, the rise of the FrP has not come without political costs.

The establishment of this ‘moderate right-wing populism’ has created a rift in FrP politics. Those on the extreme right criticize the party for losing their roots and being too compromising. Externally, the party has been criticized for losing touch with its base. Notably, “the cost of governing for an antiestablishment party is higher because it loses the ideological purity of its message” (Bjerkem 2016, 238). This statement highlights the cost of populist government as they continue to campaign on an antiestablishment platform yet become increasingly ingrained in the establishment. Despite the concerns of voters and those in the party, the FrP has again achieved success by winning 16.3% of the vote in 2013. Meanwhile, what is

most curious about FrP success is their ability to win as a populist party without focusing on culturally authoritarian positions (Bakker et al 2015). As a result, the political focus of the FrP will be subsequently researched to contribute to my proposed hypothesis.

Before addressing the exact focus of the FrP, the relationships between Euroscepticism and anti-elitism must be determined. Anti-elitism concerns politics that pit the populist party as the authentic voice of the people against those who comprise the political class, often the elite who are portrayed as being out of touch with society (Ivarsflaten 2008). Normally, the establishment is portrayed as being slow, inefficient, and an inhibition to a better path forward. Consequently, the right-wing populists portray themselves as the political saviors, positioned to shake up the establishment and establish a new order which serves the voters, not the elites. Meanwhile, Euroscepticism is largely comprised of political efforts avoiding integration into the European Union and consequences which might ensue from these policies (Harmsen 2010). I suggest an antiestablishment platform and Euroscepticism are often combined as the EU is portrayed as another level of the establishment hierarchy, a fact previously addressed (Krouwel and Abts 2007). In particular, when immigration is no longer an exploitable issue, these alternative political foci become increasingly important.

## **B. Political Operating Environment**

The FrP achieves success by engaging in particular issue foci which differentiate themselves from rival parties and turn out voters in their favor. This strategy, which emphasizes the importance of issue selection, is vital for the FrP because they are a comparatively smaller party in Norwegian government. In the 2013 election, the Labour Party (Ap) secured 30.8% of the vote while the conservative party (H) achieved 26.8% of the vote. The FrP, on the other hand, gained

16.3% of the vote according to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (2013). This vote share, though comparatively smaller, was significant because it led to the creation of a conservative coalition government. The small party politics embodied by the FrP are representative of how a smaller political force can wield significant power. By achieving status as part of the governing coalition, the FrP is able to shift the coalition position to the right on many policy issues (Bjerkem 2016). This is because the conservative party must factor in the wants of the FrP, or risk them not supporting the coalition and thus losing their governing ability. This strategic position as coalition member has resulted in vast FrP influence in Norwegian politics.

The path to success taken by the FrP is indicative of several important details addressed in my hypothesis. Previous literature dictates smaller parties operate in the same political environment, but due to their size, their relationship with other party's is affected (Meguid 2005). Whereas mainstream parties have achieved an established base and a sound political reputation, smaller parties are often left scrambling to find their niche. Generally, smaller parties emerge when the mainstream parties decide not to recognize a specific issue. Specifically, "the decisions that boosted niche party support revolved around dismissive adversarial arguments" (Meguid 2005, 354). Thus, as with other political parties, the FrP can benefit from the failure of mainstream parties to adequately address a specific policy issue. Commonly this issue is manipulated by the populist party to appear more salient than it truly is. The relationship between the FrP and Høyre is seemingly parasitic in nature, meaning the populist movement is able to benefit from the positions of the conservative party disproportionately. In Norway's case, the issue exploited by the FrP relied entirely upon anti-elitism and antiestablishment sentiment, with little focus on immigration whatsoever (Bakker et al 2015). These stances correspond with the

precise areas ignored by the mainstream parties, a point which will be acknowledged in the following section.

## C. Analysis

The political focus of the three main parties in Norway has been documented by the Chapel Hill Expert Survey. The results of this survey will be shown below to illustrate its adherence to H1. H1 states, *in countries which lack an immigration political consensus among the largest mainstream parties, the right-wing populist party will select an immigration-focused platform to magnify the scope of voter turnout in their favor*. For this hypothesis to be true, multiple points must first be addressed.

The first principle of this hypothesis which is necessary to prove validity is the recognition of the presence or absence of a political party consensus in Norway. The following graphs work to illustrate the presence of this consensus. Whether or not a consensus is established draws focus upon the category labeled “immigrate\_policy” under the CHES. H1 is contingent on whether or not a consensus exists between the mainstream parties, adhering to the pre-established standard deviation of 1.1. Additionally, for these parties to be considered mainstream, they must be moderate and appeal to the majority of voters. The combination of Høyre and Ap contained a total of 57.6% of the seats in government in 2013 (International Foundation for Electoral Systems 2013). Together, these parties are unequivocally the mainstream political bodies in the country. Furthermore, the standard deviation of immigration position between Høyre and Ap under the immigrate\_policy category is .707, well within the established 1.1 boundary illustrated in Figure 3 on page 45. This low standard of deviation, which is based on results from the CHES, represents a very small ideological difference in

immigration policy by the mainstream political bodies. This finding contributes to the research because it illustrates the presence of a political consensus on immigration issues in the country between the two major parties.

Based on data from the CHES, both parties' immigration ideologies converge on the slightly conservative end of the immigration spectrum. The average ideological position of Høyre and Ap combined is 5.83/10, with 10 representing the most conservative position possible (Bakker et al 2015). As a result, the establishment of a consensus implies the mainstream parties both relatively agree on the issue, while also finding it politically beneficial to maintain their positions. Accordingly, it is no surprise the average position between the two parties achieving the consensus falls on the conservative end of the spectrum. This is in consonance with Figure 2 which illustrated the desire toward more closed borders rather than more open borders (Fitzgerald et al 2017). Furthermore, in an environment characterized by an immigration consensus between the mainstream parties, it is expected the populist party should campaign on an issue other than immigration.

The second tenant of H1 necessary to show validity is the establishment of the right-wing populist party's political focus and the mainstream parties' political foci. The two elements of political focus are ideological position and emphasis. To establish a party's political focus, one must incorporate the strength of their ideological position and, more importantly, the emphasis of the issue in their campaign. Therefore, the political focus of the mainstream parties must be recognized. While Ap emphasized immigration more than Høyre, both mainstream parties characterized economic issues as their most important policy positions (Bakker et al 2015). This economic focus is illustrated in Figure 3 under the "economic salience" category, with a score closer to 10 representing an increased economic focus.

Figure 3: Illustrating Political Party Positions

Norwegian Political Party Policy Positions (Scaled 1-10)

country name	party_name	eu_position	eu_saience	eu_dissent	Ideological Position	Economic Issue stance
Norway	AP	5.75	4	5.3333335	3.5	3.75
Norway	H	6.5	4.5	1.25	7.25	7.25
Norway	FrP	3.5	1.75	5.3333335	8.25	7.5

party_name	Economic Issue stance	Economic Saiience	Social Issue Saiience	immigrate_policy	multiculturalism	antiteilite_saiience
AP	3.75	6.6666665	5.75	5.3333335	4.6666665	2
H	7.25	7.3333335	5.25	6.3333335	5.6666665	2
FrP	7.5	5.6666665	6.25	9	8.666667	6.6666665

Source: Adapted from Chapel Hill Expert Survey (2015)

Description: All categories are characterized on a 1-10 scale, with scores closer to 1 representing extreme left-wing positions while 10 represents extreme right-wing positions. This applies to all categories, except for those labeled eu\_saiience, economic saiience, and Social Issue Saiience. In these cells, numbers closer to 10 illustrate an issue of greater importance to the party. Note convergence of mainstream immigration positions.



## **D. What is the current right-wing populist political focus?**

If there is an immigration political consensus in a country, H1 will only prove credible if the right-wing populist party campaigns on an alternative issue platform including antiestablishment and Eurosceptic stances. If the populist party continues to campaign with an immigration focus, H1 is discredited. However, if the populist party elects to focus on another issue, the relevance of hypothesis one is displayed. Under these circumstances, the political focus of the FrP must be understood.

The distinguishing element of the FrP from other right-wing populist parties is their lack of an immigration focus coupled with significant success, a point discussed by Bjerkem (2016) and Ivarsflaten (2008). While right-wing populism is often recognized as being an anti-immigration political force, the FrP has achieved the majority of their success in other ways. The Progress Party is noted for never having a militant or ethnocentric past, a characteristic opposite of other more belligerent populist parties such as the National Front in France. The FrP is also significantly less culturally authoritarian, a feature which distinguishes itself from many other populist parties of today (Ivarsflaten 2008). This diminished focus on cultural authoritarianism inherently leads to increased political foci in other areas, including antiestablishment policy and Euroscepticism.

Mentioned above, the determination of a party's political focus relies on the combination of ideological position as well as emphasis. The current political focus of the FrP is one of undoubtable anti-elitist and antiestablishment sentiment. While no populist party across Europe has achieved success without taking a hardline immigration stance, the FrP is notable for not making it the focus of their party (Ivarsflaten 2008). Though the FrP maintains an ideologically conservative position, evidence shows they are achieving the majority of their success from anti-

elitist and antiestablishment sentiment. Observing Figure 3, evidence suggests the FrP has assumed a hardline immigration stance with a 9/10 ideological rating. However, this ideological difference is less significant when compared with the fact the left-wing mainstream party maintains a position of 5.3/10. Ultimately, these circumstances create an environment incentivizing focus on an alternative political issue. In past years, the issue of choice for the FrP has been anti-elitism (Ivarsflaten 2008). According to my hypothesis, this is a result of the adoption of a consensus by the mainstream parties. Consequently, this consensus coerces the populist party to select a different issue area, but why do they not continue to campaign upon immigration rather than choose an alternative focus?

The FrP has selected an antiestablishment focus because it has proven the most beneficial issue in turning out otherwise disenfranchised voters in their favor (Ivarsflaten 2008). Past studies have illustrated political disenfranchisement can lead to populist electoral success. In countries where disenfranchisement is present, focusing on this lack of true political representation has proven beneficial for right-wing populists whether they be as protest votes or signs of confidence in the party (Hooghe, Marien, and Pauwels 2011). This unique formula has contributed to the FrP success as they address issues completely neglected by the mainstream parties. Figure 3 illustrates this failed recognition by mainstream parties. This idea is illustrated under the anti-elitist cell which shows an agreement by the mainstream parties stating elitism is not a problem, allowing the FrP to exploit the issue (Bakker et al 2015). In fact, the FrP engaged in such a massive effort to mobilize voters based on anti-elite and Eurosceptic sentiment that they were recognized as arguably the most successful party to do so in the early 2000s (Ivarsflaten 2008). It is under these circumstances the FrP has elected to build their campaign off of mostly antiestablishment principles with minor incorporation of Euroscepticism as an

extension of the establishment. These efforts by the FrP have undoubtedly paid off. While we do not know what would have happened if the FrP built their 2000s campaigns off of immigration principles, the FrP owes much of its success to the mobilization of anti-elitist grievances (Ivarsflaten 2008). This success is derived from the FrP being the only party combatting elitism and the political establishment while the other major parties largely ignored the issue.

## **E: Satisfaction of Theory and Explanation**

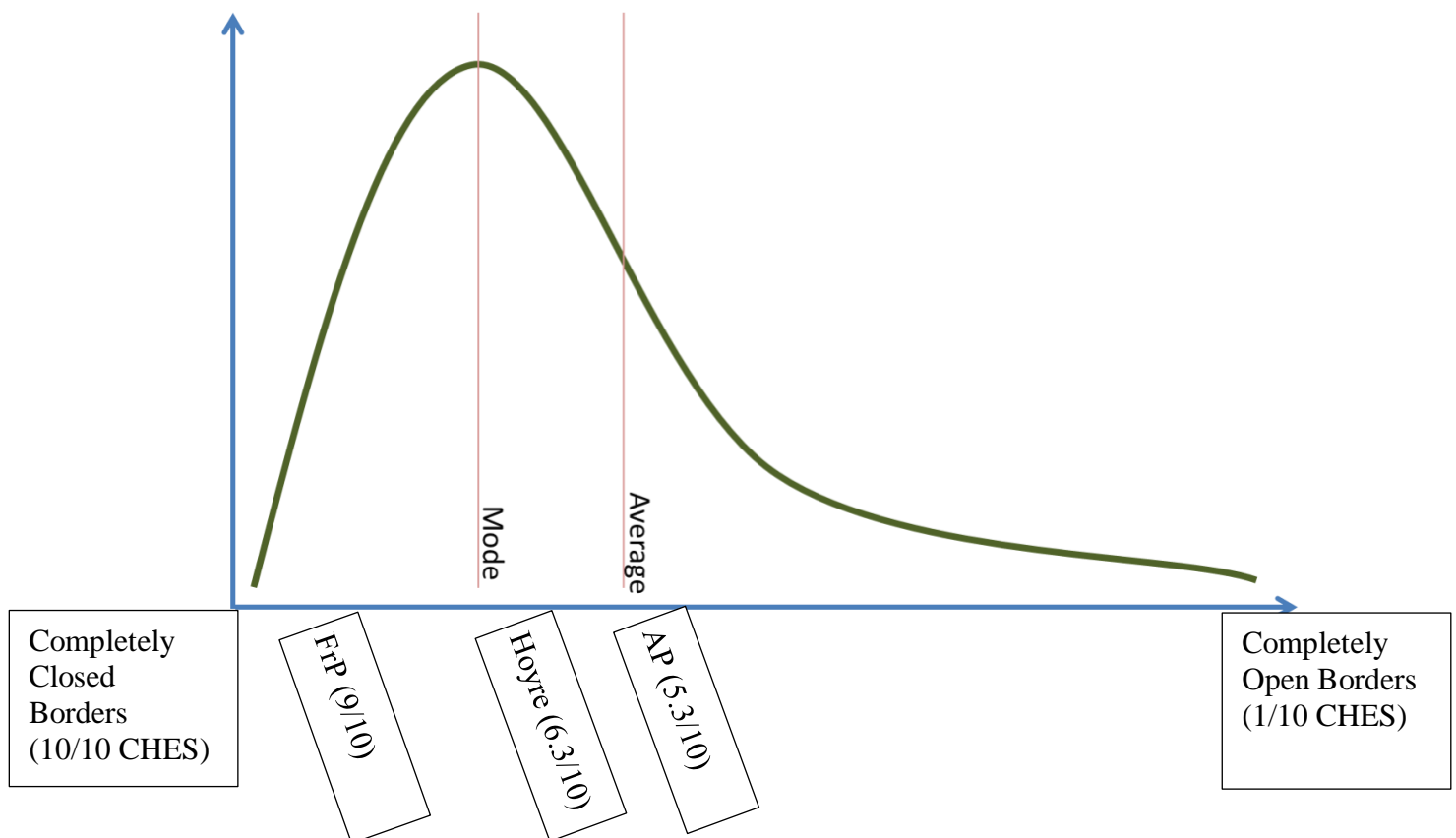
The establishment of a political consensus in Norway is characterized by two mainstream parties who have achieved a relative agreement upon what is often a divisive issue. The convergence of these mainstream party positions illustrates several realities to us. Based on the goal of all parties to win the most votes, the convergence of stances implies both parties believe relatively moderate immigration policy is most beneficial to them. Not coincidentally, these party positions happen to be extremely similar. As a result, it can be established Høyre and Ap are fulfilling what the majority of the voters in Norway would be satisfied with when it comes to immigration policy, seeing as both parties have converged upon a similar point. Most importantly, this agreement negatively impacts the immigration platform of the FrP as it makes their extreme position less differentiated (Budge 1994). A less unique position is correspondingly less likely to capture voters dwelling in the far-right immigration niche. In sum, this limited differentiation in position makes immigration less exploitable.

As a result of this political consensus, the issue area of immigration becomes significantly less exploitable by the right-wing populist party. Now that the majority of voters are likely satisfied with the immigration positions of the two moderate parties, the FrP proclaims a more conservative position only to salvage any differentiation they still may be able to claim.

Despite this, the operating area for the FrP to capture immigration-minded citizens' votes is diminished, a point I illustrate in the image below. Figure 4 connects the predisposition of voters toward conservative immigration positions compared with the ideological positions of the parties. In the circumstances of an immigration consensus, the FrP can no longer differentiate itself on immigration due to the condensed political operating area presented by the mainstream parties (Budge 1994). Consequently, the FrP addresses the issues allowing for a continued portrayal of the “us against them ideology.” This ideology manifests itself with an antiestablishment political focus, the next most exploitable issue of which offers the most differentiation.

Figure 4: Public Immigration Perception Skewed Bell Curve with 3 Main Norwegian

Political Parties Ideological Position



The relationship between the populist FrP and the moderate parties of Norway embody the hybridization between supply and demand-side politics. On the one hand, the voters' wants guide the issue areas of the political parties. Inherent grievances contribute to a limited selection of political foci for the populist party, including issues of anti-immigration policy, antiestablishment, and anti-elitism. With this limited criterion, the parties are simultaneously choosing which focus to campaign upon as they incorporate the positions of their rival parties as well. In effect, a dual selection criterion is established in which the populist party selects their stance in response to the disenfranchisement of voters, while also factoring in how this policy stance will differentiate itself from mainstream parties. In sum, it is this dual selection criterion of voters' grievances and competing party platforms which illustrates the contribution of my research.

# **Switzerland: The Story of the Swiss People's Party**

## **A: SVP Party History**

The SVP of Switzerland is currently the most successful populist party in Europe. Considering accomplishment, they are the largest party in the Swiss Federal Assembly with just over 29% of the vote in 2015. In addition, they control two of seven seats of the Swiss National Council, the governing body of the country. The success of the SVP did not occur overnight. Rather, it is the product of shifting party platform and position over the course of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The origins of the SVP date back to 1910. As the agrarian sector became increasingly dominant in Switzerland, it became clear a party needed to organize on their behalf. Around this time, agrarian focused political parties began to emerge (Mazzeloni and Skenderovic 2007). Following the formation of these agrarian parties, an increased need for organization and consolidation was necessary. In 1936, the Farmers, Artisans, and Citizens party (BGB) formally consolidated all agrarian interests while also incorporating the needs of other working classes. The focus of the BGB was to target corporations and international capital which they portrayed as eroding the “soil grounded farmers and locally oriented tradesmen” (Mazzeloni and Skenderovic 2007, 90). Thus, it was this working class focused party in 1936 which would eventually grow into what is today the SVP.

Early on, the SVP did not achieve nearly as much success as it has recently. From 1947-1990, the BGB/SVP was characterized by remarkable political stability, hovering between 10-12% political support in Federal Assembly elections (Mazzeloni and Skenderovic 2007). Following WWII, the BGB needed to reestablish itself as a result of their decreasing agrarian constituency. During this time, the BGB shifted ideological position from the moderate right to the center in an experiment to capture centrist voters. This strategy did not achieve success, and

in 1977 Christoph Blocher was elected to the presidency of the Zurich canton and would eventually become the head of the party (Mazzeloni and Skenderovic 2007). Blocher almost immediately changed the approach of the SVP from a struggling centrist party to one which would focus on more polarizing issues. In 1990, this new SVP strategy premiered, characterized by the adoption of a challenger party attitude. This new strategy focused on pitting the voting populace against the established government, which it had long struggled to maintain support under. This new strategy was characterized early on by identity politics, an exploitable issue due to the 1992 European Union referendum.

In the past four decades, the SVP of Switzerland has gone from what was once a special interest agrarian party to the largest political party in Switzerland (International Foundation for Electoral Systems 2015). This meteoric rise coupled with their unique far-right political ideology raises questions as to how they achieved success. Currently, they are the largest political party in Switzerland with the most governing seats on the national council while still maintaining radically right political stances. To begin the research, an analysis of the political operating environment of Switzerland must also be noted.

## **B: Political Operating Environment of Switzerland**

The political operating environment of Switzerland possesses unique attributes which make the country a peculiar case study. An understanding of the relationship between the SVP and other political parties is necessary as it contributes to elements of my theory. While the SVP has been arguably the most successful Swiss party in the past 30 years, much of this success stems from SVP political stances with respect to their competitors. The primary competitors of the SVP include the moderate conservative party, The Liberals (FDP), the left-wing Social Democrats

(SP), and the center/center-right Christian Democratic Party (CVP) (International Foundation for Electoral Support 2015).

The circumstances establishing the competitors of the SVP were cemented in Swiss politics in the 1930s. During this time, a reformation of the Swiss political system occurred. In an attempt to boost political stability, a “magic formula” was created which solidified the structure of the national council. This formula, which is renowned for making Switzerland one of the most stable political climates in the world, established seven federal council seats to be distributed among the four largest parties. Initially, the FDP, CVP, and SP possessed two seats while the BGB (modern-day SVP) obtained only one, making it the least influential of the four (Mazzeloni and Skenderovic 2007). This concrete system remains to this very day, with the only change being the allocation of federal council seats. Following the 2015 election, the SVP obtained two of these seats along with the SP and the FDP, while the CVP obtained one (International Foundation for Electoral Support 2015).

While the ideological positions of the FDP, CVP, and SP have remained relatively constant, the SVP has undergone major reformations since their inception. The SVP is the only party since the establishment of the magic formula which has drastically shifted their ideology, going as far as changing which end of the political spectrum they fall on. Initially, the BGB/SVP mingled among the FDP and CVP, a position somewhere between the center-right and center-left of the Swiss political spectrum (Mazzeloni and Skenderovic 2007). Following this era of political struggle, the SVP abandoned any left-leaning stances they possessed and focused on the center. Subsequently, this failure motivated the SVP to radicalize their position which corresponded with a movement to the extreme right end of the political spectrum. To this day,



the SVP remains a right-wing populist party. Meanwhile, the other parties continue to play a role in Swiss politics, and their political foci will be analyzed along with that of the SVP.

## **C: Analysis**

I have used a combination of content analysis as well as examination from the CHES to address the political positions of the three largest Swiss parties: the SVP (right-wing populist), the SP (Left), and FDP (Centre/Centre-right). Mentioned above, determination of a party's political focus blends both ideological position and, most importantly, issue emphasis. The key component of this formula is the emphasis and salience of the issue. Ultimately, if the party is not seriously affirming the issue, it cannot be considered its political focus. Whether or not a party is addressing the issue is the core of this content analysis.

H1 addresses countries where a mainstream immigration political consensus is absent. My theory dictates that populist parties in countries which lack a mainstream immigration consensus will select a political focus on cultural preservation policies as opposed to other political issues. Specifically, they will focus on immigration and policies to stifle multiculturalism. This decision is made to capture disenfranchised voters whose political opinions on immigration are not represented by the other parties because they are de-emphasized following the absence of an immigration consensus. For this theory to prove valid, several tenets must be fulfilled. First, is there a political consensus between the left-wing SP and the mainstream moderate FDP?

Following the analyzation of policy positions of the FDP and SP, there is decisively no immigration consensus. To establish this position, I have referenced the CHES which documents the positions and focus of both the FDP and SP. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being extreme right

immigration positions and 1 being extreme left immigration positions, the left-wing SP scored a 3.25/10. Conversely, the FDP rated a 6.25/10 (Figure 5). These scores represent respective ideological positions on immigration showing the SP leaning reasonably left and the FDP leaning reasonably right. Additionally, the SVP possesses an ideological score of 8.625/10. These three scores represent a standard deviation of 2.69, while the difference between the mainstream parties represents a standard deviation of 2.12. Therefore, no immigration consensus among the moderate parties is present, thus incentivizing an immigration focus by the right-wing populists.

Figure 5

Switzerland Populist Party (SVP) Issue position (Scale 1-10)

party_name	eu_position	eu_sallience	eu_dissent	Ideological Position	Economic Issue Stance	Economic Sallience	Social Issue Sallience
SVP/UDC	1	8.8888893	0.8888889	8.25	7.5	5.375	7.375
SP/PS	6.1111112	6.1111112	2.6666667	2.125	2	7.5	6.875
FDP/PLR	3.7777777	5.3333335	4.8888888	6.875	7.875	7.875	4.625

party_name	immigrate_policy	multiculturalism	antielite_sallience	mip_one	mip_two	mip_three
SVP/UDC	8.625	9.5	8.375	immigration	EU integration	anti-elite rhetoric
SP/PS	3.25	1.875	3.25	redistribution	EU integration	public services vs taxes
FDP/PLR	6.25	5.5	2.875	public services vs taxes	state intervention	EU integration

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey (2015)

Description: All categories are characterized on a 1-10 scale, with scores closer to 1 representing extreme left-wing positions while 10 represents extreme right-positions. This applies to all categories, except for those labeled eu\_sallience, economic sallience, and Social Issue Sallience. In these cells, numbers closer to 10 illustrate an issue of greater importance to the party. Note the absence of a mainstream immigration consensus, characterized by a standard deviation of immigration position of 2.12.

This data illustrates there is, in fact, no political consensus among the mainstream parties in Switzerland. The CHES also works to establish the mainstream parties' political foci. The "MIP" category is reserved for the expert opinion of the parties' most important issue (Figure 5). Regrettably, the MIP category was not included in political scientists' analysis of Norway, forcing me to reference other sources. However, the presence of the MIP category for Switzerland can be used as a valuable asset. According to data collected by political scientists in the CHES, the most important issues addressed by the SP included wealth redistribution, EU integration, and public services versus taxes. Comparatively, the FDP's three major issues included public services versus taxes, state intervention in the economy, and EU integration respectively (Bakker et al 2015). Evidently, neither of the mainstream parties emphasized immigration to any significant degree and thus elected to focus primarily on economic issues.

Combined, the mainstream parties' immigration policy positions represent no coherent immigration consensus. They are both on opposite ends of the political spectrum and differentiated enough to provide a clear party distinction on immigration position. In addition to the differentiation in policy, it is evident both parties are not significantly addressing immigration as an issue whatsoever. Following my hypothesis, these circumstances should create a political environment where the right-wing populist party focuses on immigration as their most important issue.

## **D. What is the current right-wing populist political focus?**

The SVP has established itself as a party focused on pitting itself against the other moderate political entities. As a result of this positioning, the SVP often assumes political stances which portray the SVP in competition against the rest of the political system (Mazzeloni and

Skenderovic 2007). While the SVP assumes a starkly different position on a variety of issues compared with the moderate parties, the political focus of the party is unequivocally immigration. This positioning is supported by a variety of sources.

Beginning in the 1990s, the SVP assumed a position appealing to identity politics. Specifically, the SVP has built a decades-old platform on immigration and restrictive citizenship policy (Betz 2001). This appeal to immigration and identity politics which emerged in the 1990s continues today, despite recent efforts to also increase anti-elitism/antiestablishment appeal. While this desire to shift the party's focus emerged in the early 2000s, a fundamental shift from immigration has yet to materialize completely, and the SVP continues to focus on an anti-immigration platform (Bakker et al 2015). In fact, over the past two decades, the SVP has been the most successful populist party to mobilize voter grievances based on immigration compared to all other Western European populist parties (Ivarsflaten 2008).

Due to the SVP achieving historical success by appealing to identity politics, it is no wonder the political focus of their 2015 election continued to be immigration (Bakker et al 2015). This data is supported by the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, noting their immigration position of 8.625/10. Not only did the SVP assume a relatively extreme position regarding immigration, but most importantly they emphasized it as their most important issue overall. This data point is evidenced by the SVP "mip\_one" column. Using the outlined formula of ideological position and emphasis, it is undoubtable an anti-immigration platform was the SVP's political focus. In addition, the second most important issues according to the campaign included EU integration and anti-elite rhetoric which should be noted because they are other typical populist issues. Additionally, they represent the shifting focus which is occurring as anti-elitism becomes

a more important issue. Regardless, the SVP has achieved its recent success by making their most important issue one of immigration rather than establishment or elitism.

## **E: Satisfaction of Theory and Explanation**

H1 is irrefutably strengthened when analyzing the case of Switzerland. The determining element of H1 applicable to Switzerland is the presence/absence of a consensus. This element of the hypothesis is the independent variable. In a situation where there is no political consensus, H1 is directly addressed. In a situation where there is a political consensus, H1 is inversely addressed. Following the verification of no political consensus in Switzerland, the second tenet which must be verified applies to the political focus of the populist party. Under H1, the populist party should focus on immigration as their most important issue in the absence of a political consensus. In Switzerland, H1 is verified because the mainstream SP and FDP lack a political consensus while the focus of the SVP is anti-immigration. Ultimately, it is shown when there is no political consensus on immigration among the mainstream parties, the right-wing populists will exploit the issue as their political focus. Following this finding, I will propose an explanation to support this phenomenon.

The credibility of this hypothesis rests in the party rationale when choosing their issue positions with respect to other parties. Established earlier in Figure 2, the majority of a population's immigration views are skewed toward more restricted practices (Fitzgerald et al 2017). This trend is evident across all demographic groups regardless of race, nationality, or economic status. This disposition toward closed borders is represented in a positively skewed bell chart on Figure 6, which also incorporates Swiss Party positions.

Figure 2: Graph Illustrating European Immigration Sentiment  
Source: Adapted from the European Social Survey (2017)

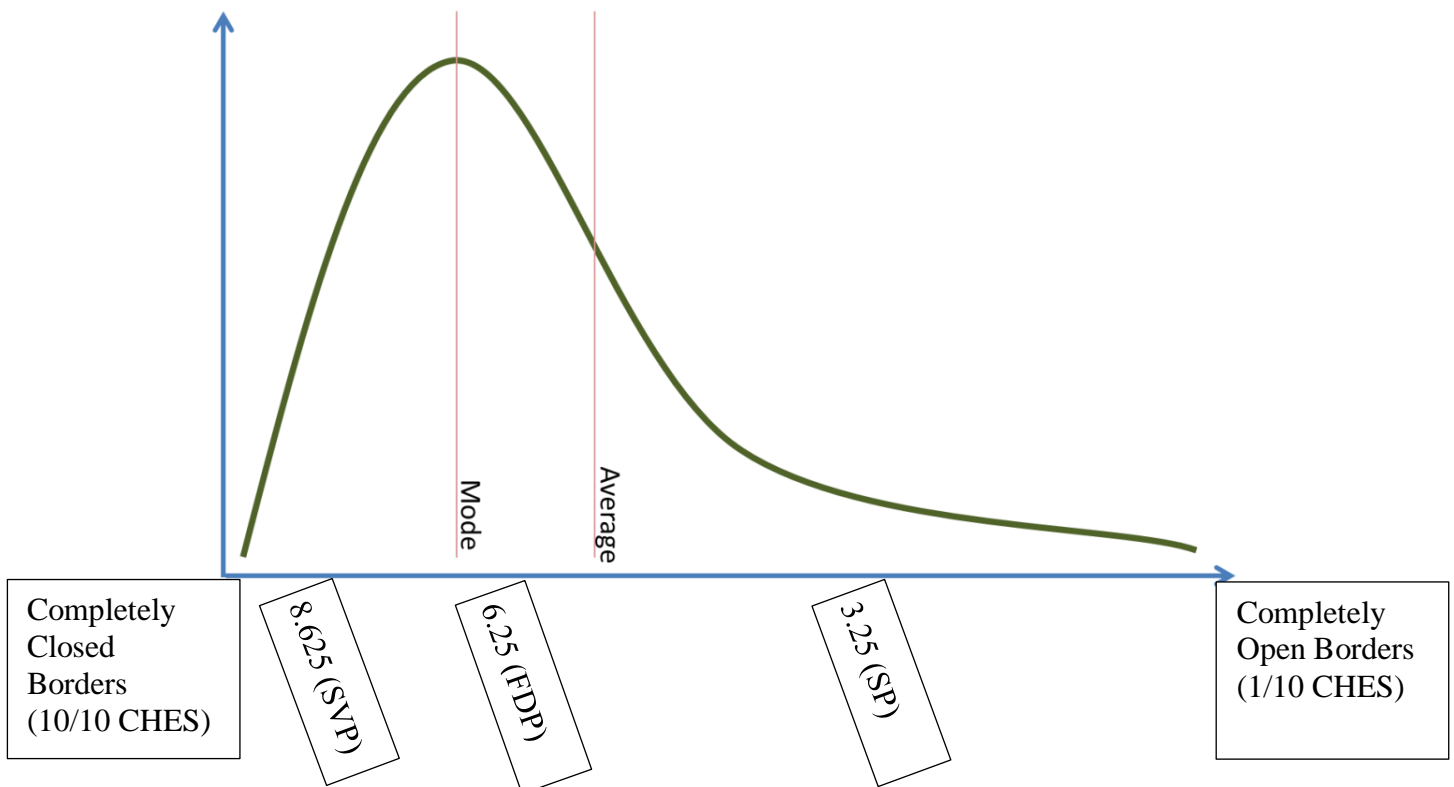
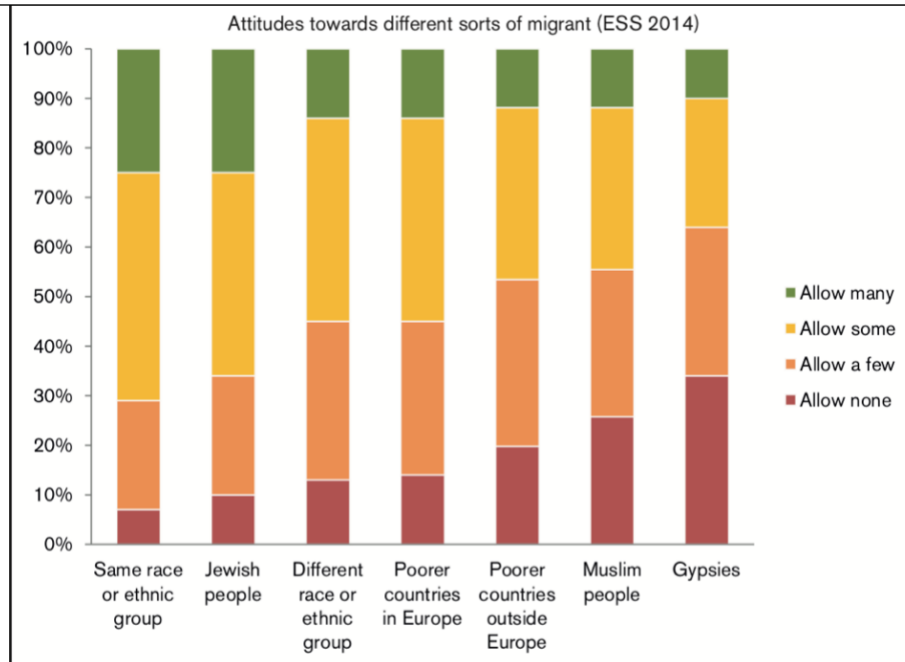


Figure 6: Illustrating a left-skewed bell curve of immigration-based voter distribution  
Description: Figure 6 illustrates the expanded ideological immigration disposition. The vast difference in immigration position between the SP and FDP allows the SVP to focus on immigration and capture disenfranchised voters.

Understanding voter predisposition toward closed borders is fundamental to discerning the rationale behind H1. The reality is the FDP, SVP, and SP all realize they are operating in a political environment with respect to each-others' party positions, an idea long recognized in democratic governments (Budge 1994). All parties are trying to capture as many votes as possible by positioning themselves in a place with a differentiated voter set. In addition to capturing votes, the parties are actively attempting to prevent the loss of any traditional party supporters. Thus, the SP has assumed a respectable left-wing position on immigration (Bakker et al 2015). This allows any left-leaning immigration concerned voters an outlet to express their opinions, more importantly, however, the extreme position allows the SP to differentiate itself against the largest and far-right SVP. The FDP is also located ideologically right of center at 6.25/10. This ideological position allows them to capture some moderate voters who may not desire the extreme policies proposed by the SVP. Finally, the SVP is located at the extreme end of the spectrum with a score of 8.625/10.

Once we understand the position of the parties, we can now explain the emphasis each one places on immigration-related issues. Of all the parties in Switzerland, the SVP emphasized immigration the most while both the FDP and SP overlooked immigration and campaigned almost entirely on economic platforms. These positions are logical with respect to their location on the immigration spectrum. It is undoubtable both the SP and FDP are well aware that Europe's perception toward immigration is skewed toward increased protectionism compared to completely open borders (Fitzgerald et al 2017). As a result, both the SP and FDP realize any campaign resources allocated toward immigration will likely be wasted if they adopt a position which is not relatively conservative. This explains the SP's left-wing stance which is likely one of differentiation rather than practical application. The SP will not, however, devote resources



toward this position except out of necessity to draw a comparison with the SVP. Consequently, the FDP holds what should be a popular immigration position. Regardless, the FDP ignores immigration as an issue because they are competing with the SP for moderate voters and will mirror the issues the SP addresses. Following this strategic positioning of all parties, the FDP and SP then emphasize other issues, such as the economy. This is in effect a concession to the SVP allowing them to exploit immigration, which are the exact circumstances we observe.

## Inter-Country Comparison

A thorough case study analyzing the FrP of Norway and SVP of Switzerland has been provided to illustrate the different strategies through which populist parties have achieved success. In Norway, it is evident the populist FrP is campaigning upon a largely antiestablishment platform. This is contributed to by the formation of an immigration consensus being achieved among the mainstream parties. Contrarily, the SVP of Switzerland has assumed a primarily anti-immigration focus. This is in response to the lack of an immigration consensus among the mainstream parties which opens a void allowing immigration to be exploited. However, what circumstances are complementing this issue selection?

I propose a significant contributing factor determining political focus is the presence or absence of an ideological immigration consensus by the mainstream parties. In Norway, the immigration positions of the two major parties which represent 58% of the population have converged (Bakker et al 2015). Not only are the parties' policies not significantly differentiated, but the convergence of policy falls on the conservative end of the political spectrum as it should per voters' predispositions (Fitzgerald et al 2017). The average ideological position of the two major parties is 5.8/10, a moderately conservative position (Bakker et al 2015). This consensus convergence of 5.8/10 is no coincidence as a moderately conservative position appeals to most European voters. Under these circumstances, both mainstream parties have positioned themselves with a reasonable immigration position. This consensus position allows them to claim a plausible immigration posture because of the positions of both parties. As a result, the majority of voters in Norway who fall between the 5.8/10 and 10/10 ideological position are satisfied with the condensed range of immigration positions.

The circumstances inhibiting the FrP from campaigning on immigration in Norway are reversed in Switzerland, permitting the SVP to campaign on an immigration platform (Bakker et al 2015). In Switzerland, the mainstream parties are decidedly split on immigration with the SP on the left end of the political spectrum and the FDP on the moderate right. Not surprisingly, the SP does not incorporate immigration as an important issue in their campaign, primarily because they are aware this position is contrary to the predisposition of the population. This positioning by the SP is most likely a result of the spatial relationship between parties, further reflecting the extreme stance of the dominant SVP which is the largest political party in Switzerland (Budge 1994). The SP is thus significantly differentiated from both the moderate right/center and the SVP. The other major player in Swiss politics is the FDP of the moderate right. The FDP maintains a moderately conservative immigration position. Regardless, the FDP has chosen not to emphasize immigration as a political issue whatsoever. The primary issues emphasized by this moderate right party include economic issues and other focuses which parallel the SP (Bakker, et al 2015).

To test the validity of the proposed hypotheses, I conclude with the incorporation of process tracing elaborated upon by Bennet (2010) and established by Van Evera (1997). Process tracing is a means of determining causal inference for hypotheses. The method of process tracing is divided into four tests with progressing degrees of hypotheses verifiability, demonstrated in Figure 8 on page 66. The two tests which are not sufficient for affirming a causal inference, but are necessary, include the Straw-in-the-Wind test and the stronger Hoop test. Alternatively, the Smoking-Gun test and the Doubly Decisive tests are sufficient for affirming causal inferences among hypotheses, but not necessary. This series of tests are incorporated to gauge the

magnitude of my proposed hypotheses. Figure 7 outlines my hypothesis as well as other leading theories, while Figure 8 outlines the series of tests applied.

Figure 7: Overview of Populist Political Puzzle

### Causal Puzzle

To explain the determining factor of Right-Wing Populist Party immigration political focus in Europe

### Main Actors

Swiss Populist Party (SVP)  
 Swiss moderate conservative party (FDP)  
 Swiss moderate left-wing party (SP)

Norwegian Populist Party (FrP)  
 Norwegian moderate right party (H)  
 Norwegian moderate left party (Ap)

### Hypotheses

#### *Independent Variables*

#### *Dependent Variables*

H1: Absence of a mainstream immigration consensus	populist focus shifts to immigration
H2: Situational: Immigration influx	r/w populist party shifts focus to immigration
H3: Economic Globalization	r/w populists react to globalization with immigration focus
H4: Relational: Issue competition	focus based on issues populists want to dominate politics
H5: Domestic Electoral system	the potential for success of populist parties

Figure 8: Process Tracing tests for Causal Inference

Is the hypothesis		Sufficient for Affirming Causal Inference	
		No	Yes
necessary for affirming causal inference?	No	1. Straw-in-the-Wind	3. Smoking-Gun
		a. <b>Passing:</b> affirms relevance of hypothesis, but does not confirm it.	a. <b>Passing:</b> confirms hypothesis
		b. <b>Failing:</b> hypothesis is not eliminated, but is slightly weakened.	b. <b>Failing:</b> may slightly weaken hypothesis
	Yes	3. Hoop-test	4. Doubly Decisive test
		a. <b>Passing:</b> may slightly strengthen the hypothesis, but does not confirm it.	a. <b>Passing:</b> confirms hypothesis
		b. <b>Failing:</b> eliminates the hypothesis	b. <b>Failing:</b> eliminates hypothesis

Source: Bennett (2010) and Collier (2011) who draw from Van Evera (1997)

H5 addresses the school of thought which focuses on the influence national electoral systems have on populist party success. For decades, an ample body of literature has shown the success of populist parties in Europe is affected and influenced by electoral systems within the country. Jackman and Volpert find electoral disproportionality is a significant factor in populist success (1996). The causality behind this determination is electoral disproportionality discourages voters from supporting smaller parties for fear of casting an arbitrary ballot, or one which will represent a party too small to make an impact. Thus, in highly disproportional environments, populist parties have a lesser chance of success. Conversely, in highly proportional electoral environments, the likelihood of populist success is enhanced (Jackman and Volpert 1996). When this reality is coupled with issue competition, the electoral system is capable of influencing the manner in which right-wing populists interact with other parties.

Electorally minded research also addresses the role in which district magnitude affects populist politics.

The electoral school of thought elaborates upon the influence of the domestic political system by stating the institutions of nations affect the ability of the extreme right to achieve their goals. This complementary argument focuses largely on district magnitude and the relationship between the national populist party and elections within districts. An analysis by Golder (2003) illustrates it is easier for right-wing populists to win seats when district magnitude is larger. Thus, extreme right parties benefit more in countries with larger district magnitudes. This is because larger districts are often characterized by stronger proportionality, meaning more viewpoints are likely to be expressed in one district while the likelihood of winning one seat is further increased (Golder 2003). In summation, the electoral framework addressing my research largely focuses on the effect of proportionality and district magnitude. While this research is fundamentally sound, it is focused on a different issue than my analysis.

The framework which addresses electoral institutions in populist success is credible, but inadmissible due to the fact this hypothesis focuses on not the selection of the political issue, but rather conditions which incentivize success. The driving factor behind electoral research in both Golder (2003) and Jackman and Volpert (1996) was to establish conditions which contribute to populist success, not to establish conditions determining issue focus. This school of thought infers that right-wing populists recognize the vitality of electoral systems in countries and base their national strategy on these electoral systems. Effectively, the electoral system impacts the party strategy by influencing what regions right-wing populists will focus their campaign on which, in turn, may affect the issue focus adopted. This framework largely contributes to the current literature by outlining the conditions which *affect* political focus via factors contributing

to the success, not the factors which *determine* political focus. This is different from my research which directly addresses the determinant of the populist political focus. Therefore, while H5 is credible in addressing conditions leading to success of populist parties, it fails to address the specific factor determining the ultimate political focus.

H4 addresses supply-side politics and the relational circumstances which incentivize a right-wing populist party to select an immigration focus. H4 has dominated general supply-side literature which incorporates issue competition and the relationships between parties. The heart of issue competition in H4 states political parties select their focus to capture the attention of other parties and address issues they hope to dominate (Green-Pederson 2007). The central aim of the smaller political party in issue competition is to get larger parties to address a specific issue (Green-Pederson 2007). This theory has proven credible in many instances where the smaller party is attempting to gain initial electoral success by focusing on issues which they hold a unique position. However, this theory encounters flaws when the political parties' relationships change over time, as is the situation in Switzerland.

Switzerland represents a situation in which the populist party has maintained the same issue focus for the several decades. Since the early 1990s, the SVP has been known for possessing an anti-immigration political focus (Ivarsflaten 2008). At this point, the SVP has possessed an immigration focus for nearly three decades and continues, to this day, to maintain an immigration focus. Throughout this same period, the relationship between parties has changed, and the SVP is now the largest political body in Switzerland (International Foundation for Electoral Support 2015). The SVP is no longer lobbying for attention from the other parties, as the circumstances of the spatial relationship has changed. Whereas the SVP may have addressed immigration in the past to draw attention to one issue, this relationship evolved, and

now other parties are lobbying for attention from the SVP. Regardless, the SVP persists with their anti-immigration focus because immigration continues to be ignored by the other conventional parties (Bakker et al 2015). Ultimately, the goal in issue competition to simply call attention to issues as a means of achieving initial success cannot be verified in the case of Switzerland because the SVP has benefitted most when immigration as an issue is not addressed. With regards to process tracing, reliance on issue competition continues to prove inadequate in determining the current political focus.

When determining whether or not issue competition is either necessary or sufficient, the larger political purpose which all parties adhere to must be stated. The ultimate goal of all parties is to achieve electoral success, power, and influence. With these goals in mind, two questions must be proposed. First, is it necessary for a political issue to dominate politics for right-wing populists to achieve success? Addressing this, it is clearly unnecessary for the populist issue of choice to dominate politics for them to achieve success. Switzerland exemplifies this principle. The SVP achieved the largest political success in the country in 2015 while immigration was largely ignored by the major parties (Bakker et al 2015). Thus, the motive behind issue competition is weakened. While it may prove initially beneficial for the populist issue to become relevant in politics, the SVP has succeeded equally as much when the issue is *not dominating* the system.

Secondarily, is achieving political attention for a specific issue a sufficient condition for the selection of a political focus? Support for this claim is slightly stronger as it is widely understood smaller parties incorporated into governing coalitions can often shift the ideological position of the largest party (Jackman and Volpert 1996). The evidence thus supports the notion parties may be selecting their initial political focus with the hopes of achieving minor electoral



success but most importantly shifting the ideological position of the country's political system. In other words, issue competition proves sufficient in unique circumstances which the party is attempting to shift the ideological position of the state. Regardless, issue competition contributes to the current literature and is relevant when acknowledging the totality of my argument.

A competing hypothesis often referenced is the effect economic globalization has had on the selection of populist political focus in Europe. This hypothesis rests on the principle that economic globalization leads right-wing populists to select an anti-immigration focus by addressing grievances surrounding job security and economic integration (Mughan, Bean, and McCallister 2003). When compared with process tracing, this hypothesis proves situationally credible. For economic globalization to be the determinant of populist political focus, it would be necessary for economic principles to form the basis of the anti-immigrant argument posited by right-wing populists. Otherwise, there is no concrete connection between economic globalization and right-wing populism. This theory is supported when initially looking at recent populist history.

In the past, economic principles were often incorporated into right-wing populist arguments as witnessed in both the FrP of Norway and the SVP of Switzerland. Norway's populist roots emerged from a party initially seeking not only tax reform but also a restructuring of the welfare system (Bjerkem 2016). European nations with extensive welfare systems have often become sources of friction as the national identity is challenged with the influx of immigrants. This is evidenced in past legislative history with Norwegian attempts to limit welfare distribution to immigrants in the 1980s and 90s, an example of economic principles being tied to anti-immigration sentiment (Bjerkem 2016).

While initial support for immigration focus as a consequence of globalization initially appears strong, it is later discredited when compared with motives of other right-wing populist parties. The heart of the globalization hypothesis rests on the manipulation of job-security as a fear among the population (Mughan, Bean, and McCallister 2003). In circumstances where the right-wing populist party selects an immigration focus, we would expect to witness the manipulation of economic grievances. This is not the case, particularly within the SVP. The SVP incorporates many principles into their cultural preservation policies, but nowhere among the most important policies lies job-security or economic grievances (Mazzeloni and Skenderovic 2007). The SVP has established the principles of their cultural preservation platform on the prevention of multi-culturalism and restrictive policies toward minorities, not the fear of job loss (Bakker et al 2015). Therefore, in situations where right-wing populists select an immigration focus, it is clearly unnecessary to exploit economic grievances surrounding immigration. In effect, H3 is not a necessary condition and currently is weakened by the characteristics of the SVP. Despite this, H3 has proven situationally significant.

Other sources of literature which focus on the determination of a political focus largely address pertinent situational influences impacting the country at the time. Specifically addressing Europe, it is widely believed an immigration influx/refugee crisis will lead to the right-wing populist party campaigning on immigration. While this may seem intuitive, the reality is very different. When tested with process tracing, it is evident an immigration influx/refugee crisis is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the populist party to focus on immigration. Evidence of this is discussed in the following example.

If an immigration influx were necessary for a populist immigration focus, the absence of any situational immigration influx would necessitate the populist party does not campaign on an

immigration platform. Again, this is not the case, particularly when compared with the political history of the SVP. Since 1992, the SVP has consistently campaigned with an anti-immigration political focus (Ivarsflaten 2008). This sustained focus has endured times of immigration lulls as well as current immigration influxes. Despite the situational disturbances, right-wing populist focus on immigration does not appear contingent on situational factors including influxes.

Furthermore, the situational argument addressing populist political focus does not prove entirely compelling to prove sufficiency. If situational disturbances alone provided a compelling argument, immigration crises would often lead to anti-immigrant political foci by populist parties in the region. While this situation is supported in Switzerland, it is refuted in Norway.

Norway has been subjected to similar immigration influxes as the rest of Europe. Norway has consistently been accepting of immigrants and refugees from around the world, ranking the 11<sup>th</sup> most accepting country of immigrants in 2017 (Gallup, Inc 2017). In this scenario, the situational increase in immigration should lead the Norwegian FrP to select an immigration political focus. This is not the case, as the FrP continues to address primarily anti-establishment sentiment (Bakker et al 2015). Thus, situational influences as a source of populist political focus prove to be neither necessary nor compellingly sufficient according to the case studies.

While H5, H4, H3, and H2 all find varying degrees of support, none of these hypotheses succinctly and completely address my research question as to why European populist parties select the political foci they do. H4 does a moderately well job incorporating the relationship of other political parties in influencing political focus by analyzing factors contributing to right-wing populist success. Furthermore, H3 and H2 have both proved historically relevant in certain circumstances. Regardless, I intend to consolidate these hypotheses as well as other literature into my new framework represented in H1.

The smoking gun test for H1 suggests the absence of an immigration consensus is a sufficient condition for right-wing populist parties to focus on anti-immigration sentiment. Despite this smoking-gun verification, it is possible populist parties are selecting an immigration focus for reasons other than the absence of a mainstream consensus. Alternative motivations for an immigration platform can include economic conditions, a particular Eurosceptic referendum in question, and additional situational factors. Thus, the presence of an immigration consensus is not a *necessary* condition for an alternative right-wing populist political focus. Rather, the absence of an immigration consensus incentivizes the adoption of an immigration focus because it increases the potential benefit of an immigration campaign, particularly when compared with other alternative issues. Practically, this hypothesis has been consistently validated in both Norway and Switzerland. In Switzerland, the populist SVP has proven extraordinarily successful following their choice of an immigration focus which is selected following the absence of any consensus. Conversely, the FrP has proven the most effective party in mobilizing anti-elitist and antiestablishment minded voters since 1990 (Ivarsflaten 2008). In summation, H1 finds credibility in the passing of the smoking gun test, which according to Collier (2011) confirms the validity of the hypothesis.

When the totality of the research is referenced, H1 provides a strong case for sufficiency in affirming causal reference. The sufficiency of this condition is further strengthened because both Switzerland and Norway represent inverse case studies. The validity of H1 is supported in Norway where a consensus exists, and the FrP focuses on alternative populist issues. Additionally, H1 is complemented by Switzerland which represents a case study where no immigration consensus is present. In sum, because I have tested both a case study and its inverse upon the same independent variable, the verification of the second hypothesis significantly

strengthens the support of the entire argument. Thus, the sufficient nature of H1 creates a theory which is now generalizable across multiple European countries experiencing populist success.

## Conclusion

The circumstances surrounding right-wing populist party success in Europe are both vast and unique, while the origins of this phenomena date back to the post-WWII consensus. The conclusion of WWII ushered in the adoption of a common political philosophy across the major European states. Then, and now, the predominant ideology of these Western European states stems from the neoliberal school of thought. This worldview calls for both widespread democratization as well as the reduction of trade barriers and expansion of capitalist principles. Ultimately, neoliberal efforts manifested themselves in Europe as freedom of movement, labor, a common currency, and economic community emerged. Over a 50-year period, Europe transformed itself from one of divided states to a region of extreme economic, political, and cultural interconnectedness.

The reason neoliberalism was able to sweep the Europe so rapidly is due to the nature of WWII. The destruction the war necessitated action to be taken which would prevent any such occurrence in the future (Vanke 2007). As is often the case, however, the yearning for increased interconnectedness intrinsically eschewed those political parties in opposition. Europe was overwhelmed by a common ideology, and any dissent was ignored. Over several decades, political parties began to emerge which protested this post-war consensus, many of which were right-wing populist in nature. While initially rejected as fringe parties, the last quarter of the twentieth century saw them grow in prominence.

The issue of right-wing populist success in Europe is one of significant magnitude. Since the 1990s, nearly every country in Western Europe, as well as most of Eastern Europe, has seen a compelling rise in right-wing populist party electoral success (Tartar 2017). The success of these populist parties is a critical issue because widespread victories hold the potential to reshape the

current political structure of Europe. Modern-day Europe is characterized by an extensive common monetary union, joint economic area, and the Schengen freedom of movement agreement. In addition, interconnectedness also involves both military and political relationships as NATO participation is increasingly questioned. If populist parties continue the trend of success they have experienced since the 1990s, the current status-quo of European politics will be transformed. To understand the populist policy positions which possess the ability to reshape Europe, the main issues of these parties are called into question.

Successful populist parties in Europe are fascinating because of the variable nature with which they have achieved success. Typically, right-wing populism in other parts of the world incorporates a charismatic leader who posits the right-wing populist party against immigration, a reflection of the limited nature of right-wing populism outside of the European Union. While the leader claims to represent the true voice of society, the party represents a new, better way forward. Additionally, the right-wing populists often appeal to grievances surrounding the homogeneity of the nation (Betz 2001). This tenant of right-wing populism is often followed in Europe, but other elements contribute to their success as well. Arguably the most important factor in European right-wing populist success is the determination of which issue the populist party will campaign upon. In Europe, right-wing populist parties have achieved success by both focusing on an antiestablishment position as well as anti-immigration policy.

Antiestablishment positions have become a crucial source of right-wing populist success, as is the case in Norway (Ivarsflaten 2008). In Europe, these antiestablishment positions have emerged with targeted rhetoric criticizing the mainstream political parties, the political system itself, and the elites who comprise the system (Krouwel and Abts 2007). Thus, attacking the establishment also necessitates an attack against the political class, an element which works to

incorporate anti-elitism into most antiestablishment platforms. On the other hand, anti-immigration platforms focus on identity politics. The parties using this strategy hope to mobilize grievances and concerns voters may have about the identity and ethnic makeup of a nation (Betz 2001). In recent history, both issues have proved successful. Addressing this success, a wide body of literature has emerged which examines the circumstances surrounding these populist victories.

While there is no shortage of literature reaffirming populist success in Europe, it is often misguided as a result of a reoccurring bias to adhere to one of two schools of thought. The preponderance of current literature addressing right-wing populism in Europe fails to recognize the dichotomy of supply versus demand-side politics. While supply-side politics focuses on the implementation of party strategy to capture votes, demand-side politics addresses the role of the voters in asserting their political concerns. The key difference between these two schools of thought relies on which actor is determining the focus, and which actor is responding to the focus.

Supply-side politics addresses the party as the principal actor and the people as respondents, while demand-side politics portrays the opposite. The majority of current literature is demand-side focused, while recent research has begun to address supply-side politics. Regardless, there is a void in the literature as both schools ignore the role primary actors can have on each other symbiotically. This is where my research comes in.

I propose an alternative framework which hybridizes both supply and demand-side politics. The framework I have introduced is built upon a three-tier relationship between the right-wing populist party, the competing political parties, as well as the voters. In determining the political focus, I propose the right-wing populist party seeks to position itself with respect to



the other mainstream parties with unique concern to the issue of immigration. The motivation behind this positioning is exploitability of disenfranchised voters. Disenfranchised voters are characteristically unlikely to participate unless they are compelled with extraordinary effort under circumstances which are often not taken by established political parties. Right-wing populist success is maximized when the specific issue areas ignored by the establishment are addressed to turn these voters out. This is supported by the Norwegian FrP which has proven the most successful populist party in capturing antiestablishment sentiment, as well as Switzerland where the SVP has proven most successful in capturing anti-immigration sentiment (Ivarsflaten 2008). In this manner, the disenfranchised voters are exerting influence over the right-wing populists because they are the source of which all right-wing populist success lies.

In capturing the disenfranchised voting class, the right-wing populists must also pay particular attention to the spatial relationship between themselves and the other mainstream parties. Once the populist parties have positioned themselves strategically, they possess the capability to manipulate issue salience to increase voter turnout. The malleability of issue salience in politics is ultimately the premise of my research. These facts fulfill H1 which addresses countries where a mainstream political consensus is absent. In this political environment, there is an enormous incentive for the right-wing populists to campaign on immigration because an immigration focus is most beneficial to the right-wing populists due to the lack of attention from the mainstream. This phenomenon is witnessed because no coherent consensus results in mainstream parties simultaneously differentiating themselves on immigration by either adopting unrealistic policy positions or by failing to address the issue. As a result, the political operating area regarding immigration is both expanded and misrepresented by mainstream parties. In the end, this situation is favorable to the right-wing populists as it allows

them to exploit the issue of immigration. In sum, I have established a contributing factor to the circumstances allowing for right-wing populist success in Europe. By incorporating demand-side politics into supply-side party strategy, I have illustrated that right-wing populist parties are selecting their political focus by acknowledging other party positions and focusing on unique issues to mobilize voters. This research has filled a void in both supply and demand theory.

The final contribution of my research lies in the generalizability of the findings. Multiple case studies were selected with the specific purpose of examining the total effect an immigration consensus can have on the populist party. While H1 was supported, so was its inverse in an entirely separate country. The commonality of these findings rests on the sole independent variable which focuses on the presence or absence of an immigration consensus. Additionally, this research is even more generalizable because of the inherent predisposition toward immigration which is experienced across cultures. Fear of immigrants is not solely a European right-wing phenomenon; rather it is a trend the world has grown uncomfortably familiar with for centuries. In sum, the reliance on inherent anti-immigration predispositions coupled with the incorporation of multiple case studies creates a theory which can be applied to any democratic country with multiple parties which is experiencing increasing right-wing populist success.

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