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The Populist Radical Right in the United States: Lessons from Europe

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Political Science

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Abstract

The dissertation investigates the electoral phenomenon of the populist radical right (PRR) in the United States. The main venue for analysis is internal party competition within the conservative Republican Party for its nominations. The thesis draws extensively on European PRR literature, which has explored the roots of these parties' electoral successes overseas, and applies insights gleaned to the American context. It is divided into three articles, each of which explores a Republican nomination campaign in-depth and applies lessons learned from the European literature to the American case.

The first article, presented in chapter 2, examines the role of issue salience in Pat Buchanan's 1996 bid for the Republican presidential nomination. Through a case study, content analysis of primary debates, and regression analysis of exit polls taken in New Hampshire, this article demonstrates that Pat Buchanan attempted to drive the salience of PRR issues, disproportionately attracted the votes of those who prioritized the issues he owned and finds no relationship between the source of candidate impressions and support for Buchanan.

Chapter 3 covers Donald Trump's groundbreaking 2016 primary campaign, focusing on the concept of convergence. The Western European literature demonstrates that the PRR succeeds when mainstream parties of the left and right converge. This chapter uses a case study approach to examine the rhetoric adopted by the Trump campaign, demonstrating that Trump ran a campaign attacking the Republican Party he was seeking to lead and offering an ideological alternative to the Republican mainstream. An analysis of exit poll data demonstrates that, despite his strong anti-Republican rhetoric, support for Trump was not associated with dissatisfaction with the Republican Party, a variable that better predicts support for Trump's rival, Ted Cruz.

Chapter 4 analyzes the appeal of PRR politics in the US after the election of Donald Trump. Specifically, I seek to explain how new media helps politicians representing the PRR secure support in Republican primaries. Using an online survey of 1052 Arizona Republicans in the lead-up to the August 2018 Senate primary, the article examines support for three candidates: Rep. Martha McSally, former Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio, and Kelli Ward, a physician. The findings highlight a bifurcation in the drivers for support of PRR candidacies: Skepticism of immigration drives the Arpaio vote, while use of social media news and belief in party convergence mobilize Ward's support. The results demonstrate that support for PRR politicians in the Arizona primary is concentrated in two groups, anti-immigrant and anti-establishment, and that the anti-establishment voters are more likely to access news on social media. These findings indicate that social media news consumption does shape voter perceptions about mainstream parties favorably for the PRR.

These three articles invoke theories derived at least in part from the study of the Western European populist radical right to the American context and provides mixed evidence for the portability of the frameworks. Though not all theoretically expected relationships are present, the dissertation demonstrates that there are important analogues between the American PRR and the European PRR and provides a crucial bridge between these largely distinct literatures.

Keywords

Donald Trump, Pat Buchanan, Kelli Ward, Joe Arpaio, Radical right, Extreme right, Populism, Populist radical right, Republican Party, Primary election

Summary for Lay Audience

The American right-wing has changed in recent years. Today, the Republican Party is the party of Donald Trump and his allies in the “Make America Great Again” movement. More traditional Republicans have been sidelined in favour of what political scientist Cas Mudde calls the “populist radical right,” (PRR) a political movement characterized by a rejection of elite influence (populism), anti-immigrant sentiment (nativism), and a belief in a strong government that harshly enforces norms (authoritarianism). This brand of right-wing politics has been ascendant in Europe for many years and this dissertation seeks to address questions about how the lessons learned from the Western European experience can apply in the United States. It opens with a review of the European literature, as well as a discussion of the American presidential nomination process, and proceeds into three chapters, each of which covers a Republican nomination contest.

Chapter 2 reviews Patrick Buchanan’s failed bid for the 1996 Republican presidential nomination through the lens of “issue salience,” evaluating whether his support was tied to the importance of PRR issues—particularly trade—to the electorate. A review of several televised debates and exit polling data from the New Hampshire primary provide evidence that Buchanan was indeed more successful among those who prioritized PRR issues and that he spent more time focusing on those issues during the campaign.

Chapter 3 jumps to 2016, when Donald Trump captured the Republican nomination. The Western European literature is full of examples of voters seeking alternatives where mainstream conservative parties are viewed as too cozy with their opposition. This chapter explores if a similar phenomenon was present in 2016. I use exit polling data to assess whether Trump’s

frequent invocation of anti-Republican rhetoric endeared him to voters who felt betrayed by the Republican Party and find that it did not.

Finally, Chapter 4 covers the 2018 US Senate primary in Arizona, demonstrating that those who supported PRR candidates in the primary were more likely to consume social media news and were more likely to believe that there were no major differences between the Republican establishment and the Democratic Party.

Taken together, these articles demonstrate that, in some cases, insight derived from the study of Western European right-wing movements can apply in the United States.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Cristine de Clercy and Dr. Peter Ferguson without whom this dissertation would have been impossible. Their sage advice, prompt feedback, and careful editors' eyes were essential to my progress. I also owe a great deal to Dr. Matthew Lebo and Dr. Cameron Anderson who provided critical feedback and helped to ground me in the literature I am seeking to contribute to.

Additionally, I owe a great deal to my friends and professional colleagues who helped me make the dissertation process work. Fred Chagnon, John Annand, and Mark Tauschek were there when I needed them—and stepped out of the way when it was convenient for me—and this must be acknowledged. So here we are.

Finally, I must thank my partner, Leanna, who stood by me as I pecked away at the manuscript, thought it was done, and then started all over again. Hopefully this time it sticks!

Jeremy C. Roberts

April 5, 2023, Fort Myers, Florida

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Chapter 1: A Global Phenomenon?

On May 1, 2021, former Republican presidential nominee and sitting United States Senator from Utah Mitt Romney stood before a crowd of state Republican Party members meeting at a convention in West Valley City, Utah. Although he was a member of Utah's congressional delegation and a senior member of the Republican party, Romney had been an outspoken critic of the former Republican president, Donald Trump, who served from 2017-2021. His opposition to the Trump presidency meant that Romney, erstwhile leader of the Republican Party, was speaking to a hostile audience. He began his speech by criticizing Joe Biden on tax hikes, wasteful spending, and the rising levels of national debt, but he quickly lost the crowd when he announced that he was a proud Republican. This drew boos from the audience. Frustrated, Romney admonished the crowd. "You can boo all you like, but I've been a Republican all my life."¹ To a casual observer, this may have been surprising. But to a close observer, this exchange was anything but. Romney's conflict with Republican power brokers had been simmering since Trump's election victory in 2016. At the same time, the idea that a Republican Party convention audience would openly boo an incumbent Republican senator who eight years earlier has led the Party into the 2012 presidential election as its nominee is preposterous. How did it happen? How did the political winds shift such that a politician like Romney, a principled conservative and scion of a storied Republican dynasty, was jeered and mocked when he spoke to a crowd of fellow Republicans in his home state?

This dissertation is not about Mitt Romney in particular, or the electoral fortunes of traditional Republicans in the twenty-first century. It does, however, seek to contextualize a

¹ Marie Fazio, "Mitt Romney Is Booed by Members of His Own Party," *The New York Times*, May 2, 2021.

surge in a particular brand of right-wing politics in the United States. This breed of right-wing politicians, known as the populist radical right (PRR), has been a potent force in Western European politics for decades and, along with its American equivalent, has come to be critically important.² The West European right and the American right have much in common, but the literature has, unfortunately, been relatively slow to catch up with these similarities. In the wake of the 2016 election, scholars scrambled to explain Trump’s success considering the rise of the PRR “often with no knowledge of or reference to the volumes of articles and books already devoted to them in Europe in the 1990s.”³ Lessons from other Western democracies can be applied fruitfully to improve our understanding of American politics. That is the primary goal of this dissertation.

In furthering this goal, I seek to apply theory and context derived from the aforementioned “volumes of articles and books” in three case studies,⁴ two of which are devoted to Republican presidential nomination contests, while the third covers a US Senate primary. In chapter 2, I employ analyses of several televised debates and exit poll data to assess the role that issue salience played in Pat Buchanan’s unsuccessful 1996 bid for his party’s presidential nomination, demonstrating that, while Buchanan did attempt to drive issue salience by focusing on traditional PRR issues in his public remarks, he was ultimately unable to set the political agenda. Chapter 3 covers Donald Trump’s successful 2016 nomination campaign. Using a narrative case approach to contextualize Trump’s relationship with the Republican Party and

² Note that in general, this dissertation focuses on the countries of Western and Central Europe—used throughout, the term “European literature” refers to research on the party families that developed in postwar liberal democratic countries like France, Italy, Austria, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands, France, and Germany. While the study of the post-communist right in Eastern Europe is essential to understanding modern right-wing dynamics in Europe, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

³ Cas Mudde, *The Far Right Today* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019), 97.

⁴ This is a ‘three article dissertation,’ which binds three independent pieces of scholarship together based on a common theme.

analyzing exit poll data from several competitive primaries, I demonstrate that, while Trump attempted to sow discontent among Republicans with their Party, those who felt betrayed did not disproportionately break for him—in contrast with theoretical expectations. Finally, chapter 4—originally published in *Politics and Governance*⁵—uses original survey research to demonstrate that support for a PRR candidate in the 2018 Arizona senate primary is correlated with consumption of “new media,” aligning with theoretical expectations derived from the European literature.

This introduction includes an overview of the dissertation’s contribution to knowledge, a discussion of key concepts, including the “populist radical right,” a short review of the literature on the PRR in Europe to provide background for the individual article-chapters, and articulates the case for studying Republican primaries.

1.0.1 Contributions to knowledge

Scholars have busied themselves with the study of the American right nearly as vigorously as they have pursued understanding of the European right, though often not in terms recognizable to scholars of the European right. The first key contribution of this dissertation is a direct acknowledgement of the similarities between the European PRR and an American PRR faction as captured in the three articles included in this dissertation, derived from the European literature, and applied to the American case. Unlike much of the existing literature, which takes the two geographies individually and perhaps alludes to transatlantic similarities, this dissertation is a direct recognition of the global PRR phenomenon. Trump’s rise, for example, is part of a global phenomenon and should not be divorced from it. The way he chose to present himself and the attacks he launched on the Republican Party have precedent in Western Europe. By

⁵ Jeremy C. Roberts, “The Populist Radical Right in the US: New Media and the 2018 Arizona Senate Primary,” *Politics and Governance* 8, no. 1 (2020), 111-121.

acknowledging and theorizing based on the extensive literature developed there, this study is unique.

An additional contribution comes from the cases studied here. While there is no shortage of literature on the successful election of Donald Trump to the presidency in 2016, there is something of a gap on his antecedents. In comparing Trump's nomination journey within the Republican Party to that of Pat Buchanan, an unsuccessful candidate with a similar ideological profile and support base, I seek to ground Trump more firmly in the historical context of American conservatism in the United States, while at the same time expanding the relatively sparse literature on Buchanan's campaign.

Another contribution related to the case selection is the inclusion of a state-level case. Chapter 4 covers the 2018 Arizona US senate primary, examining a legislative contest and a state-level contest in one case. This case study is also unique. When an early draft of the findings was published in *Politics and Governance* in 2020, to my knowledge there were no other pieces of scholarly research that explored the contest in any detail. The implications of the PRR surge in American politics are clear. The reordering that accompanied Trump's 2016 victory and subsequent elections has been seismic. In bringing the fruits of the voluminous Western European literature to bear in explaining features of American primary elections, this dissertation contributes to knowledge. Of course, it is essential to understand the concepts that underpin the cross-national context. We begin with key terms and a review of the West European literature.

1.1 Definitions and Literature Review

As noted above, here I establish a definitional base before proceeding to a chronological discussion of the literature's thematic development. The theories outlined in this thesis covers the populist radical right (PRR), a phrase intended to apply to a specific subset of the broader far

right party family. Though the far right is much studied, the literature lacks definitional consistency. Many terms have been used to apply to the subjects. The scholarly literature on the party family spans multiple waves focusing on its different aspects,⁶ and covers dozens of parties that have participated in numerous elections. It is unsurprising that key terms are not used in a completely consistent manner. Concepts surrounding the far right and extreme right party families are contested. When it comes to the far or extreme or radical right (often used interchangeably), Carter's words are worth repeating here: "an unequivocal definition of this concept is lacking."⁷ Mudde states it even more plainly: "There is no consensus on terminology and there never will be."⁸ In order to understand the PRR as a concept, we must carve a relatively consistent definition from the literature on the far right as a whole.

Much of the research written during the third wave of the postwar far right (roughly 1980-2000, see below) was devoted to sorting out the conceptual morass that came about as scholars scrambled to explain the electoral success of this emergent party family in Western Europe, which defied convention and upended traditional party systems.⁹ The far right is an umbrella term comprising a number of distinct political actors and organizations united ideologically by beliefs in the importance of hierarchy and the rejection of social equality.¹⁰ Of course, scholars have noted that this introduces a complication, as sorting entities spatially on a left-right axis alone would catch a number of mainstream or traditional conservative parties with

⁶ Cas Mudde, "Introduction to the Populist Radical Right," in *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader*, ed. Cas Mudde (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 2-3.

⁷ Elisabeth L. Carter, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe: Success or Failure* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 14.

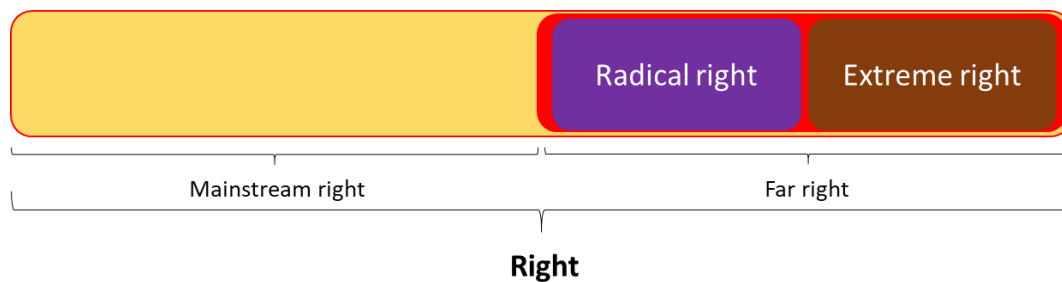
⁸ Cas Mudde, *The Far Right in America* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 1.

⁹ For example: Cas Mudde, "The War of Words Defining the Extreme Right Party Family," *West European Politics* 19, no. 2 (1996), 230; Meindert Fennema, "Some Conceptual Issues and Problems in the Comparison of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe," *Party Politics* 3, no. 4 (1997), 482.

¹⁰ Hans-George Betz, "The New Politics of Resentment: Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe," in *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader*, ed. Cas Mudde (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 338.

traditionally hardline positions on some issues as “far right,” which is not analytically useful.¹¹ It is also worth noting that many non-radical/extreme right parties have views that fall outside of the political norm, like political libertarians. In this sense, mainstream is therefore a catch-all for non-radical, non-extreme parties. Ignazi therefore suggests a definition for the extreme right that, along with a spatial dimension, also includes declared reference to historical fascism, and attitudes towards the existing political system—that is, whether the entity in question accepts democratic values.¹²

Figure 1: Ideological spectrum of groups on the right



Within the broader far right concept, the extreme right is generally characterized by its opposition to the essence of the most limited form of democracy: popular sovereignty. Mudde describes the extreme right as “*in essence* antidemocratic.”¹³ While extreme right parties do sometimes contest elections, they ultimately “[do not believe] that people should elect their leaders.”¹⁴ The relationship with interwar fascism (e.g., National Socialism, Italian Fascism), which is the most coherent expression of anti-democratic sentiment on the right in the twentieth

¹¹ Piero Ignazi, “The Silent-Counter-Revolution: Hypotheses on the Emergence of Extreme Right-Wing Parties in Europe,” *European Journal of Political Research* 22, no. 1 (1992), 8.

¹² Ibid. 7 See also: Daniele Albertazzi and Sean Mueller, “Populism and Liberal Democracy: Populists in Government in Austria, Italy, Poland and Switzerland,” in *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader*, ed. Cas Mudde (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 511. This latter point has been empirically validated: Albertazzi and Mueller find that when right-wing populist parties enter government, there is “a subsequent erosion of liberal democratic principles.”

¹³ Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 31.

¹⁴ Mudde, *The Far Right in America*, 1.

century, is critical to defining the extreme right. Fennema argues that all fascist parties fall into the extreme right category, and that “[to] rightfully be called extreme right... an anti-immigrant party should show the ideological features that are characteristic of the pre-war extreme right.”¹⁵ Neo-fascists, white supremacists, and violent right-wing movements that seek to upend the political order deserve the label “extreme right.” They are fundamentally opposed to the most basic democratic principles, and if they do manage to seize power, they pose a real threat to political institutions and conventions.¹⁶

Many far right groups do not reject the tenets of basic democracy, however, and cannot fairly be described as “extreme” using the above definition. Some of these groups have a minimal relationship to historical fascism either by dint of geography (emerging in countries where fascism was comparatively weak) or by ideology. To distinguish between the extreme right and those other actors that do not fit well with the conservative mainstream but also do not clearly reject the far right, some scholars have opted to use the word “radical.” Radicalism implies an anti-system ideology, but without blatant anti-democratic tendencies. The source of this distinction lies in the idiosyncrasies of German law. Extreme parties, defined as those that seek to work outside of the system to destroy it, are illegal, while radical parties, which aim simply to oppose the existing political establishment, are not.¹⁷ German scholars are, unsurprisingly, at the forefront of the study of far right, so this legal distinction has had important implications for the broader field of study.¹⁸

¹⁵ Meindert Fennema, "Some Conceptual Issues and Problems in the Comparison of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe," *Party Politics* 3, no. 4 (1997), 482.

¹⁶ See, for example the case of Hungary. Peter Kreko and Zsolt Enyedi, "Orban's Laboratory of Illiberalism," *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 3 (2018), 41-42.

¹⁷ Mudde, "The War of Words," 231.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 241.

Unfortunately, while this distinction has permeated much of the literature, definitional confusion remains. The fact that “extreme” is often used interchangeably with “radical” to describe the far right party family contributes to this continued definitional confusion.¹⁹ In their study of the French National Front (FN), for example, Bréchon and Mitra characterize the extreme right as “a movement which seeks a comprehensive ideological change without, however, questioning the legitimacy of the constitution and established institutions of the state.”²⁰ Carter’s definition of extreme right includes two parts: “a rejection of the fundamental values, procedures, and institutions of the democratic constitutional state”, and “a rejection of the principle of fundamental human equality”²¹

It is necessary to refine the concept of the far right, as taken together its components are too broadly interpreted for effective analysis. Street-level fascists and anti-immigrant parliamentarians might have some traits in common, but their differences—including tactics and general willingness to contest elections—are too acute to group them together as part of the same ideological category for the purposes of this analysis. I propose instead to focus on the PRR, among the most popular and viable incarnations of the radical right, as it is electorally relevant, and the concept is both manageable and precise. The next section dives deeper into this PRR phenomenon.

1.1.1 The populist radical right

As the brief review presented above demonstrates, the phrase “far right” can refer to any number of distinct, even competing parties and organizations. Far right organizations and actors hold different views, ranging from neo-fascism to neoliberalism, and while they may share

¹⁹ Ibid., 230.

²⁰ Pierre Bréchon and Subrata Kumar Mitra, "The National Front in France: The Emergence of an Extreme Right Protest Movement," *Comparative Politics* 25, no. 1 (1992), 64.

²¹ Carter, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe*, 31.

hostility towards immigration and globalization, this hostility manifests itself in different ways. Parties of the (relatively) mainstream radical right contest elections. Neo-fascist groups may participate in intimidation and brawling. Some conceptual narrowing is therefore appropriate, and Cas Mudde's term, the "populist radical right," a movement which has come to dominate the far right around the world over the past several decades, is suitable for the analysis at hand. According to Mudde, the PRR, "is the most relevant subgroup within the radical right," and, "includes almost all relevant far right parties in contemporary Europe."²² Crucially, the term refers to parties that do not fundamentally reject the tenets of democracy.²³

According to Mudde, the PRR is defined by its ideological positions in three core areas: populism; nativism; and authoritarianism.²⁴ Volumes could be written on each of these concepts. This is not the venue for such exposition. However, it is worth briefly discussing each term in turn to understand the intricacies of this subset of the global far right movement that has captured the interest of scholars and voters alike in Western Europe and around the world.

Populism is a notoriously nebulous concept, made more indecipherable by its frequent application in diverse contexts. American senator and presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, French National Front (FN) leader Marine Le Pen, and anti-tax Norwegian Anders Lange are all "populists," but would likely bristle at the comparison, as they represent dramatically different ideological positions. The key commonality rests in a rejection of elite power. I understand populism in its simplest, unmodified form here as a fundamental rejection of the political elite by

²² Mudde, *The Far Right in America*, 2.

²³ Here it is worth noting that this dissertation is not intended to be a partisan exercise. While the right to vote and participate in politics is sacred, the argument here is about the factors that contribute to the success of a particular brand of right-wing politician, not a blanket condemnation of that success, as sometimes occurs when scholars treat populist success as a democratic disease. In my view, populism can be correctly read as imposing on liberal democratic principles in some cases while also serving as a counterbalance against an unelected bureaucracy or otherwise unrepresentative political leadership class. This dissertation is not a critique of PRR voters. See the discussion on page 11.

²⁴ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 25.

the people, represented by an individual or political party (and mobilized, perhaps, by real or imagined democratic slights). According to Kenneth Roberts, “the essential core of populism is understood to be the political mobilization of mass constituencies by personalistic leaders who challenge the established elites.”²⁵ Populists are virulently anti-elite—and with good reason: they see elites as “the main obstacle to the genuine expression of the popular will.”²⁶ As one Latin American populist put it in a campaign slogan, “Only one ideology, against the oligarchy.”²⁷

Central to the modern radical right’s appeal is its rejection of the status quo. Just as the Tea Party sought to remake Republican orthodoxy in the United States by pushing a socially conservative, anti-tax platform, the Western European radical right has sought to undermine the social order ushered in with the European Union.²⁸ The wholesale dismantling of the status quo is key to the appeal of these and similar organizations. This opens them up to accusations that they are short on substance, with Betz articulating a similar claim:

It seems hardly surprising that radical right-wing populist parties have been relatively successful in attracting significant electoral support among the growing number of disenchanting and skeptical voters more interested in voicing their grievances than in evaluating alternative approaches to solving pressing social problems.²⁹

²⁵ Kenneth M. Roberts, “Populism, Political Conflict, and Grass-Roots Organization in Latin America,” *Comparative Politics* 38, no. 2 (2006), 127.

²⁶ Grahame F. Thompson, “Populisms and Liberal Democracy--Business as Usual,” *Economy and Society* 46, no. 1 (2017), 49.

²⁷ Ximena Sosa, “Populism in Ecuador: From José M. Velasco Ibarra to Rafael Correa,” in *Populism in Latin America* ed. Michael L. Conniff (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 172.

²⁸ Vanessa Williamson, Theda Skocpol, and John Coggin, “The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism,” *Perspectives on Politics* 9, no. 1 (2011): 25-29; Sofia Vasilopoulou, “European Integration and the Radical Right: Three Patterns of Opposition,” in *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader*, ed. Cas Mudde (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 125.

²⁹ Hans-George Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe* (New York: St. Martin's, 1994), 107. For additional examples, see, Ruth Wodak and Majid KhosraviNik, “Dynamics of Discourse and Politics in Right-Wing Populism in Europe and Beyond: An Introduction,” in *Right Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*, eds. Ruth Wodak, Majid KhosraviNik, and Brigitte Mral (London & New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), xvii.

While this may be true in some cases, survey evidence indicates that PRR voters do tend to hold views like those espoused by the parties—this is to say there is more to the PRR than a simple protest vote.³⁰ But how does this ideology manifest itself in practice?

Populist parties, though they often exploit prejudice in practice, are inclusionary movements, uniting their version of “the people” against an elite that may be defined based on class, race, or some other cleavage. Populism is more than a tactic. According to Mudde, it is

a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ and the ‘corrupt elite,’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.³¹

The contemporary PRR is populist because its appeals to this antagonistic conception of the relationship between democratic stakeholders and elites, and it is radical because its formulation of the “pure people,” typically involves raw majoritarianism: the majority should rule always. As applied by the PRR, however, which is defined by its exclusionary nativism (see below), members of the majority may not include marginalized groups, including racial outgroups or immigrants who threaten national homogeneity.³² There is, of course, more to *liberal* democracy than simple majority-rule.³³ With its emphasis on the general will, the populist message is distinct from more mainstream left or right appeals because of the populist de-emphasis on liberal pluralism. According to Plattner, “modern democracy has a dual character—it is itself, in this sense, a kind of hybrid regime, one that tempers popular rule with antimajoritarian features.”³⁴ While populism can serve as a sort of “corrective” for democracies that have

³⁰ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 227.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

³² *Ibid.* 19

³³ Marc F. Plattner, "Populism, Pluralism, and Liberal Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 1 (2010), 84.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

problems with inclusion,³⁵ owing to their majoritarianism, successful populist appeals can isolate minorities.

The exclusion of ethnic minorities and foreigners is a theme within the PRR, and Mudde includes nativism, an exclusionary variety of nationalism, as another defining characteristic of the ideology. Nativism is arguably the PRR's sharpest differentiator. Ellinas expresses this position, writing, "The glue that ties these parties together is their shared understanding that the political should be congruent with the national."³⁶ PRR politics do not generally focus on economics. The appeal is couched in ideology's cultural stance—specifically, its nativism. In France, for example, "The issues of immigration and *insecurité* form the core of the complex cleavage structure on which the [FN] is based."³⁷ The National Front's (FN's) mission, as a PRR party, has been to politicize these cleavages, and its success in doing so has been essential in explaining the ebb and flow of its electoral support.³⁸ To say that PRR success is tied perfectly to public attitudes towards immigration is an oversimplification, but it does highlight the centrality of the issue.

The final defining PRR characteristic per Mudde's definition is authoritarianism. Authoritarianism here refers to "the belief in a strictly ordered society, in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely."³⁹ In practice, this means that PRR parties and candidates often focus on crime and terrorism in their appeals and endorse strict "law and order" politics. In the early period of the study of the postwar far right, authoritarianism was the dominant angle of

³⁵ Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser, "The Ambivalence of Populism: Threat and Corrective for Democracy," *Democratization* 19, no. 2 (2012), 184-208.

³⁶ Antonis A. Ellinas, *The Media and the Far Right in Western Europe: Playing the Nationalist Card* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 12.

³⁷ Edward G. DeClair, *Politics on the Fringe: The People, Policies and Organization of the French National Front* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 53.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

³⁹ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 23.

inquiry, with scholars like Adorno and Lipset expounding on the concept. It is sufficient for now to highlight that support for authoritarianism remains an arrow in the modern PRR's ideological quiver.

In sum, the PRR is a movement characterized by anti-establishment populist parties that invoke nativist ideas, including anti-immigrant—even racist—sentiments in their appeals along with belief in strict order and severe sanctions for violations. PRR is not, however, a synonym for fascist, nor is it a fundamentally anti-democratic movement in that it contests elections, sometimes successfully, largely working within the system.

The next section traces the evolution of the Western European literature on the far right. The literature follows a trajectory set by the far right itself as it competed (and continues to compete) in the postwar European political scene, beginning in the immediate postwar period with backward-looking neo-fascist movements. Since 1945, the far right has evolved into a large and varied party family, including the PRR. By the turn of the millennium, the PRR, despite its pariah status, had become firmly entrenched in the party systems all over Europe, especially in the West, a reality that has transformed scholars' perspectives, triggering more work on the role these parties play in coalition formation and how they act when in government.⁴⁰

1.2 The Evolution of the Study of the Populist Radical Right

This thesis focuses on the postwar radical right, which is distinct ideologically and practically from the interwar fascist movements that captured Germany and Italy (among others) in the 1920s and 1930s. Following Klaus von Beyme, who initially identified three waves of the

⁴⁰ Fraser Duncan, "Immigration and Integration Policy and the Austrian Radical Right in Office: the FPÖ/BZÖ, 2000-2006," *Contemporary Politics* 16, no. 4 (2010), 344-348; Tjitske Akkerman, "Comparing Radical Right Parties in Government: Immigration and Integration Policies in Nine Countries (1996-2010)," in *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader*, ed. Cas Mudde (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 501.

European far right in a 1988 article,⁴¹ Cas Mudde marks four key periods of far right development, beginning with neo-fascists in the immediate postwar period after 1945 and culminating in global mainstream acceptance for some PRR ideas in the 2000s.⁴² In the sections below, I highlight these four phases, and clarify how scholarship on the far right evolved to respond to the questions provoked by developments in the PRR's evolution and success.

1.2.1 The Immediate Postwar Period—the Rise of the Neo-fascists (1940s and 1950s)

The first major wave in the study of the postwar far right arrived as scholars sought to confront fascism's immediate legacy. Reflecting on its defeat in the Second World War, and with demand for its exclusionary politics cooled by the booming economy of the 1950s,⁴³ the far right was relegated to the political sidelines, reveling in fascist nostalgia at the expense of real electoral participation.⁴⁴ Throughout this period, the Western European far right—and the scholarship that traced it—was retrospective, firmly rooted in wartime fascism. As Mudde puts it, “[t]hey were mostly described as ‘neo-fascists,’ but there was really not much new to them.”⁴⁵

The behaviouralist movement, which had its heyday in the immediate postwar and into the 1970s, saw the breakdown of political scientists' collective belief in traditional historical and institutionally-grounded methods that had characterized the field up to that point, in favour of modern, empirically-grounded research techniques. According to Dahl, the behaviouralist push defied easy explanation but could be characterized as a revolt against established orthodoxy:

Historically speaking, the behavioral approach was a protest movement within political science. Through usage by partisans, partly as an epithet, terms like political behavior and the behavioral approach came to be associated with a number of political scientists, mainly Americans, who shared a strong sense of dissatisfaction with the achievements of conventional political science,

⁴¹ Klaus von Beyme, "Right-Wing Extremism in Post-War Europe," in *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader*, ed. Cas Mudde (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 150-151.

⁴² Cas Mudde, *The Far Right Today* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019), 11-21.

⁴³ David Art, *Inside the Radical Right: The Development of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 169.

⁴⁴ Mudde, *The Far Right Today*, 12-13.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

particularly through historical, philosophical, and the descriptive-institutional approaches, and a belief that additional methods and approaches either existed or could be developed that would help to provide political science with empirical propositions and theories of a systematic sort, tested by closer, more direct and more rigorously controlled observations of political events.⁴⁶

The behaviouralist revolution shaped the questions scholars asked and the methods used to answer them. It led to a stream of quantitative research, much of which focused on major events like elections,⁴⁷ but also included studies based on opinion polls, some of which sought to map the relationship between attitudes and political orientations.⁴⁸ This new way of thinking shaped how political scientists chose to approach explaining the nature and origins of the far right, which had recently played a major role in the Second World War. Research in this period often incorporated opinion polling and other quantitative analyses, which generally coalesced into two broad approaches: psychological and social-structural.

This initial wave of postwar scholarship was dominated by these two approaches: a psychological approach typified by research into “authoritarian personalities,” and one that instead referred to broader social structural phenomena and class, most famously Lipset’s “working class authoritarianism.”⁴⁹ The concept of the authoritarian personality was originally grounded in the research of Fromm, whose work in the 1930s and early 1940s focused on psychoanalysis and empirical studies of authoritarian attitudes. Fromm built authoritarian archetypes using the results of questionnaires he distributed to workers and bureaucrats,⁵⁰ an early example of the individual-level survey research that Adorno and other postwar

⁴⁶ Robert A. Dahl, "The Behavioral Approach in Political Science: Epitaph for a Monument to a Successful Protest," *The American Political Science Review* 55, no. 4 (1961), 766.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York: Wiley, 1960), *passim*.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Herbert McClosky, "Conservatism and Personality," *The American Political Science Review* 52, no. 1 (1958), *passim*.

⁴⁹ von Beyme, "Right-Wing Extremism," 154.

⁵⁰ Jan Baar and Peer Scheepers, "Theoretical and Methodological Foundations of the Authoritarian Personality," *Journal of the Authoritarian Personality* 29, no. 4 (1993), 346.

behaviouralists would come to prefer. Unlike the Marxist thinkers of the day, Fromm de-emphasized the role of social structures and class relative to that of “persistent family structures that reproduced personalities more than willing to submit to authorities.”⁵¹

The rise and fall of the Nazi regime in Germany inspired other scholars as well. Erikson, for example, produced a psychoanalysis of young Germans, searching for personality characteristics that would drive them to support Hitler.⁵² Taking this a step further, Adorno and his collaborators received a grant from two American Jewish organizations and eventually produced the best-known work in the field, *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950).⁵³ *The Authoritarian Personality* is a work of social psychology predicated on the hypothesis that an individual’s political convictions are interrelated and form a mentality, which can be attributed to “deep-lying trends in his personality.”⁵⁴ In keeping with the then-dominant behaviouralist approach to the study of politics, *The Authoritarian Personality* relies on a number of “intensive clinical studies” on individuals and groups based on questionnaires and interviews designed to elicit the sought-after political and social convictions, and map them to broader authoritarian subsystems.⁵⁵ Perhaps the most influential output from Adorno’s work is his F-scale (“fascism-scale”), which is the individual-level assessment Adorno and his colleagues designed, and responses to which correlate with important personality traits, including xenophobia, ethnocentrism, dogmatism, and rigidity.⁵⁶

Much of the early literature focuses on the personality characteristics of those who support authoritarian ideas to explain authoritarian success in the early twentieth century. Indeed,

⁵¹ Ibid., 348.

⁵² Erik H. Erikson, "Hitler's Imagery and German youth," *Psychiatry* 5 (1942), *passim*.

⁵³ Baar and Scheepers, “Theoretical and Methodological Foundations,” 349.

⁵⁴ T. W. Adorno et. al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964), 1.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 12-13.

⁵⁶ Samuel Messick and Douglas N. Jackson, "The Measurement of Authoritarian Attitudes," *Educational and Psychological Measurement* XVII, no. 2 (1958), 241.

both Adorno et. al. and Lipset perceived demand for the far right as a “normal pathological condition,”⁵⁷ meaning that it is present in all societies to a certain degree. But, as noted above, they diverged somewhat in how they view the role of social factors. Critical among these factors is class. Adorno and Fromm were less concerned with broader social structures, instead preferring as their unit of analysis the individual. Lipset, on the other hand, emphasized the role of class, arguing that one's class identity shapes authoritarian predispositions by dint of lower levels of education, less involvement with civil society, and economic insecurity, among other characteristics.⁵⁸ According to Lipset,

the lower-class individual is more likely to have been exposed to punishment, lack of love, and a general atmosphere of tension and aggression since early childhood, experiences which often produce deep-rooted hostilities expressed by ethnic prejudice, political authoritarianism, and chiliastic transvaluational religion.⁵⁹

Working class authoritarianism manifests itself as authoritarian communism, while the middle classes, subject to different pressures, endorse fascism.⁶⁰ As the right-wing political landscape began to shift in the 1950s away from fascist nostalgia, new right-wing populists emerged, inspiring scholars to write about a new generation of right-leaning figures.

1.2.2 “Right-Wing Populism” (1950s to 1980s)

In the 1950s and 1960s, scholars around the world were confronted with a new brand of right-wing party that cast off the early radical right’s fascist roots in favour of a sort of neoliberal populism. These new parties were defined by their anti-elite, anti-establishment programmes,⁶¹

⁵⁷ Michael Minkenberg, "The Radical right in Postsocialist Central and Eastern Europe: Comparative Observations and Interpretations," *East European Politics & Societies* 16, no. 2 (2002), 339.

⁵⁸ Seymour Martin Lipset, "Democracy and Working Class Authoritarianism," *American Sociological Review* 24, no. 4 (1959), 489.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 495 (Chiliastic refers to the quality of seeking quick, fundamental social transformation, while transvaluation implies a general reassessment of one’s value system.)

⁶⁰ Seymour Martin Lipset, "Working-Class Authoritarianism: A Reply to Miller and Riessman," *The British Journal of Sociology* 12, no. 3 (1961), 280.

⁶¹ Mudde, *The Far Right Today*, 14.

and through the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s some found electoral success. This era is when radical right-wing parties really began to embrace populism to the degree recognizable today, and this change influenced a great deal of the scholarship at the time, as analysts addressed disruptions to what had been relatively stable party systems.⁶² All the while, political science orthodoxy was evolving as well, with rebellion against behaviouralism coalescing towards the end of the 1960s as influential figures pushed for more socially aware, values-driven research in political science.⁶³

The right-wing populist era saw the emergence of a cohort of party leaders who had little in common with neo-fascists but who did not fit the traditional conservative mold. This group includes Pierre Poujade, a small businessman who successfully instigated an anti-tax populist movement on behalf of the French petite bourgeoisie, and Anders Lange whose eponymous anti-tax party later developed into the Norwegian Progress Party.⁶⁴ Initially, these movements were not associated with the far right, which had, up to that point, been tied to interwar fascism.⁶⁵ Instead, the successive and related movements were reactions to the postwar economy and the social deprivation brought about by this transition.⁶⁶ During this period, scholars focused their efforts on covering the rise—and occasionally the surprising success—of the new crop of right-

⁶² Erik Damgaard, "Stability and Change in the Danish Party System over Half a Century," *Scandinavian Political Studies* 9, no. A9 (1974), 122.

⁶³ Erkki Berndtson, "Political Science in the Era of Post-Behavioralism. The Need for Self-Reflection." *Scandinavian Political Studies* 10, no. A10 (1975), 173-174.

⁶⁴ Edward G. DeClair, *Politics on the Fringe: The People, Policies and Organization of the French National Front* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 20. Sten Berglund and Ulf Ljunstrom, "The Scandinavian Party System(s) in Transition (?): A Macro-Level Analysis," *European Journal of Political Research* 7, no. 2 (1979), 187.

⁶⁵ Cas Mudde, *The Far Right Today* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019), 14-15.

⁶⁶ von Beyme, "Right-Wing Extremism," 150.

wing populist parties in Western Europe, many of which, like the Poujadists, emerged as anti-tax economic movements with a strong, centralized leadership.⁶⁷

Many works from this period focused on how the party systems of several European countries (specifically in Scandinavia) experienced disruption,⁶⁸ while exploring and proposing general causal factors that explain citizens' dealignment from traditional, class-based left-right politics.⁶⁹ In particular, scholars who were active during the 1960s and 1970s extended some of the foundational work by Lipset and others on the role of class and occupation (particularly work as a small businessperson) in determining support for right-wing parties.⁷⁰ These arguments hold that, cast adrift by the rise of large corporations and a social system that prioritizes this type of organization, the petite bourgeoisie are especially susceptible to the economy's vicissitudes, and therefore more likely to be attracted to the radical right, reminiscent of Lipset's "middle-class authoritarians."⁷¹ In a typical study of this era, Nolan and Schneck use the results of a survey to argue that, "small businessmen are relatively more susceptible to political attitudes and sentiments that support right-wing extremism than are bureaucratic managers."⁷²

The postwar economy is not the only explanatory variable cited by scholars during this period. Another school of thought, prominently debuted by Ronald Inglehart in 1971, points to the importance of shifts in intergenerational values, based on circumstances during one's

⁶⁷ Paul Taggart, "New Populist Parties in Western Europe," in *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader*, ed. Cas Mudde (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 163-164. These parties would sometimes take their names from their founders, as in the case of "Anders Lange's Party for a Strong Reduction in Taxes, Duties, and Public Intervention."

⁶⁸ Sten Berglund and Ulf Ljunstrom, "The Scandinavian Party System(s) in Transition (?): A Macro-Level Analysis," *European Journal of Political Research* 7 no. 2 (1979), *passim*.

⁶⁹ For an example, see: Hans Jorgen Nielsen, "The Uncivic Culture: Attitudes towards the Political System in Denmark, and Vote for the Progress Party, 1973-1975," *Scandinavian Political Studies* 11, no. A11 (1976), 154.

⁷⁰ Seymour M. Lipset, "Social Stratification and Right-Wing Extremism," *The British Journal of Sociology* 10, no. 4 (1959), 346-382. See, for example, Harold D. Lasswell, "The Psychology of Hitlerism," *Political Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (1933), 373-384.

⁷¹ Richard L. Nolan and Rodney E. Schneck, "Small Businessmen, Branch Managers, and Their Relative Susceptibility to Extremism: An Empirical Test," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 2, no. 1 (1969), 90.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 98

formative years. Inglehart cited this value shift towards what he calls “‘post-bourgeois’ value priorities” as a reason for the decline in class voting, and as a contributing factor to the growth of new parties.⁷³ Other scholarship from this era explored how the parties contributed to their own success or failure amidst realignment among voters. Berglund and Lundstrom, for example, found that the rise of new parties in Scandinavia, many of which were populist right-wing parties like the Norwegian Progress Party and the Finnish Rural Party, was attributable to the ability of the party system to adapt to social change (in this case effectively responding to the decline in class voting).⁷⁴

The “right-wing populist” period is important because it is the first era that featured serious non-traditional right-wing parties that fully eschewed fascism. These parties rose on the strength of a different coalition of voters and benefited from citizens’ dealignment from other parties on both the left and the right. And, as the literature cited above indicates, they often catered to a particular type of voter: the small businessperson who felt left-behind by the growing welfare state. As the party family developed in the 1980s, this constituency would grow to include nativists and Euroskeptics. To be clear, the “right-wing populist” era is not politically significant because these parties were particularly successful. It took many more years, until the 1980s, for these parties to gain substantial footholds beyond a few smaller European countries.

1.2.3 “Radical Right” (1980s and 1990s)

Up until the 1980s, the postwar far right had been a relatively marginal player. This changed after 1980. Mudde describes the early 1980s as the genesis of “[t]he first significant wave of far-right politics in Western Europe.”⁷⁵ Ignazi concurs, writing of these parties, “[f]irst,

⁷³ Ronald Inglehart, “The Silent Revolution in Europe: Intergenerational Change in Post-Industrial Societies,” *The American Political Science Review* 65, no. 4 (1971), 992.

⁷⁴ Berglund and Lunnstrom, “The Scandinavian Party System(s) in Transition (?),” 204.

⁷⁵ Mudde, *The Far Right Today*, 16.

they are new because they have been founded (or have emerged from absolute irrelevance) in recent years; second because they do not belong to the traditional political families and pose an important challenge to them.”⁷⁶ Fringe parties, like the French National Front (FN) or the Vlaams Blok (VB) in Belgium, surged to the fore by capturing seats in local and national elections.

The fall of communism in 1989 allowed for the emergence of a formal Eastern European radical right.⁷⁷ Towards the end of this period, one radical right party—the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ)—even managed to make it into government, representing “arguably the greatest success yet for a radical right party in Western Europe.”⁷⁸ New success brought new significance, and scholars mobilized to explain what was suddenly a phenomenon of practical electoral importance. Unlike previous iterations of the far right, focused primarily on opposition to the emerging welfare state, this new wave of far right parties capitalized on the “unemployment and xenophobia at the end of a long, prosperous period.”⁷⁹ For this group of parties—which he dubs “new populist,”—Taggart writes “race and immigration are... touchstones of dissent.”⁸⁰ This period is distinct from previous periods in the degree of acceptance PRR ideas received. While these ideas first emerged and came to define the most popular branch of the far right party family in the early 1980s, it would take decades before those ideas would resonate more seriously with the electorate at large.

Several important scholarly developments characterize this period’s literature, including a new focus on definitional work, efforts to develop taxonomies of the far right, along with the

⁷⁶ Piero Ignazi, “New Challenges: Postmaterialism and the Extreme Right,” in *Developments in West European Politics*, ed. Martin Rhodes et. al. (London: Palgrave, 1997), 300.

⁷⁷ Mudde, *The Far Right Today*, 17-18.

⁷⁸ Duncan, “Immigration and Integration Policy,” 337.

⁷⁹ von Beyme, “Right-Wing Extremism,” 151.

⁸⁰ Taggart, “New Populist Parties,” 159.

development of grand theories explaining increasing electoral success. Scholarship explaining the causes of far right success throughout the 1980s and 1990s focused primarily on “demand side” explanations, building on the foundations developed in earlier decades. Demand side explanations “emphasize the grievances that make the far right appealing.”⁸¹ This is opposed to the characteristics of the parties themselves that make them palatable to voters, which generally are referred to as “supply side” factors. This is not to say that scholars excluded supply side factors from analysis—towards the end of the 1990s and into the new millennium, these explanations became increasingly important.

Demand side explanations focus on the social or economic problems that motivate electorates to support a particular party or candidate on the far right. Given the centrality of unemployment and xenophobia as hallmarks of the radical right during this period, much of the literature focuses on how changes in these conditions shape demand for populist radical right politicians. The critical point is that the parties themselves are not considered actors central to their own success. Scholars posit that various factors influence demand for far right parties, focusing their analyses on the electorate and its whims as opposed to the parties themselves. These factors serve as the basis of many of the studies undertaken throughout the “radical right” period. As to what those demand-influencing factors might be, some scholars point to shifts in intergenerational values,⁸² while others explore the changes wrought by the evolution of the global economy.⁸³ Still other analysts have posited that “cultural grievances,” often operationalized as the presence of immigrants, explain variations in far right support.⁸⁴ Three

⁸¹ Matt Golder, “Far Right Parties in Europe,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 19, no. 1 (2016), 481.

⁸² Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), *passim*.

⁸³ Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism*, *passim*.

⁸⁴ Golder, “Far Right Parties in Europe,” 485.

overarching categories (modernization, economic, and cultural grievances) align with Golder's review of the demand side literature.⁸⁵

Modernization explanations have their roots in the work of early sociologists like Lipset, whose 1960 book, *Political Man*, attributed the success of the Nazis to their opposition to “the ‘big’ forces of industrial society” which “appealed to those who felt uprooted or challenged.”⁸⁶ As the economy continued to grow and change amidst the renewed enthusiasm for free trade and globalization, scholars explored the role that such a transition played in driving electorates into the arms of far right leaders.⁸⁷ Unemployment spiked in many European countries in the 1980s, calling into question the viability of optimistic postmaterialist theories,⁸⁸ and shaping the nature of demand for right-leaning parties. Among the more influential works that fit this mold is Betz's book, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe*, in which he argued that “the political changes reflected in the emergence of the radical populist right are largely a consequence of a profound transformation of the socioeconomic and sociocultural structure of advanced Western European democracies.”⁸⁹ More general economic arguments hold that populations exposed to economic hardship are more amenable to PRR appeals. During this period, scholars used variables like the unemployment rate as a proxy for economic dissatisfaction, and produced

⁸⁵ Ibid., 482.

⁸⁶ Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1960), 145.

⁸⁷ Betz, “The New Politics of Resentment,” 420. See also Paul Taggart, *Populism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), especially 91-98; Paul Taggart, “Populism and Representative Politics in Contemporary Europe,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9, no. 3 (2004), 273. (“With modernity [‘late’ or otherwise], come the institutions of representative politics and with those institutions come certain processes and demands that force populism.”)

⁸⁸ See, for example, Ignazi, “The Silent-Counter-Revolution,” 25.

⁸⁹ Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism*, 27.

mixed results, with some scholars finding that unemployment does predict support for the radical right and others coming to the opposite conclusion.⁹⁰

Of course, economic grievances are not the only relevant demand side factors. As the populist radical right wing of the far right—particularly its emphasis on xenophobia and racism—came to characterize the movement, scholars explored the impact that cultural grievances have on demand for these parties. In general, economic explanations hold that demand for parties increases concomitantly with anti-immigrant or anti-foreigner sentiment. Scholars explored this thesis throughout the 1990s, producing works that tracked the relationship between support for the far right and macro-level variables like the immigration rate. For example, evidence from public opinion surveys in Western Europe and elections in Scandinavia demonstrated that immigration pressures did result in increased support for extreme right parties in both regions.⁹¹ Other work was more localized: an analysis of neighbourhood voting patterns in Amsterdam revealed that the presence of Moroccans and Turks has a high (positive) impact on support for the Dutch extreme right, while a similar analysis in Germany found no such general relationship. Instead, the study reports that areas where criminal suspects were more likely to be foreigners were more likely to support the far right electorally.⁹²

⁹⁰ Robert W. Jackman and Karin Volpert, "Conditions Favouring Parties of the Extreme Right in Western Europe," *British Journal of Political Science* 26, no. 4 (1996): 507. Jackman and Volpert find a relationship. Pia Knigge, "The Ecological Correlates of Right-wing Extremism in Western Europe," *European Journal of Political Research* 34 (1998), 249-279. Knigge, on the other hand, finds that, while immigration and general political dissatisfaction *do* explain some of the variation in support for the populist right in Europe, unemployment and inflation—proxies for economic woes—do not. Newer work tends to dispute this conclusion. See, for example, Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 205-206 on the lack of empirical support for the "losers of globalization" thesis, or Golder, "Far Right Parties in Europe," 484, for a review of the more recent literature.

⁹¹ Knigge, "The Ecological Correlates of Right-wing Extremism," 266; Christopher J. Anderson, "Economics, Politics, and Foreigners: Populist Party Support in Denmark and Norway," *Electoral Studies* 15, no. 4 (1996), 505.

⁹² Sjoerd De Vos and Rinus Deurloo, "Right Extremist Votes and the Presence of Foreigners: An Analysis of the 1994 Elections in Amsterdam," *Journal of Economic & Social Geography* 90, no. 2 (1999), 140; Wesley D. Chapin, "Explaining the Electoral Success of the New Right: The German Case," *West European Politics* 20, no. 2 (1997), 67.

While demand side factors dominated the literature during this period, other scholars developed more holistic solutions that incorporate elements of supply as well. Kitschelt and McGann attributed the Western European extreme right's success to its policy offerings.⁹³ They argued that a so-called "winning formula"—basically an appeal to the xenophobic and racist tendencies of blue-collar constituents combined with free market appeals targeting petite bourgeoisie—explains radical right success.⁹⁴ Parties that rely too heavily on neo-fascist symbolism or fail to appeal to both of these groups have difficulty building the coalition necessary for victory, and remain marginalized. This "winning formula" argument found purchase and has continued to drive discussion well into the twenty-first century.⁹⁵ Around the turn of the millennium, the focus shifted to include a greater emphasis on the supply side of the equation, to which we now turn.

1.2.4 The Populist Radical Right Goes Mainstream (2000-Present)

The radical right had been a decidedly fringe element in West European politics over the first several decades of its existence, despite a surge in electoral viability in the 1980s and 1990s. But as the new millennium dawned, PRR parties began to enter the European political mainstream, becoming a fact of life for West European political systems. This section highlights the modern era of the literature on the populist radical right and explores how scholars have confronted this newly-empowered political force.

The Freedom Party's entry into government in Austria in 2000, along with Jean-Marie Le Pen's second place performance in the 2002 French presidential election were strong indications

⁹³ Herbert Kitschelt with Anthony J. McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 3.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10, 275.

⁹⁵ Sarah L. de Lange, "A New Winning Formula?: The Programmatic Appeal of the Radical Right," *Party Politics* 13, no. 4 (2007).

that the PRR was entering the political mainstream. By the 2010s, the PRR arguably had morphed into the most important political movement in the world. In the United States, Donald Trump won the 2016 presidential election, fundamentally reshaping American politics. The United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union in a 2016 referendum owing partly to populist pressure on the right, while radical right political figures found success around the world, including in the Philippines, Poland, and Hungary.⁹⁶ These events inspired a new wave of scholarship that marks a departure from the traditional focus of the study of the far right. Whereas previous decades were dominated by studies of the electorate and its demand for far right policies and personalities, the more recent literature has tended towards supply side explanations, the role of emerging media, and the actions the PRR has taken when it has entered government. Of particular interest to these scholars is how mainstream parties have reacted to this surge in populism.

This next section delves into these supply side approaches. All far right parties are not equal, and supply siders hold that variations in party organization and policy programs can explain why some parties find success and others never propel their members into office.⁹⁷ This literature works at the “macro-level,” that is to say it invokes the concept of party competition to explain the radical right’s success.⁹⁸ On the policy program front, as noted above, Kitschelt and McGann argued there is a relationship between the nature of a party’s programmatic appeals and

⁹⁶ Daniele Albertazzi and Sean Mueller, "Populism and Liberal Democracy: Populists in Government in Austria, Italy, Poland and Switzerland," in *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader*, ed. Cas Mudde (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 511; Peter Kreko and Zsolt Enyedi, "Orban's Laboratory of Illiberalism," *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 3 (2018), 39; Benjamin Biard, "The Influence of Radical Right Populist Parties on Law and Order Policy-Making," *Policy Options* 40, no. 1 (2019), 40.

⁹⁷ Parts of this section are adapted from my related work on this subject. See: Jeremy C. Roberts, "The Populist Radical Right in the US: New Media and the 2018 Arizona Senate Primary," *Politics and Governance* 8, no. 1 (2020), 111-121.

⁹⁸ James F. Downes, "A New Electoral Winning Formula? Beyond the Populist Radical Right: Center Right Party Electoral Success, 'Strategic Emphasis' and Incumbency Effects on Immigration in the 21st Century" (PhD Dissertation, University of Kent, 2017), 49-50.

its electoral success, coining the term “winning formula”. This so-called “Kitscheltian model” has been influential but has also been the subject of criticism on the basis of the difficulty PRR parties with neoliberal economic positions have had in attracting the crucial working-class constituency.⁹⁹ Other scholars assert that ideology is a key explanatory factor but argue that ideological flexibility matters more. Muis and Scholte, for example, found that a degree of left-leaning ideological flexibility on the economy contributed to improved electoral fortunes for the Dutch Party of Freedom, while Harteveld found that such a leftward shift is effective in attracting working class voters to the populist radical right.¹⁰⁰ Rydrgen, meanwhile, argues that a new, “potent master frame,” defined as “the basic pattern from which its appeals for support were delivered,” facilitated the cross-national diffusion of PRR parties in Europe.¹⁰¹ This master frame, which supplanted the original fascist frame that fell out of favor after the Second World War, includes appeals to ethnonationalism, racism, and populism.¹⁰² Rydrgren argues, essentially, that it took the PRR several decades to coalesce around this politically palatable set of appeals, but that this coalescence can explain some success.¹⁰³

Ideological programmes are only part of the supply side picture, of course. The conduct of the parties themselves, including their administrative competence, the effectiveness of party organizations, and the charisma of their leaders have all factored into explanations for electoral

⁹⁹ Ibid. 50; see also: de Lange, “A New Winning Formula?”

¹⁰⁰ Jasper Muis and Michel Scholte, “How to Find the ‘Winning Formula’? Conducting Simulation Experiments to Grasp the Tactical Moves and Fortunes of Populist Radical Right Parties,” *Acta Politica* 48, no. 1 (2013), 42. Eelco Harteveld, “Winning the ‘Losers’ but Losing the ‘Winners’? The Electoral Consequences of the Radical Right Moving to the Economic Left,” *Electoral Studies* 44 (2016), 226.

¹⁰¹ Jens Rydrgen, “Is Extreme Right Wing Populism Contagious? Explaining the Emergence of a New Party Family,” *European Journal of Political Research* 44 no. 3 (2005), 413. See also: Mark R. Beissinger, “Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena: The Diffusion of Bulldozer/Rose/Orange/Tulip Revolutions,” *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 2 (2007), 259-276.

¹⁰² Rydrgen, “Is Extreme Right Wing Populism Contagious?,” 427.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 432-33.

success and failure.¹⁰⁴ Some scholars have explored the electoral “rules of the game” to explain electoral success among the parties of the far right. For example, Jackman and Volpert noted that the conditions or electoral rules under which populist actors operate inform the likelihood of their success, examining proportionality, number of parties, and electoral thresholds.¹⁰⁵ A concrete example of this phenomenon in action can be found in France, where Socialist president Francois Mitterrand deliberately altered the electoral system to make it more proportional—a move which benefited the radical right at the expense of the mainstream right.¹⁰⁶ Kitschelt and McGann, meanwhile, argued that two conditions are necessary for the extreme right to broaden its electoral constituency: the existence of a postindustrial economy, and the convergence of the major parties. These are insufficient, however, without the adoption of the supply side “winning formula” outlined above.¹⁰⁷ In a sense, though, the parties/candidates themselves represent only a component of “supply.” The media environment, comprising the organizations that relay and interpret political information, has also been identified as an important shaper of political perspectives, warranting scholarly attention. We now turn to examine the role of the media in the rise of the PRR.

Without the media, most people would have little political information with which to form opinions. The relationship between the media and the formation of public opinion is an important phenomenon that has drawn significant scholarly attention. Initial conceptions of the media’s role in individual opinion formation assumed that rational voters consume objective

¹⁰⁴ Edward G. DeClair, *Politics on the Fringe: The People, Policies and Organization of the French National Front* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 189; Antonis A. Ellinas, “The Rise of Golden Dawn: The New Face of the Far Right in Greece,” *South European Society and Politics* 18, no. 4 (2013), 561; David Art, *Inside the Radical Right: The Development of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 8.

¹⁰⁵ Jackman and Volpert, “Conditions Favouring Parties,” 506.

¹⁰⁶ Daniel Stockemer and Abdelkarim Amengay, “The Voters of the FN under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen: Continuity or Change?,” *French Politics* 13, no. 4 (2015), 373.

¹⁰⁷ Kitschelt with McGann, “*The Radical Right in Western Europe*,” 275.

news and make decisions on that basis.¹⁰⁸ In practice, the process of opinion formation is much more complex than this; a strictly rational conception of opinion formation has been described as “rigid and sociologically thin.”¹⁰⁹ Early challengers to this view, most notably Katz and Lazarsfeld, argued instead for an intermediary between media sources and the consumers of the news, a sort of elite layer that interrupts the flow of information directly from the mass media to its ultimate consumer.¹¹⁰ Other scholarship, building on this foundation, asserts that opinion formation is driven by interdependence: “public opinion is grows out of an interaction between media messages and what people make of them.”¹¹¹ Indeed, this model rejects selectivity (that is, the idea that audience perceptions are reinforced by the media sources selected based on the information the audience would like to hear), with one author asserting (in 1989) that “most readers do not have a clear choice between newspapers offering distinct and obvious ideological approaches in their editorial or news columns.”¹¹² In the intervening decades, with the rise of conservative talk radio, ideological cable news channels, and the Internet and social media, this argument falls flat.

The more recent literature on media and opinion formation indicates that media consumption does in fact have an impact on peoples’ opinions on political issues. Mutz, for example, argues that media consumption exposes people to the fact that their circumstances are shared, in the process facilitating the politicization of those issues.¹¹³ Cassino, in his work on the

¹⁰⁸ Ronald N. Jacobs, “Media and Opinion Formation: Toward a New Theory of Deliberative Politics,” in *The Space of Opinion: Media Intellectual and the Public Sphere*, eds. Ronald N. Jacobs and Eleanor Townsley (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 55-56.

¹⁰⁹ Jacobs, “Media and Opinion Formation,” 60.

¹¹⁰ Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications* (Glencoe, Illinois, The Free Press, 1955), *passim*.

¹¹¹ Robert M. Entman, “How the Media Affect What People Think: An Information Processing Approach,” *Journal of Politics* 51 no. 2 (1989), 349.

¹¹² Entman, “How the Media Affect What People Think,” 363.

¹¹³ Diana C. Mutz, “Contextualizing Personal Experience: The Role of Mass Media,” *The Journal of Politics*, 56 no. 3 (1994), 692.

Fox News Channel finds a direct relationship between the network's presence and support for Republican candidates in American primary elections, indicating that selective media consumption is associated with preference for candidates.¹¹⁴ Still other research has emerged that focuses on the role of social media, a uniquely interactive type of media platform that facilitates sharing and reintroduces the concept of the personal network into the process of opinion formation.¹¹⁵ In fact, though the authors are cautious about establishing causality, one study of social media users found that voters in a Canadian provincial election who used social media did have distinct voting intentions, and the effects of social media use were greater than for traditional media.¹¹⁶

In recent years the literature on the media's role in creating favorable opportunities for the PRR has burgeoned. The PRR has characteristics that make it uniquely compatible with modern media. This compatibility manifests itself as the willingness of many media organizations to publicize PRR policy ideas and campaign information (even if the tone is scathing), and for more general attention to be devoted to party leaders. Ellinas offers an insightful evaluation of the nature of the relationship:

The political repertoire of the Far Right satisfies the thirst of the media for sensational, simplified, personalized, and controversial stories. Exaggerated references to violent crime and urban tension, which are typical ingredients of Far Right appeals, match the growing tendency of the media to dramatize news. The 'simplism' that also characterizes Far Right appeals (Lipset and Raab, 1978) is in line with a media appetite for monocausal explanations and for the delivery of easy solutions to complex phenomena.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Dan Cassino, *Fox News and American Politics: How One Channel Shapes American Politics and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 60.

¹¹⁵ Samuel Mochona Gabore and Deng Xiujun, "Opinion Formation in Social Media: The Influence of Online News Dissemination on Facebook Posts," *Communicatio*, 44 no. 2 (2018), 25.

¹¹⁶ Éric Bélanger, "Social Media Use and Voting Intention in the 2012 Quebec Election Campaign," *French Politics*, 17 (2019), 478.

¹¹⁷ Ellinas, *The Media and the Far Right in Western Europe*, 34.

PRR candidacies are appealing to media outlets, and those outlets, in turn, provide parties and candidates with the attention necessary to build and maintain public support. The question that emerges concerns the media's influence. How does coverage affect electoral results, if at all? This question is especially relevant considering that much of the coverage the PRR receives is likely to be negative, given its inherent appeal to controversy. One much-studied answer is found in the media's ability to set the political agenda.

Agenda-setting can be summarized as idea that “the media do not directly [affect] people's opinions... but the agenda of issues we think about (public agenda) by highlighting some topics while neglecting or mentioning others in passing.”¹¹⁸ There is, it should be noted, an important distinction between policy agenda setting, a tradition in which scholars seek to explain what makes it onto the policy agenda, and public agenda-setting, which covers the impact of communications on public sentiment.¹¹⁹ This study focuses on the latter.

Agenda-setting is widely cited as a core function of the right-wing media in the United States. Skocpol and Williamson, for example, cite media coverage of the Tea Party movement as crucial to reframing the 2012 election around Tea Party issues.¹²⁰ Lippman's early research on the role of mass media in shaping individual perceptions of world event, published as *Public Opinion* in 1922, is the genesis of modern public agenda-setting research, though the term did not enter the vernacular for several more decades.¹²¹ The proposed causal relationship between media coverage and success at the polls was first studied comprehensively in a landmark paper

¹¹⁸ Inga Huck, Oliver Quiring, and Hans-Bernd Brosius, “Perceptual Phenomena in the Agenda Setting Process,” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 21, no. 2 (2009), 141.

¹¹⁹ James W. Dearing and Everett M. Rogers, *Agenda-Setting* (Thousand Oaks and London: SAGE, 1996), 16-17.

¹²⁰ Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 160-163.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

published by McCombs and Shaw in 1972.¹²² Their study focused on the 1968 election campaign, and compared what voters in Chapel Hill, North Carolina reported were the most significant issues of the campaign with the stories that the media (print, television, and newsmagazines) chose to focus on. They found substantial correlation between the former and the latter. Voters, McCombs and Shaw reasoned, have limited access to information about politics other than through the media, so it seems unlikely that the observed correlation could be spurious.¹²³ The authors note that the observed correlation may be the result of media outlets catering to the desires of readers to generate more attention, but dismiss this explanation, citing the observation that professional reporters and typical readers are not generally politically aligned.¹²⁴

Since this foundational work, the literature has evolved, both theoretically and methodologically. Much of the original work on public agenda-setting is observational, but over time scholars began to build on the theoretical tradition, incorporating experimental methods as exemplified by Iyengar and Kinder. Iyengar and Kinder conducted a number of experiments to practically evaluate the media's impact in setting priorities among its consumers, demonstrating that issues given more coverage become more important in the eyes of news viewers.¹²⁵ Scholars have also recognized the existence of the "third person effect (TPE)" which references a phenomenon whereby individuals perceive that undesirable messages will "have a greater effect on others than on themselves."¹²⁶ In other words, in many cases respondents believe that, while

¹²² Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972), 176-187.

¹²³ *Ibid.* 185

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Shanto Iyengar and Donald Kinder, *News that Matters: Television and American Opinion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 21.

¹²⁶ David R. Dewberry, "The Third Person Effect Goes to Congress," *Southern Communication Journal* 79, no. 4 (2014), 280. For this idea's origin see W. Phillips Davison, "The Third Person Effect in Communication," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (1983), 1-15.

others are likely to be influenced by media content, the respondent him or herself is not. The TPE has methodological implications for studies of the media's agenda-setting function in that answers to questions like "what is the most important issue facing the nation right now" might not reflect survey respondents' personally held beliefs.¹²⁷ Other factors, like perceived bias in reporting, matter as well,¹²⁸ and can generate a hostile media effect (the perception that the media agenda is the opposite of one's own¹²⁹). This is especially relevant when it comes to PRR politics, as media elites occupy a paradoxical position as both arbiters of needed coverage and widely reviled by the base. Critically, however, agenda setting does not imply that coverage is necessarily favorable—only that it links candidates and issues.

In the literature on populism specifically, the media's role in drawing attention to particular ideas and helping politicians establish issue ownership, which refers simply to an association between a party or candidate and a particular policy domain,¹³⁰ is well-documented. A simple conflict defines the populist approach to politics: the people versus a corrupt, out of touch elite. From Argentina to Austria, populists on all sides of the political spectrum make similar claims about entrenched power structures and the role the people can play in upending those structures. A narrative that paints the entrenched power structure as the ultimate issue to be overcome is not useful to the PRR unless it is important to voters, and crucially, the PRR is the faction perceived to "own the issue." This is the core of the issue ownership theory.

Some empirical evidence bolsters the theory. Public support for anti-immigrant parties in Europe, for example, has been demonstrated to increase with the electorate's exposure to stories

¹²⁷ Huck et al, "Perceptual Phenomena in the Agenda Setting Process," 142.

¹²⁸ Laura M. Arpan and Arthur A. Raney, "An Experimental Investigation of News Source and the Hostile Media Effect," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 80, no. 8 (2003), 265-281.

¹²⁹Huck et al, "Perceptual Phenomena," 151.

¹³⁰ Jonas Lefevere, Anke Tresch, and Stefaan Walgrave, "Introduction: Issue Ownership," *West European Politics* 38, no. 4 (2015), 755.

about populist concerns like crime and immigration.¹³¹ There Boomgaarden and Vliegthart found “a significant positive influence of news on vote intention for anti-immigrant parties.”¹³² In the UK, the tabloid press played a key role in the ascent of nativist ideas by participating in the “essentialisation of the Other—be it asylum seekers or Muslims...”¹³³ And in Austria, Jörg Haider’s populist Freedom Party in Austria often found itself aligning with an ideologically eclectic, but influential tabloid that was anti-globalization, anti-immigrant, occasionally anti-Semitic—and reached almost half of all adult Austrians.¹³⁴ Plasser and Ulram further validate this finding by highlighting the extensive reliance of the Freedom Party on news coverage from friendly print and television outlets engaged in “newsroom populism.”¹³⁵

Beyond tabloids and other traditional media outlets, the surge in popularity of new partisan media, best exemplified by social media websites like Facebook and Twitter, has changed the game for populist figures across Europe. As examples, Stockemer and Barisione found that the French FN benefited from social media activism as Marine Le Pen consolidated her hold over the party in the early 2010s,¹³⁶ and in Hungary, Karl reports similar findings about

¹³¹ Bjorn Burscher, Joost van Spanje, Claes H. de Vreese, “Owning the Issues of Crime and Immigration: The Relation Between Immigration and Crime News and anti-Immigrant Voting in 11 Countries,” *Electoral Studies* 38 (2015), 59-69.

¹³² Hajo G. Boomgaarden and Rens Vliegthart, “Explaining the Rise of Anti-Immigrant Parties: The Role of News Media Content,” *Electoral Studies* 26, no. 2 (2007), 413.

¹³³ Aurelien Mondon, “Populism, the People, and the Illusion of Democracy—the Front National and UKIP in a Comparative Context,” *French Politics* 13, no. 2 (2015), 147.

¹³⁴ Reinhard Heinsich, “Right Wing Populism in Austria: A Case for Comparison,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 55, no. 3 (2008), 43. It should, however, be noted that the influence the press has on attitudes (though not necessarily the agenda) is often overstated. See: Zsolt Boda et al., “Politically Driven: Mapping Political and Media Discourses of Penal Populism—The Hungarian Case,” *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 29, no. 4 (2015), 885.

¹³⁵ Fritz Plasser and Peter A. Ulram, “Striking a Responsive Chord: Mass Media and Right-Wing Populism in Austria,” in *The Media and Neo-Populism: A Contemporary Comparative Analysis*, eds. Gianpietro Mazzoleni et al. (Westport and London: Praeger, 2003), 40.

¹³⁶ Daniel Stockemer and Mauro Barisione. “The ‘New’ Discourse of the Front National under Marine Le Pen: A Slight Change with a Big Impact.” *European Journal of Communication* 32, no. 2 (2017), 11.

Hungary's Jobbik, a radical nationalist party.¹³⁷ What the literature has clearly demonstrated is a relationship between elements of the far right and media coverage of relevant issues.

1.3 Applying West European Insights in the American Context

To this point the literature review has been largely confined to the Western European context, exploring a rich tradition of scholarship on the populist radical right. Other contexts matter as well—the emergence of figures like Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil and Jose Antonio Kast in Chile have been cited as examples of the global phenomenon cropping up in Latin America.¹³⁸ The Latin American case, widely associated with populism, is comparable in some ways with the brand of populist radical right politics studied here, but the historical context, including ongoing democratic transitions, institutional differences, high inequality, historical immigration patterns, a history of military dictatorship, and the prevalence of insecurity among the population, makes the context less suitable for broad-based comparison.¹³⁹ The PRR phenomenon is more recent and less well-entrenched in Latin America; as Zanotti and Roberts put it, it remains “the exception and not the rule.”¹⁴⁰ While it is true that the party family historically has been most successful in Europe, this thesis concerns the PRR in the United States. Applying the insights from this significant European literature in the United States—a complicated federal democracy with a distinct political history and institutions—requires some specification. The next section articulates the case for examining the PRR in Republican primaries and provides an account of the development of the competitive primary.

¹³⁷ Philipp Karl, "Hungary's Radical Right 2.0," *Nationalities Papers* 45, no. 3 (2017), 353.

¹³⁸ Thomas Kestler, "Radical, Nativist, Authoritarian--Or All of These? Assessing Recent Cases of Right-Wing Populism in Latin America." *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 14, no. 3 (2022), 290.

¹³⁹ Ibid. 292-293 ; Lisa Zanotti and Kenneth M. Roberts, "(Aún) La Excepción y no la Regla: la Derecha Populista Radical en América Latina," *Revista Uruguaya de Ciencia Política* 30, no. 1 (2021), 30.

¹⁴⁰ Zanotti and Roberts, "(Aún) La Excepción y no la Regla." (Note: I used a translation feature offered by the publisher to access a copy of this article in English translated from the original Spanish.)

1.3.1 *Republican Primaries as a Venue for Analysis*

In the postwar era, many European countries adopted proportional electoral systems. The United States remains stubbornly majoritarian. This is a crucial difference that makes comparison difficult. Across Europe, even minor parties can gain an electoral foothold and some popular legitimacy. In contrast, the American system rewards winner-take-all politics, which has frozen those extreme groups that have not found homes within the mainstream parties out of the electoral conversation entirely.¹⁴¹ Fortunately for the PRR, its ideological adherents have found just such a home. Historically, many conservatives found ideological purchase in the Democratic Party, especially in the solidly Democratic south where political competition was largely intra-party and served the explicit purpose of protecting white racial supremacy.¹⁴² More recently—particularly since the 1960s, the election of Lyndon Johnson, and the passage of civil rights legislation—the Republican Party has dominated American conservatism, becoming the *de facto* conservative party by the 1980s.¹⁴³ As this thesis is focused primarily on the more modern history of the PRR (the third and fourth waves), Republican primaries are more suitable for analysis. The next section provides an overview of Republican primaries and caucuses.

1.3.2 *The Evolution of Republican Primaries*

The process by which American partisans select their party's nominee for the presidency has a long and convoluted history. The contests take place at the state and territory level, and the states have unique processes. Each state contest can involve different kinds of participants (such as open; closed; and “jungle,” where candidates from both parties are on the same ballot) and different styles of voting (primaries, caucuses, or primaries and caucuses). Some contests are

¹⁴¹ Mudde, *The Far Right in America*, 4.

¹⁴² V.O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), 11.

¹⁴³ Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), xii.

binding, directing the votes of the delegates sent to the national party convention. Others, at least historically, have been nonbinding, meaning that, while voters do participate, the results do not obligate delegates to vote a particular way at the national convention. States may choose to allocate delegates on a winner-take-all basis, while others opt to award delegates proportionally. The contests are also distributed across several months, though some states do choose to vote as a bloc to maximize their influence (see, for example, the mass of elections on "Super Tuesday").¹⁴⁴ Additionally, there are national party rules designed to punish states that deviate from the party's process, and updates to those rules to address any perceived weaknesses in the process, like frontloading contests (holding a greater number of elections earlier in the primary season) to avoid drawn out nomination contests that might damage the party's public perception.¹⁴⁵

Given that the United States is one of the world's oldest democracies, the history of the presidential nomination contest extends well into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when candidates were selected at nominating conventions by party elites.¹⁴⁶ Since then, changes in norms and party rules have inspired an expansion in the nomination electorate that has changed the way nominees are selected, introducing elements of openness that make the nomination contests reasonably analogous to general elections. Over the more than one hundred-fifty years reformers, politicians, and party insiders have spent refining the system, its various incarnations have emphasized different, occasionally contradictory features. A general accounting of those

¹⁴⁴ Ranier Schwabe, "Super Tuesday: Campaign Finance and the Dynamics of Sequential Elections," *Social Choice and Welfare* 44, no. 4 (2015), 927-928.

¹⁴⁵ This is not always effective, however. In 1972, for example, New York's Governor refused to adhere to new party rules, and the New York primary elected unattached delegates, favouring the well-organized Democratic candidate, George McGovern. See: Andrew Busch, *Outsiders and Openness in the Presidential Nominating System* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 88.

¹⁴⁶ Busch, *Outsiders and Openness*, 5.

features, as well as the trajectory of historical change, helps contextualize the late twentieth and early twenty-first century contests that serve as the basis for the bulk of my analysis.

When they wrote the Constitution in the 1780s, the Founding Fathers almost certainly did not have primary elections in mind, nor did they envision the sort of presidential election that has emerged today based as it is (however indirectly) on popular vote totals.¹⁴⁷ Originally, presidential nominees were to be selected by each state's electors, each of whom had the right to vote twice, though one vote was required to be for a candidate from out of state.¹⁴⁸ Presumably this was intended to pave the way for a consensus second choice to take the office,¹⁴⁹ though under such a system it would have been difficult for any candidate to achieve the required majority of Electoral College votes, meaning that the founders likely intended for the House of Representatives to elect the President.¹⁵⁰ Part of the problem with this system was that they did not foresee political parties as we know them today. The inherent downsides of a factional competition for political office greatly troubled early American statesmen, including George Washington, who was the only president to serve without a party label.¹⁵¹ No amount of argument or pointed editorializing could prevent politicians from succumbing to the pull of organization, however, and when John Adams succeeded Washington as president, he did so after the first genuine contest between two major political parties: the Republicans and the

¹⁴⁷ Stan M. Haynes, *The First American Political Conventions: Transforming Presidential Nominations, 1832-1872* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2012), 5. Haynes's book is an excellent source of information on the early American party nomination process and is the primary source of information for the pre-convention section of this chapter.

¹⁴⁸ Haynes, *The First American Political Conventions*, 5-6. Electors today are typically selected by the popular vote winner in each state, though two states, Maine and Nebraska, split their electors based on more complicated rules.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Caroline J. Tolbert, David P. Redlawsk, Daniel C. Bowen, "Reforming Presidential Nominations: Rotating State Primaries or a National Primary?" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 42, no. 1 (2009), 71.

¹⁵¹ Ralph Ketcham, *Presidents Above Party: The First American Presidency, 1789-1829* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 91-93. Washington criticized the institution of faction in general, writing "the alternate domination of one faction over another ... has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, [and] is itself a frightful despotism." (p. 93).

Federalists.¹⁵² Despite initial hesitation, parties became necessary. In this vein, Aldrich outlines the “regular and recurring” challenges that create the circumstances that lead to parties: the need to solve a collective action problem, a social choice problem, and an electoral mobilization problem.¹⁵³

Parties brought with them the need for a centralized nominating process, since the lack of one could result in vote-splitting that would prevent any single candidate from achieving the required majority of Electoral College votes (as was the case in 1824). Haynes offers a compelling explanation of how the emerging American party system responded to this unforeseen challenge:

Into this void jumped members of Congress, and the congressional caucus system for nominating presidential candidates was created. The caucus consisted of each party’s elected members of Congress in the House of Representatives and in the Senate gathered together for a single meeting held at the end of the congressional session in the spring of the presidential election year. A vote was taken and the winner became the party’s presidential candidate. It was a simple and easy way to pick a nominee, but gave the people no voice in the selection of presidential candidates. This system lasted for a generation after George Washington left the presidency.¹⁵⁴

Of course, from a participation perspective, this was problematic, and required a remedy. That remedy came in the form of the party convention.

The first national party convention took place in 1832 as Andrew Jackson, the progenitor of arguably the earliest mass political movement in US history, sought a new vice-presidential nominee and prepared to face a presidential election.¹⁵⁵ Jackson, a controversial if celebrated figure, was an early populist who reviled the lack of mass participation in the presidential nomination contest. In fact, it was a closely held view of Jackson’s that participation by the

¹⁵² James Roger Sharp, *American Politics in the Early Republic: The New Nation in Crisis* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993), 157.

¹⁵³ John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties: A Second Look* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995 [2011]), 27-44.

¹⁵⁴ Haynes, *The first American Political Conventions*, 6.

¹⁵⁵ Tolbert et al, "Reforming Presidential Nominations," 71. The convention ultimately selected Martin Van Buren.

broader population would “purify the political process.”¹⁵⁶ This purification was personal for Jackson, and likely involved two important beliefs: that parties should be disciplined; and that Martin Van Buren should be his running mate—an outcome that the old system did not assure.¹⁵⁷ This put him at odds with political traditions that kept the presidential nomination closely held within the party. Unsurprisingly, he was skeptical of the caucus system,¹⁵⁸ arguing that it would inevitably result in the selection of candidates that were bad for the country (personified by a personal nemesis, William Crawford, whom Jackson described as an “archfiend”).¹⁵⁹ Jackson won the vote, though, and once the presidential nomination contest had escaped the purview of the privileged few, there was no going back.

In the post-Jacksonian period, up until the Progressive Era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, each party held a nominating convention where delegates, generally comprising party elites representing the states, met and selected the presidential nominee through a floor vote. This style of convention would be considered relatively inaccessible by today’s standards, given the norms around political participation of the time. The property qualification for white male suffrage was not even fully abolished until the immediate pre-Civil War period (North Carolina was the final state in 1857), to give a general idea of what these norms looked like.¹⁶⁰ Under the convention system, nominees only needed to appeal to party insiders, a non-representative slice of the population. Leaders of local party committees wielded outsized

¹⁵⁶ John M. Belohlavek, *Andrew Jackson: Principle and Prejudice* (New York and London: Routledge, 2016), 64.

¹⁵⁷ Andrew Busch, *Outsiders and Openness in the Presidential Nominating System* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 4.

¹⁵⁸ The caucus system discussed here is not the same as the caucus system currently practiced in several states.

¹⁵⁹ Belohlavek, *Andrew Jackson: Principle and Prejudice*, 48.

¹⁶⁰ Justin Moeller and Ronald F. King, *Removal of the Property Qualification for Voting in the United States* (New York and London: Routledge, 2018), 1.

influence under this system, usually through their power to restrict the vote, control delegate slates, and, where this failed, commit outright fraud.¹⁶¹

Progressives bristled at the lack of participation in the selection process and sought to open it up. Progressive Era reforms included steps to democratize political processes across the several states, including through the direct election of senators, the secret ballot, and, of course, suffrage for (white) women. These reforms had a profound impact on party nomination contests.¹⁶² Reformers targeted states, encouraging them to hold primaries to secure mass support for candidates, and by 1916, twenty states had signed on.¹⁶³

The mixed system was thus born. Candidates occasionally competed in the primaries, which were now open to greater participation, and could award some convention delegates, though the real battles were fought in the so-called “smoke-filled rooms” where party elites decided who would bear the party’s standard in the coming presidential election. In general, between about 1924 (the approximate end of the Progressive Era) and 1968, the primaries that candidates contested were rarely of any sort of strategic significance, and only impacted about a third of convention delegates.¹⁶⁴ It was therefore possible for entire nomination candidacies to flourish outside of the plebiscitary primary system—and for popular candidates to be snubbed despite consistently positive primary results by an inability to translate those results into convention delegates. One case from the 1950s is an extreme example of this phenomenon.

In 1952, Tennessee Senator Estes Kefauver handily trounced his rivals in the primaries, winning more states than each of them combined, yet the delegates at the Democratic National

¹⁶¹ Busch, *Outsiders and Openness*, 5.

¹⁶² Tolbert et al, “Reforming Presidential Nominations,” 71.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁶⁴ Busch, *Outsiders and Openness*, 8.

Convention chose to nominate his rival, Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson.¹⁶⁵ This trend of highly visible, but ultimately unimportant primary elections culminated in the disastrous Democratic convention held in Chicago in 1968, where antiwar protestors stole the show and embarrassed the party. Hubert Humphrey, Lyndon Johnson's vice president who had not participated in any of the primaries leading up to the convention, was able to edge out his antiwar opponents, Minnesota senator Eugene McCarthy, and South Dakota senator George McGovern. The fundamental incongruence between the Democratic base and its leadership that the violence and disorder accompanying the 1968 convention exposed jolted the party into the modern era. The damage in Chicago forced a series of reforms that resulted in the presidential nomination process that largely still exists today, with some changes over the years.

The commission the Democrats convened to explore party reform was formally called the "Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection," though it came to be known as the McGovern-Fraser Commission after its chairs.¹⁶⁶ The Commission recommended several changes, including various provisions for minority representation, but its most lasting and visible legacy has been the requirement that convention delegates should not be selected by party leaders, but through a fair and transparent process. With this new requirement, the commissioners intended to combat the patronage and backroom dealing that had been an important part of the delegate selection process, and, consequently, the nomination process.¹⁶⁷

The first election under the new rules took place in 1972, and since 1976, when incumbent President Gerald Ford won leadership of the Republican Party via a series of

¹⁶⁵ Jim Baker, "Locked out of the Smoke-Filled Room: Estes Kefauver's Failed Bid for the Democratic Presidential Nomination in 1952," (MA Thesis, University of South Dakota, 2011), 3.

¹⁶⁶ George McGovern was the first victorious candidate who campaigned under the new rules that he had helped bring about through his leadership of the Commission.

¹⁶⁷ John S. Jackson, *The American Political Party System: Continuity and Change over Ten Presidential Elections* (Washington D.C. Brookings Institution Press, 2015), 50.

primaries and caucuses, party nomination contests have been decided by mass participation.¹⁶⁸ In fact, 1976 was the first year that a candidate, Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter, won with a strategy that included fighting every contest. Up to that point, successful candidates, including McGovern, author of the landmark report, had been strategic about the primaries they contested.¹⁶⁹

McGovern-Fraser was the beginning of a new era in US politics, of a “a mature rules regime, which has changed incrementally, but has remained basically stable for ten presidential election cycles.”¹⁷⁰ While it is true that ideological conflict has always existed within the major parties, the fundamental change in nomination politics makes it difficult to compare the pre-1968 era with the modern era. The transition from engaging in a series of strategic contests—to, for example, demonstrate electability to the party elite—towards a more plebiscitary nomination process where candidates run everywhere to accrue necessary delegates, is a crucial transition in the history of party presidential nominations. The timing of the reforms therefore sets a clear boundary before which cases are unlikely to be analytically useful. While PRR candidates could have contested party nominations (and many Southern Democrats did), they did not have to face the larger voting public, which makes the comparison with Western Europe more difficult. Given the nature of this dissertation, that era is largely out of scope. The next section highlights the cases selected for analysis in the subsequent chapters and summarizes the plan for the dissertation.

¹⁶⁸ So-called superdelegates, vestiges of the old system designed to prevent outsiders from taking the nomination as Jimmy Carter did in 1976, do exist, and they have meaningfully participated in Democratic conventions—crucially in the case of the 2008 contest, where their support put Barack Obama over the edge. These delegates, however, comprise only about 20% of the total number of Democrats, and they generally shift their votes to reflect popular totals. The Republican Party also allows party bigwigs a seat at party nominating conventions, though they have never decided an election in the post-McGovern-Fraser era. (For more information see Jackson, *The American Political Party System*, 55-56.)

¹⁶⁹ Busch, *Outsiders and Openness*, 176.

¹⁷⁰ Jackson, *The American Political Party System*, 4.

1.4 Case Selection and the Plan for the Dissertation

The three articles that comprise the body of the dissertation cover Pat Buchanan’s failed 1996 Republican primary challenge, Donald Trump’s 2016 successful nomination campaign, and the 2018 primary for the Republican nomination for US Senate in Arizona, ultimately won by Martha McSally, a local Congresswoman. They are meant to stand alone—each answers a different question using theoretical insights derived from the Western European literature—but they share some general selection parameters in common. First, they all involve contests for federal office. PRR actors can exist anywhere, but the Western European literature focuses on national parties, so the value of contests for local or other sub-national offices are less appealing. A second consideration is the nature of the office sought. Presidential politics factor into discussions of the transatlantic PRR movement and are therefore especially useful. The third case concerns the Senate, which, outside of the presidency, is the most powerful elected federal office one can hold in the United States, and whose members are individually influential in legislation that impacts PRR priorities.

Other criteria include the presence of a major PRR candidate and the lack of an incumbent. In general, incumbents in presidential and other elections have a substantial advantage over challengers in primaries. Incumbent presidents bring numerous advantages to bear, “from the 'bully pulpit' that the office commands to control of their party's national organization and many of its state affiliates.”¹⁷¹ Generally, incumbent presidents—even weak ones—do not face seriously contested party nomination contests, though Lyndon Johnson, Jimmy Carter, and George H. W. Bush did face primary challengers who may have influenced their eventual general election defeats (or, in Johnson’s case, his decision not to pursue the

¹⁷¹ Rhodes Cook, *The Presidential Nominating Process: A Place for Us?* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 54.

nomination). Finally, of the three possible options for federal office, the presidency, the Senate, and the House of Representatives, I chose to focus on the presidency for two reasons. First, presidential campaigns have attracted the most attention from European scholars looking for an American analogue, making them the logical place to start in applying possible shared scholarly insights. Second, high profile races attract significant attention from pollsters and other commentators, increasing visibility and providing more avenues for analysis. To round out my analysis—as the PRR is not a strictly presidential phenomenon—I also chose to include a legislative case study based on a competitive primary for an open senate seat. This case (the race to replace Jeff Flake as Arizona senator in 2018) was preferable to a House race, as a statewide campaign made it easier (and cheaper) to gather original survey data compared to a more localized contest. The race, which attracted national attention, also featured relatively well-known candidates with public profiles that facilitate smoother ideological placement—none were running from a position of true obscurity. We turn now to an overview of the cases and a plan for the dissertation.

1.4.1 The Cases and the Plan for the Dissertation

Each chapter is a standalone article, meant to be consumed independently, but all share a common thread: each evaluates a theoretical proposition about PRR candidates in a Republican nomination contest for federal office derived from the extensive literature devoted to the Western European phenomenon. To be clear, the theoretical propositions are validated by survey data unevenly: results in chapters 2 and 4 are mixed, while the results in chapter 3 are essentially null. Still, taken as a whole, this dissertation demonstrates that dynamics are transatlantic—the Western European scholarship is indeed useful in explaining aspects of the American PRR phenomenon. Each chapter contributes to different components of this shared understanding.

Chapter 2 explores the role of issue salience in Pat Buchanan's unsuccessful 1996 campaign for the Republican nomination. Buchanan, a former Nixon speechwriter who was the Republican Party's most prominent trade hawk and immigration critic through the 1990s, challenged Republican orthodoxy on these and other issues during the 1996 campaign. Using an analysis of several televised debates and a logistic regression analysis of exit polling data collected after the New Hampshire primary, I demonstrate that Buchanan was disproportionately focused on PRR issues (particularly foreign trade), and that voters who shared that issue prioritization were more likely to support him. I do not, however, find the hypothesized relationship between news consumption habits and support for Buchanan in New Hampshire. This chapter demonstrates that the salience of PRR issues does correlate with outcomes for PRR candidates, as is generally the case in Western Europe, and that Buchanan did attempt to fight the campaign on his own terms, despite the general low salience of his issues.

Chapter 3 explores Donald Trump's ultimately successful bid for the Republican presidential nomination in 2016—the most consequential event in the modern history of the populist radical right, certainly in the United States and likely globally as well. This chapter explores hypotheses derived from an influential theoretical tradition that points to a lack of options on the supply side as an explanatory factor for PRR success. More specifically, when voters perceive the mainstream parties to have ideologically converged on important issues, a favorable opportunity structure emerges for PRR candidates to fulfill the demand for hardline trade or immigration policies.

In applying this to the 2016 Republican nomination contest, I leverage a case study approach and demonstrate that Trump—despite his membership in the Republican Party—waged a war against the party establishment and attempted to wrest ideological control away from

traditional leadership. Using an analysis of exit polling data, I test the related propositions that Trump’s voters, angered by perceived ideological weakness on the part of the Republican establishment, should have been more likely to feel betrayed by the Party and less likely to identify as Republicans when compared to other candidates’ supporters. In fact, I find that that neither of these propositions is true—Trump’s supporters were no more likely to feel betrayed by the Party or to identify as independents. This does not align with theoretical expectations but is nonetheless an important finding when considering how the relationship a figure like Trump has with his political party figures into prospects for victory.

Finally, chapter 4 covers a legislative case, the 2018 Arizona US Senate primary. Through analysis of an original survey conducted among Arizona Republicans in the weeks leading up to the primary election, I demonstrate that supporters of Kelli Ward, a firebrand PRR candidate, were more likely to report believing in convergence between the major party establishments (that is, the Democrats and the Republicans), and were also more likely to get their news from “new” media sources—particularly social media. This aligns with theoretical expectations. Another PRR candidate—the former Maricopa County Sheriff, Joe Arpaio—found support among voters who had negative views of immigration, but not among those who reported consuming social media, talk radio, or the Fox News Channel. This article demonstrates that, as the PRR has become the dominant force in US politics, candidates vie for different elements of the coalition. Arpaio, as a hardliner, was more successful among immigration skeptics with less education, while Ward, then a relatively untested politician, found more support among those critical of the Republican establishment and who consumed social media news, where anti-establishment content was likely to circulate. As the Republican Party grapples with Donald Trump’s legacy, figures like Kelli Ward, who would go on to become the chair of

the Arizona Republican Party, using the position to challenge the results of the 2020 election, have risen to national prominence.¹⁷²

Chapter 5 is a short conclusion that highlights the findings and insights from the three articles taken together, outlines the theoretical contribution, and includes a brief discussion of the implications of the findings. A final section outlines possible future avenues for research, addressing some of the limitations of the dissertation.

1.4.2 Limitations

The three articles that form the corpus of this dissertation are theoretically similar in that they all explore Republican nomination campaigns through the lens of a well-developed literature that explains similar phenomena in Western Europe. They are, however, exploratory. They do not seek to establish firm causality, only to explore potentially relevant avenues for further study. The case approach affords the opportunity to provide significant depth on the individual cases (reviewing the course of the 1996 campaign, outlining how Trump feuded publicly with the Republican National Committee, and providing insight into the choices the Arizona senate candidates made when they entered the race), but there is limited external validity. Comparison across time and space is difficult, and while I have attempted here to test broadly applicable theories, this thesis should be read with this limitation in mind. I have selected a variety of different cases for analysis to assess the suitability of European-derived hypotheses (successful PRR candidacies, failed PRR candidacies, presidential and legislative elections, etc.). I have also supplemented case analysis with large-n analyses, using many observations within a single case to complement the thick description that comes from the “causes of effects” approach typical of detailed qualitative research that traces causality directly,

¹⁷² Robert Draper, “The Arizona Republican Party’s Anti-Democracy Experiment,” *The New York Times Magazine*, August 15, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/15/magazine/arizona-republicans-democracy.html>

with an “effects of causes” approach that instead looks at average effects over a sample population.¹⁷³

Another limitation concerns availability of relevant data. Pollsters ask questions relevant to the horserace, prominent issues of the day, and vote choice. While I was able to leverage data gathered from exit polls conducted in 1996 and 2016, the data was not originally gathered to aid in this sort of analysis. The data is relevant, and the empirical findings are relevant to the theory staked out in the chapters, but, if presented with the opportunity to author original questions, their form would have looked somewhat different. In chapter 5, where I was afforded this opportunity, cost was the primary limitation: a long survey to a closely targeted audience is generally more expensive than a shorter survey directed at a broader audience. This cost advantage is reflected in the original Arizona survey, which included a screening question that eliminated independents to reduce the effort of collecting the sample size. In my view, this was a necessary trade off.

A final limitation is comparability. While I have done my best to sketch a theoretical framework that highlights the undeniable similarities between the Western European and American manifestations of the populist radical right, varied institutions, history, and political culture are extremely important. This dissertation does not explore racial dynamics outside of the more abstract xenophobia and anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies shared by the international populist radical right. This is a critical aspect of the historical¹⁷⁴ and contemporary¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Sharon Crasnow, “The Role of Case Study Research in Political Science: Evidence for Causal Claims,” *Philosophy of Science* 79, no. 5 (2012), 657.

¹⁷⁴ V.O. Key, *Sothern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949); Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

¹⁷⁵ Michael Tesler, *Post-Racial or Most Racial? Race and Politics in the Obama Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Marc Hooghe and Ruth Dassonneville, “Explaining the Trump Vote: The Effect of Racist Resentment and Anti-Immigrant Sentiments,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 51, no. 3 (2018); Beyza Buyuker et

understanding of American politics from the Jim Crow era to the present. This research is not meant to supersede that research. Rather, my objective here is to provide a broader perspective and contribute to a greater understanding of what is growing into the most significant political development in recent US political history.

al, "Race Politics Research and the American Presidency: Thinking about white Attitudes, Identities and Vote Choice in the Trump Era and Beyond," *The Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 6, no. 3 (2021).

Chapter 2: Pat Buchanan, Issue Salience, and the 1996 Campaign

2.1 Introduction

Around the world, political actors who endorse populism, nativism, and authoritarianism—the defining tenets of what Mudde has termed the populist radical right¹⁷⁶ (PRR)—have won legislative and executive office, drawing significant scholarly attention. Until relatively recently, however, much of this attention has been narrow in focus, belying the phenomenon’s global nature. Scholars of the American right have traced the history of racist extremism in the United States,¹⁷⁷ focusing almost exclusively on that national context, while scholars of the European right have led the study of transnational radical right politics, particularly in Western Europe.¹⁷⁸

Emphasizing their anti-establishment credentials, PRR parties and candidates attack mainstream conservatives as out of touch elites who exercise power to subvert the will of the people. This often manifests itself as an intense opposition to immigration in general, strong protectionist inclinations, and “tough-on-crime” penal policies.¹⁷⁹ The European PRR is further characterized by a simplistic approach to politics, offering basic solutions to complicated modern problems and appealing to a voting base that is drawn to a “fantasised and glorified ‘good old days’ where popular sovereignty prevailed.”¹⁸⁰ Western Europe does not have a monopoly on

¹⁷⁶ Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 25.

¹⁷⁷ V.O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949)., Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978); Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort?* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2000); Leonard Zeskind, *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2009). Cas Mudde, *The Far Right in America* (New York and London: Routledge, 2018).

¹⁷⁸ Herbert Kitschelt with Anthony J. McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995); Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*; Hans-George Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe* (New York: St. Martin's, 1994).

¹⁷⁹ Cas Mudde, "Introduction to the Populist Radical Right," in *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader*, ed. Cas Mudde (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 4-5.

¹⁸⁰ Aurelian Mondon, “Populism, the ‘People’ and the Illusion of Democracy—The Front National and UKIP in Comparative Context,” *French Politics*, 13 no. 2 (2015), 145.

this style of politics. In recent years, right-wing populists have leapt from relative obscurity to the forefront of the national discourse. This is true in Western Europe with the successful Brexit movement, the historically good showing for PRR candidates in France and Austria, and the election of Giorgia Meloni in Italy in 2022. It is also true in the United States, where Donald Trump and his allies have successfully captured and reshaped the Republican Party in the PRR image.¹⁸¹ But Trump was not the first Republican primary candidate to embrace PRR principles. As Mudde articulates, Trumpism has much in common with Pat Buchanan's paleoconservatism.¹⁸² Buchanan, a Nixon speechwriter, Reagan communications director, and pioneering television pundit, was an early champion of many Trumpist ideas. Like other PRR actors, Trump and Buchanan emphasized issues like immigration and trade, citing the collapse of domestic manufacturing in the face of globalizing influence, and arguing for more restrictive policies designed to combat illegal immigration—often positioned as an existential threat to the country. Given the similarity of the PRR phenomena in Western Europe and the United States, this chapter brings explanations for the European phenomenon to bear to study the American experience.

Scholars of the Western European right identify issue salience as an important variable in explaining how candidates can succeed or fail in elections, exploring how different actors, including the media and PRR actors themselves, position issues and contribute to the broader information environment that voters occupy while making choices about who to support in elections. In this chapter, I use a case study approach to answer the following research questions: how do PRR actors attempt to benefit from the salience of PRR issues? How do they drive issue salience? What are the consequences of success and/or failure?

¹⁸¹ Cas Mudde, *The Far Right in America* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 40.

¹⁸² *Ibid.* 32

The chapter begins with a review of the existing literature on the concept of issue salience in general, and how issue salience and the related concept of issue ownership have been applied to explain the Western European far right. Those outcomes share characteristics with elections in the United States, where figures espousing similar populist, nativist, and authoritarian views have contested primary elections—with mixed success. The next section, therefore, reviews one such example: a case study of Pat Buchanan’s 1996 bid for the Republican nomination for president. I explore Buchanan’s candidacy and the 1996 context, highlighting how Buchanan compares with his fellow Republicans. In this case, I highlight his emphasis on PRR issues, and the salience of broader political issues driven by current events during the campaign. The next section contains an analysis of five televised debates, which demonstrates that Buchanan was unique among Republicans in his emphasis on PRR issues. The final section comprises a deeper look at Buchanan’s efforts in New Hampshire, a state he narrowly won, and includes a logistic regression analysis of an exit poll conducted in that state, which demonstrates that Buchanan found support among those who prioritized his owned issue, foreign trade, but that he was not disproportionately successful among those who received their impressions of candidates from newspapers. Just as European PRR parties are less successful when their issues are not salient, it appears that Buchanan suffered from the relatively low salience of the issues he owned, aligning broadly with theoretical expectations.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 Issue Salience

Dearing and Rogers define salience as “the degree to which an issue on the agenda is perceived as relatively important.”¹⁸³ Issue salience is crucial to issue-based explanations for political phenomena, and issues have been described as “crucially [deciding] results.”¹⁸⁴ An important—and related—concept is issue ownership, which refers simply to an association between a party or candidate and a particular policy domain.¹⁸⁵ Candidates and parties have issues with which they are associated. Steve Forbes, for example, is indelibly associated with his flat tax proposition, explained in detail below. These issues range in importance between elections and this variety has been used to explain electoral outcomes, especially in the context of valence politics.¹⁸⁶ In fact, where voters and parties generally agree on desired outcomes across a variety of issues, it becomes essential to drive salience of one’s own issues and become the most credible voice in addressing them. This is contrary to the Downsian idea that issue positions will converge around the median voter.¹⁸⁷ Candidates can differentiate themselves by changing the issues on which the election is fought rather than competing on the same issues. The ability to foster issue ownership is therefore critical to electoral success, though there is good reason to suspect that the effects of ownership are conditional on salience—owning an issue only matters if enough of the electorate believes that issue is important, making campaigns

¹⁸³ James W. Dearing and Everett M. Rogers, *Agenda-Setting* (Thousand Oaks and London: SAGE, 1996), 8.

¹⁸⁴ Ian Budge and Dennis Farlie, *Explaining and Predicting Elections: Issue Effects and Party Strategies in Twenty-Three Democracies* (London and Winchester: Allen & Unwin, 1983), xii.

¹⁸⁵ Jonas Lefevere, Anke Tresch, and Stefaan Walgrave, "Introduction: Issue Ownership," *West European Politics* 38, no. 4 (2015), 755.

¹⁸⁶ Jane Green, "When Voters and Parties Agree: Valence Issues and Party Competition," *Political Studies* 55, (2007), 650.

¹⁸⁷ Bernard Grofman, "Downs and Two-Party Convergence," *Annual Review of Political Science* 7 (2004), 31-32; Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).

opportunities for candidates to inspire salience and position themselves as owners of those salient issues.¹⁸⁸

Other scholarship has demonstrated that what matters, matters: Egan reports a “strong, significant relationship between the extent to which a party’s issues are salient and its performance in US presidential elections since 1960.”¹⁸⁹ Petrocik, in a foundational work on the subject, argues that ownership predicts, “a campaign effect when a candidate successfully frames the vote choice as a decision to be made in terms of problems facing the country that he is better able to ‘handle’ than his opponent.”¹⁹⁰

The broader argument is that salience is what drives difference between elections, not sharp swings in voter policy attitudes.¹⁹¹ The issues may not change between campaigns, but their relative emphasis does, causing changes in electoral outcomes. Issue alignment strongly predicts vote choice,¹⁹² and during campaigns, candidates can impact their likelihood of success by courting specific voters who are likely to prioritize the issues that matter to those candidates.

This is best articulated by van der Brug, who explains the phenomenon succinctly:

Each of the parties has a set of policy issues that they “own”, i.e., policy areas where they have a relatively good reputation. So, parties can gain electoral support by increasing the salience of each of their issues during a campaign, reason for them to consistently emphasize “their” topics.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ Jonas Lefevere, Anke Tresch, and Stefaan Walgrave, "Introduction: Issue Ownership," *West European Politics* 38, no. 4 (2015), 779; Anke Tresch and Alexandra Feddersen, "The (In)stability of Voters' Perceptions of Competence and Associative Issue Ownership: The Role of Media Campaign Coverage," *Political Communication* 36, no. 3 (2019), 398, 404.

¹⁸⁹ Patrick J. Egan, *Partisan Priorities: How Issue Ownership Drives and Distorts American Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 74.

¹⁹⁰ John Petrocik, "Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study," *American Journal of Political Science* 40, no. 3 (1996), 826.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Michael Barber and Jeremy C. Pope, "Does Party Trump Ideology? Disentangling Party and Ideology in America," *American Political Science Review* 113, no. 1 (2019), 38.

¹⁹³ Wouter van der Brug, "Issue Ownership and Party Choice," *Electoral Studies* 23 no. 2 (2004), 211.

Additional research has demonstrated that salience is a key factor moderating the ability of political elites to influence public opinion.¹⁹⁴ It is to issue salience that we next turn.

2.2.2 Issue Salience and the Populist Radical Right

Grounded in populism, nativism, and authoritarianism, PRR candidates are particularly emphatic on issues like crime, immigration, and trade. Often caustic, this rhetoric comprises much of the public discourse around PRR issues and is one of the ways candidates and politicians can differentiate themselves from their opponents. Mainstream conservatives may attempt to engage on PRR issues increasing those issues' salience and ultimately boosting support for the PRR.¹⁹⁵

Scholars have demonstrated that the salience of these issues is key to understanding how PRR parties and politicians perform electorally. Mudde, for example, argues that the PRR “[profits] from increased salience of sociocultural issues...”¹⁹⁶ Golder argues that an increase in salience of economic issues harms the far right, as such an event disrupts the culturally-bound electoral coalition it relies on.¹⁹⁷ This is a view shared by Norris and Inglehart, who argue broadly that the rise in salience of sociocultural issues has contributed a resurgence in authoritarian populism.¹⁹⁸ The fact that these sociocultural issues are unevenly salient across elections, due in part to varying political contexts and global events, explains how relatively stable views translate into unstable electoral support for PRR parties in Europe.¹⁹⁹ This is

¹⁹⁴ John G. Bullock, “Elite Influence on Public Opinion in an Informed Electorate,” *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 3 (2011), 513.

¹⁹⁵ Antonis A. Ellinas, *The Media and the Far Right in Western Europe: Playing the Nationalist Card* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 66.

¹⁹⁶ Cas Mudde, “The 2012 Stein Rokkan Lecture: Three decades of populist radical right parties in Western Europe: So what?” in *The Populist Radical Right: A reader*, ed. Cas Mudde (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 530.

¹⁹⁷ Matt Golder, “Far Right Parties in Europe,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 19, no. 1 (2016), 488.

¹⁹⁸ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 124.

¹⁹⁹ Cas Mudde, *The Far Right Today* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019), 176.

apparent in work by other scholars. The salience of law-and-order issues, for example, benefited the French National Front in 2002, when Jean-Marie Le Pen shocked the world with a strong second place finish.²⁰⁰ Also the ability of the French media to drive the salience of the immigration issue—even in the face of a reduction in immigration—also contributed to this outcome.²⁰¹ There is further evidence for salience as a consideration in explaining outcomes: In Belgium, salience and ownership interact to predict electoral outcomes for radical right parties (more salient PRR issues mean more support for the Vlaams Blok),²⁰² though much of this is likely attributable to media coverage, which has not always been rooted accurately in events.²⁰³ The next section outlines a theory derived from this literature.

2.3 Theory

If the drivers for PRR success are transatlantic, we should be able to reject the null formulations of the following hypotheses. First, PRR candidates should be more likely to invoke PRR issues in their public rhetoric. They should be more likely than their opponents to steer the campaign towards issues that are important to them, rather than engaging in a conversation about other issues that may be surfaced during the campaign. As the literature cited above demonstrates, the PRR benefits when issues like immigration are important to the electorate. Mainstream conservatives, often place less emphasis on cultural issues and are historically more likely to embrace fiscal conservatism as a policy plank, making them less likely to focus the campaign on those issues. It therefore stands to reason that PRR actors should be more willing to

²⁰⁰ Antonis A. Ellinas, *The Media and the Far Right in Western Europe: Playing the Nationalist Card* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 194.

²⁰¹ Ibid. 172

²⁰² Romain Lachat, "Issue Ownership and the Vote: The Effects of Associative and Competence Ownership on Issue Voting," *Swiss Political Science Review* 20, no. 4 (2014), 778.

²⁰³ Stefaan Walgrave and Knut De Swert, "The Making of the (Issues of the) Vlaams Blok," *Political Communication* 21, no. 4 (2004), 496.

employ rhetoric about owned issues, particularly immigration, trade, and crime, as this is where those actors may find a favorable opportunity structure.

A second hypothesis holds that support for PRR candidates should be associated with the salience of their owned issues. Continuing the logical progression from the first hypothesis, if voters believe that PRR issues are salient and that the PRR candidate owns those issues, it stands to reason that those voters would be more likely to support the PRR candidate at the ballot box. If issue salience does explain differential outcomes for PRR candidates in Western Europe, it is likely that support for PRR issues is the mechanism through which this occurs, making the hypothesized relationship a clear observable implication.

Finally, the ability of the media to grow issue salience and ownership is an important part of the European PRR story. If, as the literature suggests, salience derives at least in part from media coverage, it stands to reason that consumption of media sources that cover PRR issues and candidates favorably could be an important link in that chain. The literature review above demonstrates that understanding the relationship between the media and the far right (including the populist radical right) is an important step in explaining its electoral success. Therefore, the third hypothesis reads, PRR candidates should be disproportionately likely to receive support from consumers of media that cover PRR issues and candidates favorably.

The next section reviews the case selection, explaining why Pat Buchanan's 1996 campaign is a suitable venue to review these hypotheses.

2.3.1 Case Selection

Many of the studies cited above refer to parties competing in general elections. However, nomination contests, where partisanship is not a useful cue, are especially fruitful venues for exploring issue salience. Primaries create a distinct set of incentives for candidates and party

members, pitting them not against members of another party with a well-established, different issue profile, but against members of their own party. This has the effect of robbing members of an easy heuristic: if all candidates belong to the same party, partisanship is not a useful way to differentiate them. Issue alignment and salience provide a useful way to make that differentiation. Logically speaking, “if voters have more intense preferences on one dimension than the other, then small policy differences on that dimension will translate into large differences in preferences.”²⁰⁴ It should therefore be the case that PRR primary candidates attempt to steer the agenda towards issues they own, driving up the salience of issues that differentiate them from their mainstream conservative opponents.

In pursuing comparisons with Western European explanations, nomination contests are preferable. The US “first-past-the-post” system pushes intra-right-wing conflict into the primary arena, making it a better venue for this analysis. Pat Buchanan’s 1996 bid is an especially useful nomination contest, as it featured an American candidate who is often invoked in comparisons with the Western European PRR,²⁰⁵ running against a diverse group of right-leaning candidates in a series of primaries. Of the possible case study options, Pat Buchanan’s 1996 campaign is among the most analytically useful.

2.4 Case Study: Pat Buchanan’s 1996 Bid

2.4.1 Background

A conservative commentator and former political staffer, Pat Buchanan ran for president in 1996 as a Republican. Fresh from an impressive showing against incumbent president George H. W. Bush in the 1992 primaries, Buchanan was arguably the most formidable PRR figure of

²⁰⁴ Stephen Ansolabehere, Jonathan Rodden, and James M. Snyder Jr., “Purple America,” *Journal Of Economic Perspectives* 20, no. 2 (2006), 106.

²⁰⁵ Hans-George Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1994), 23.

his day, and the first to gain real acceptance in the modern Republican Party, however tenuous this turned out to be. Though he has never held elected office, Buchanan has variously been a prominent journalist, pundit, staffer, author, and, of course, candidate, and drew significant attention for his controversial political views.

Patrick J. Buchanan was born in 1939 in Washington D.C. to an Irish Catholic family. He came of age in the 1950s, a period that defined the modern American conservative movement with the founding of William F. Buckley's influential *National Review* magazine, which embraced social conservatism, free market economics, and anti-communism.²⁰⁶ For Buchanan, who, according to a biographer, found his earliest political influence in his anti-communist, McCarthyite father, the emergence of this anti-communist strain was to have a lasting impact on his political outlook.²⁰⁷

In his twenties, Buchanan became enamored with *National Review*, attracted by its founder's anti-communism and devout Catholicism, which inspired his enrolment in a graduate journalism program at Columbia University in New York.²⁰⁸ Upon graduation, he moved to St. Louis, where he worked as a opinion writer in the early 1960s.²⁰⁹ In 1964, he went to work for former vice president Richard Nixon as a press aide, answering correspondence and writing a newspaper column, eventually following Nixon to the White House.²¹⁰

After Nixon resigned, Buchanan retreated from electoral politics and began building a different type of public profile, working as a commentator and eventually moving to radio and

²⁰⁶ Martin Durham, *The Christian Right: The Far Right and the Boundaries of American Conservatism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 1-2.

²⁰⁷ Timothy Stanley, *The Crusader: The Life and Tumultuous Times of Pat Buchanan* (New York: Thomas Dunne, 2012), 18-9.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

²⁰⁹ Patrick J. Buchanan, *Right From the Beginning* (Boston: Little Brown, 1988), 267-269.

²¹⁰ Stanley, *The Crusader*, 22, 34-37; 47-48.

then television, with a show called *Crossfire* that aired on CNN beginning in 1982.²¹¹ He did well as a rhetorical pugilist on CNN but soon moved back into politics, joining the Reagan White House as Director of Communications after the 1984 election.²¹² While working for Reagan, Buchanan was embroiled in several rounds of controversy, including his support for Austrian president (and alleged Nazi) Kurt Waldheim, and other accused Nazi war criminals. His tenure ended in 1988, and he began laying the groundwork for a presidential run.

A self-identified “paleoconservative,” Buchanan cast himself in contrast with the neoconservatism of the 1980s.²¹³ This ideological worldview, generally nostalgic for an earlier era, counted among its adherents those who argued that “the nation’s cultural homogeneity was the basis of its greatness” in contrast with neoconservatives who held that immigration was largely beneficial.²¹⁴ Buchanan described his conservatism in just such a nostalgic fashion as “learned at the dinner table” and “soaked up in the parochial school.”²¹⁵ Buchanan reflected these themes in his memoir, criticizing 1988 presidential candidate Jack Kemp as too focused on tax cuts and other issues, while reminding his reader that “the business of America is not *business*.”²¹⁶

Dissatisfied with the state of Republican politics in the 1990s, Buchanan decided to challenge incumbent president George H. W. Bush for the Republican nomination. In December 1991, when he declared his candidacy, Buchanan provided a justification for his decision:

Why am I running? Because we Republicans can no longer say it is all the liberals' fault. It was not some liberal Democrat who declared, "Read my lips! No new taxes!," then broke his word to cut a back room budget deal with the big spenders. It was not Edward Kennedy who railed against a quota bill, then embraced its twin. It was not Congress alone who set off on the greatest

²¹¹ Ibid. 88-90.

²¹² Ibid. 100

²¹³ Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives: Ideas & Personalities Throughout American History* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009), 246.

²¹⁴ Ibid. 249

²¹⁵ Buchanan, *Right From the Beginning*, 15.

²¹⁶ Ibid. 6.

social spending spree in 60 years, running up the largest deficits in modern history. No, that was done by men in whom we placed our confidence and our trust, and who turned their backs, and walked away from us.²¹⁷

Buchanan probably knew that his chances of victory were minimal, but feeling betrayed by the Republican establishment, who had cut the “back room” deal he had referred to in his speech, he forced the Party to confront the paleoconservative charge that he led.

Throughout the nomination campaign, Buchanan attacked Bush as a “flip flopper” on taxes, on his administration’s role in increasing the national debt, and on his record on unemployment.²¹⁸ Buchanan was especially active in New Hampshire, spending \$1.4 million to run ads criticizing Bush with a focus on his failure to live up to the famous “no new taxes” pledge.²¹⁹ He did not win any states in 1992, but he did win enough support to earn a speaking slot at the Republican Convention. His fiery speech there invoked the LA riots, a paroxysm of civil disobedience and looting that erupted after police officers were acquitted of charges related to a widely publicized beating of a black motorist. Speaking about national guardsmen who had been deployed to the city in the wake of the violence, Buchanan told the crowd, “as they took back the streets of LA, block by block, so we must take back our cities, and take back our culture, and take back our country.”²²⁰ The speech had strong racial overtones—a clear “us” and “them” distinction drawn between inner-city minorities and the broader white American population. His defeat in 1992 did little to quell Buchanan’s political ambitions.

Between the 1992 and 1996 election cycles, Buchanan remained politically active. In 1993, Buchanan’s supporters incorporated *American Cause*, a political non-profit that raised

²¹⁷ Patrick J. Buchanan, “A Crossroads in Our Country’s History” speech delivered in Concord, New Hampshire, December 10, 1991,” *4President*, <http://www.4president.org/speeches/buchanan1992announcement.htm>.

²¹⁸ L. Patrick Devlin, “Television Advertising in the 1992 New Hampshire Presidential Primary Election,” *Political Communication* 11, no. 1 (1994), 87-88.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.* 82, 88.

²²⁰ Patrick J. Buchanan, “1992 Republican Convention Speech,” August 17, 1992. *Patrick J. Buchanan: Official Website*, <http://buchanan.org/blog/1992-republican-national-convention-speech-148>.

money for Buchanan's travel and some television advertising, particularly highlighting his opposition to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).²²¹ In 1994, the Republicans won control of the House of Representatives, delivering a rebuke to President Clinton and the rest of the Democratic Party. By 1996, Buchanan identified an opportunity to compete for an open nomination against various Republican stars, including the Senate Majority Leader and several governors and legislators. In March of 1995, Buchanan announced his campaign for president in New Hampshire, where his message had been well-received three years earlier.

Pat Buchanan's announcement speech laid out his vision for the 1996 campaign. He began by highlighting his anti-establishment *bona fides*: "[in 1992] we came up here to New Hampshire, and you and I stood together to say to the national establishment of both parties, 'Turn around. You're going the wrong way!'", before delivering an anecdote-stuffed appeal to Middle America replete with criticism of American-sponsored international institutions:

today, our birthright of sovereignty, purchased with the blood of patriots, is being traded away for foreign money, handed over to faceless foreign bureaucrats at places like the IMF, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and the U.N.²²²

His commitment to American sovereignty was not confined to global financial treaties. He also castigated the government for its inadequate response to what he saw as the crisis of illegal immigration:

our leaders, timid and fearful of being called names, do nothing. Well, they have not invented the name I have not been called. So, the Custodians of Political Correctness do not frighten me. And I will do what is necessary to defend the borders of my country even if it means putting the National Guard all along our southern frontier.²²³

²²¹ Douglas Frantz, "Populist Candidate Has Sophisticated and Lucrative Political Apparatus," *New York Times*, March 4, 1996, <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/03/04/us/politics-patrick-j-buchanan-populist-candidate-has-sophisticated-lucrative.html>.

²²² Patrick J. Buchanan, "1996 Announcement Speech" speech delivered in Manchester, New Hampshire, March 20, 1995, *Patrick J. Buchanan: Official Website* <http://buchanan.org/blog/1996-announcement-speech-171>.

²²³ *Ibid.*

Buchanan was back, and while his announcement drew immediate condemnation it typified the 1996 campaign.²²⁴ Over the course of the next year, Buchanan aggressively campaigned. He contested dozens of caucuses and primaries beginning in early 1996, traveling the country, delivering speeches, and appearing in debates. He was ultimately able to edge Dole out in several states' primaries, including New Hampshire, Louisiana, and Missouri (though the latter two contests were low-turnout caucuses).²²⁵ We turn now to an analysis of the campaign, including the candidates and the issue environment.

2.4.2 *The 1996 Campaign*

The 1996 Republican Primary field was dominated by three candidates: Buchanan, a former Nixon speechwriter and Reagan White House communications director, Bob Dole, former Senate Majority Leader and establishment stalwart, and Steve Forbes, an upstart magazine publisher who leveraged his significant personal fortune to advocate for a flat tax. Several other candidates participated in many of the primaries, including former Tennessee governor and Secretary of Education under George H.W. Bush, Lamar Alexander, Texas senator Phil Gramm, Indiana senator Richard Lugar, California congressman Robert Dornan, former diplomat Alan Keyes, and tire magnate Morry Taylor. Brief descriptions of each candidate are included in Table 1 below. A detailed examination of Buchanan's two main opponents, Bob Dole and Steve Forbes, comprises the next section.

Table 1: 1996 Republican Presidential Candidates

Candidate	Description	Fate
Pat Buchanan	Republican speechwriter/communications director; former television host; 1992 Republican presidential candidate	Second place finisher; won New Hampshire, Alaska, Missouri, and Louisiana

²²⁴ Richard L. Berke, "A New Quest By Buchanan For President," *New York Times*, March 21, 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/03/21/us/a-new-quest-by-buchanan-for-president.html>.

²²⁵ Harold W. Stanley, "The Nominations: Republican Doldrums, Democratic Revival," in *The Elections of 1996*, ed. Michael Nelson (Washington DC: CQ Press, 1997), 22-29.

Bob Dole	Senate Majority Leader; moderate conservative Republican	Eventual nominee
Steve Forbes	Publisher of <i>Forbes Magazine</i> ; business magnate, flat tax advocate	Dropped out; won Arizona and Delaware
Lamar Alexander	Former Tennessee governor; former Bush Secretary of Education; moderate conservative candidate	Dropped out
Phil Gramm	Texas senator; economist; economic conservative hardliner	Dropped out
Richard Lugar	Indiana senator; significant foreign policy experience	Dropped out
Morry Taylor	Tire magnate; advocate for running the federal government like a business	Dropped out
Robert Dornan	California Congressman; former actor; known for his flamboyant public persona	Dropped out
Alan Keyes	Former Reagan-era diplomat; ardent culture warrior and abortion opponent	Dropped out

2.4.2.1 Bob Dole, Establishment Stalwart

Bob Dole, Kansas senator and Senate Majority Leader had served as the Republican Party’s vice presidential nominee on the Ford ticket in 1976 and in the Senate since 1985. His nomination bid reflected his deep relationship with the Republican establishment. For one, Dole’s appeal did not come from his charisma—indeed, he left many audiences disappointed with the quality of his oratory.²²⁶ Instead, he used his network to gather endorsements from key Republicans and was able to build a “formidable war chest.”²²⁷

Pat Buchanan stood in contrast to the stuffy and formal Dole. An avowed populist, Buchanan’s campaign was predicated on his defiance of Republican orthodoxy and his defense of forgotten Americans. By way of comparison, Dole comforted supporters with promises that he would fall squarely within the mainstream, telling the audience at a televised debate before the New Hampshire Primary, "I'll be a good mainstream conservative president with a lot of good

²²⁶ Ibid., 18.

²²⁷ Ibid., 18

ideas about America's future."²²⁸ He attacked Buchanan as an extremist (later softening his stance to merely “extreme”) and defended his own conservative credentials, explaining to another group of prospective voters, “I pride myself on being a conservative, but I also pride myself on not playing on the fears of people.”²²⁹

On policy issues, Dole and Buchanan emphasized different themes. In fact, Buchanan and Dole differed far more on trade than they did on a key Republican wedge issue, abortion.²³⁰ Palmer argues that, during the 1996 New Hampshire primary, where differentiation tends to be based on character, the main features that distinguished the two leading candidates were Buchanan’s “extremism” and Dole’s old age.²³¹ The list of key issues of the day—the “Contract with America” and the crusade against Clinton’s economic policies—did not include free trade, and the establishment powers, including Clinton, Dole, and Gingrich led American accession to the World Trade Organization as a unified front.²³² A consensus on the issue of trade among the mainstream candidates of both parties represented an opening for a candidate to mobilize those voters who prioritized trade issues and the threat of globalization.

Immigration is the other key area where Dole and Buchanan differed significantly. Buchanan’s anti-immigrant credentials were unimpeachable. He consistently endorsed the concept of cultural homogeneity as a crucial plank of American immigration policy.²³³ Dole, on the other hand, was more hesitant to engage on the subject. While Buchanan was calling for

²²⁸ “New Hampshire Primary Debate,” Republican Primary Debate, C-SPAN, February 15, 1996, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?69949-1/hampshire-primary-debate>.

²²⁹ Edward Walsh, “Dole Backs Off: Buchanan’s Just ‘Extreme’,” *Washington Post*, February 24, 1996, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1996/02/24/dole-backs-off-buchanans-just-extreme/a0cd1018-bec5-4ec1-a001-7f6f4eaf34cc/>.

²³⁰ Andrew Busch, *Outsiders and Openness in the Presidential Nominating System* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 162.

²³¹ Neil Palmer, *The New Hampshire Primary and the American Electoral Process* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 83.

²³² Stanley, *The Crusader*, 215, 226.

²³³ Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 249.

troops on the Mexican border, Dole, along with many other Republicans, found himself pulled to the right, but immigration did not permeate the campaign beyond a few stops in border states.²³⁴

Of course, Buchanan and Dole were not the only two candidates. Publishing magnate Steve Forbes entered the primary with a focus on taxation, and it is to his candidacy we next turn, as he served as a potent foil for Buchanan.

2.4.2.2 Steve Forbes, Flat Tax Crusader

Steve Forbes, of the *Forbes* publishing empire, was a non-traditional candidate. He had little in the way of previous political experience. At his campaign launch in September 1995, Forbes highlighted his vision, calling his campaign “unusual” and outlining his “new and unexpected” approach to politics.²³⁵ This approach primarily entailed rewriting the tax code to replace the graduated income tax with a 17% flat tax on all income over \$36,000. He summarized his views as follow:

I am straightforwardly calling for a tax cut, to expand the economy and make everyone better off. The old-style Washington politicians just hide behind the deficit. They give us shell games rather than tax cuts because their one principle is: Never, ever take money away from Washington. As we all know, the deficit was the prime rationale for the last two tax hikes; two of the largest tax hikes in American history, which put the country on a downward spiral, destroying growth and—guess what?—expanding the deficit. I'm proposing real tax cuts because I believe that growth is the key that will unlock the deficit prison.²³⁶

Forbes’s differentiator—that he alone among the candidates would “[raise] high the banner of economic expansion and opportunity”—was anathema to the sort of campaign that Buchanan ran, and in many ways, despite Dole’s dominance, Forbes represented a potent foil.²³⁷

²³⁴ Paul Feldman, “Buchanan Hitches California Campaign to Prop. 187,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 20, 1996, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1996-03-20-mn-49210-story.html>; James Sterngold, “Parallel Agonizing Over Immigration,” *New York Times*, March 23, 1996, <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/03/23/us/politics-the-convention-parallel-agonizing-over-immigration.html>.

²³⁵ Steve Forbes, “Steve Forbes Presidential Campaign Announcement,” speech delivered at the National Press Club, C-SPAN, September 22, 1996, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?67291-1/steve-forbes-presidential-campaign-announcement>.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

During the 1996 campaign, Buchanan sought to paint his opponents as ivory tower Republicans, calling the flat tax proposal something “dreamed up by the boys at the yacht club,” and going on the attack, leaving no Republican truism untouched in the process.²³⁸ While Forbes’s flat tax proposal garnered criticism from the Buchanan camp, many of whom correctly intuited its regressive nature, it did attract some supporters, especially among wealthier Republicans and some talk radio listeners.²³⁹ Forbes’s flat tax proposal was the first serious consideration of the issue at the primary debate level, and “propelled him from a novelty candidate to someone who is getting enough attention to warrant consistent attacks from his rivals.”²⁴⁰ Forbes’s substantial personal fortune also allowed him to circumvent campaign spending limits by loaning his campaign money and forgoing federal matching funds, substantially outspending his opponents.²⁴¹

Though he only won Delaware and Arizona, eventually finishing third behind Dole and Buchanan in the overall vote count, Forbes’s impact on the campaign should not be understated. By introducing a heretofore unheard-of flat tax proposal into an election campaign that came on the heels of the Republican election victory in 1994, Forbes was able to capitalize on, and drive the salience of, fiscal issues. He even managed to capture the endorsement of fiscal hawk, Congressman Jack Kemp.²⁴² If Buchanan saw himself as the country’s conscience, Forbes saw himself as its treasurer. Unfortunately for Buchanan, as discussed in some detail below, money

²³⁸ Palmer, *The New Hampshire Primary*, 26.

²³⁹ Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Joseph N. Cappella, *Echo Chamber: Rush Limbaugh and the Conservative Media Establishment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 226.

²⁴⁰ Neil A. Lewis, “Flat Tax, Once Obscure Idea, Is Set to Enter Campaign Debate,” *New York Times*, January 9, 1996, <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/01/09/us/flat-tax-once-obscure-idea-is-set-to-enter-campaign-debate.html>.

²⁴¹ Stanley, “The Nominations,” 24.

²⁴² John M. Broder, “Kemp Turns Heads With Late Cheer for Forbes: Timing of Endorsement surprises Analysts. ‘He must have been on another Planet Yesterday,’ one Says,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 7, 1996, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1996-03-07-mn-44182-story.html>.

mattered more. As an outsider, Forbes cast himself in opposition to the Republican insiders, a strange sort of elite populism that sought to revamp the tax code in a regressive way.

Along with the other candidates of the establishment, Alexander, Lugar, and Gramm, Dole pitched himself as a mainstream conservative and emphasized his extensive experience in government and his commitment to mainstream conservative principles. Forbes, on the other hand, touted his business experience (as did Morry Taylor, though with much less success and fanfare) and ran a campaign focused almost exclusively on taxation and government finances. Buchanan, though—like the candidates of the PRR in Western Europe—found his niche in cultural issues, emphasizing his opposition to freed trade and immigration as differentiators with many others in the Republican Party. How did this approach manifest itself in the campaign? Was Buchanan able to drive and harness the salience of these issues? Unfortunately for Buchanan, the primary campaign was not fought on PRR issues, creating an unfavorable environment for his campaign, in line with the European experience.

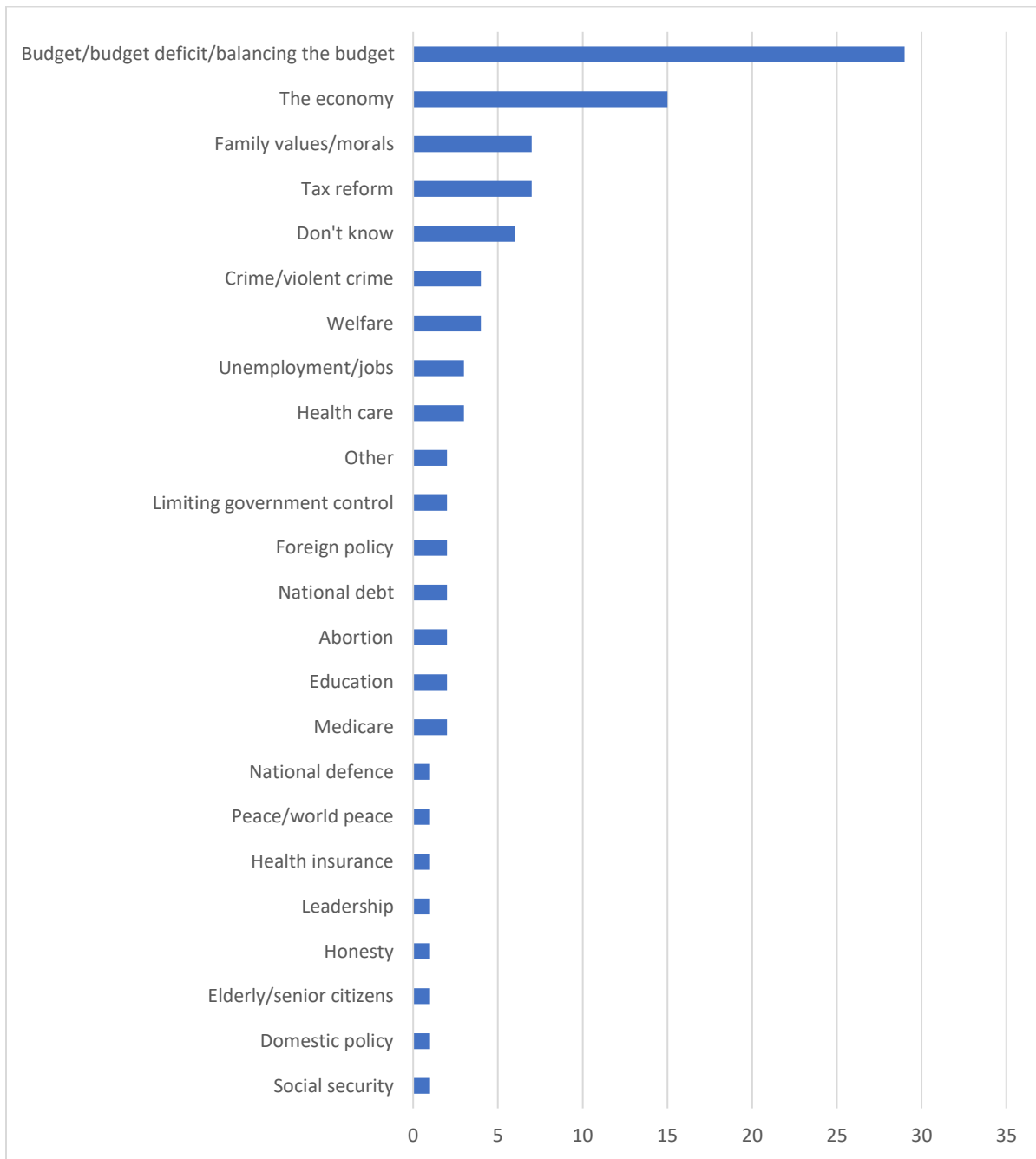
2.4.3 Issue Salience in the 1996 Campaign

We turn now to the first hypothesis, examining it considering the case. It reads, *PRR candidates should be more likely to invoke PRR issues in their public rhetoric*. This is true of Buchanan, who focused his campaign on trade and immigration. In 1996, Buchanan made protectionism in opposition to globalization and trade agreements “the most prominent feature of his argument,” calling NAFTA, “the legal instrument of piecemeal surrender of American sovereignty.”²⁴³ He wrapped himself in arguments about economic nationalism while his opponents debated the merits of a flat tax. He talked about tariffs while Dole and Forbes talked about welfare reform. The question of the 1996 campaign was ultimately whether Buchanan’s

²⁴³ Durham, *The Christian Right*, 150.

“America First,” economically nationalist campaign for “moral regeneration” would win out over standard pocketbook appeals. This, along with his anti-immigration, preservationist sentiments clarified how he perceived himself as different from his fellow Republicans. The Western European example illustrates that the PRR benefits from an environment where their issues are salient. In 1996, voters were primarily concerned with economic matters. Figure 2 demonstrates that PRR issues were not generally important to Republican voters, even after months campaigning by Buchanan. This has its roots in political developments that immediately preceded Buchanan’s candidacy, particularly the Republican successes in the election of 1994.

Figure 2: Most Important Issue for Presidents to Address, Feb 1996, Republican Identifiers²⁴⁴



When the Republicans swept the House of Representatives in 1994, the freshman class of legislators came ready to challenge a president they viewed as fiscally irresponsible and

²⁴⁴ Source: Cable News Network (CNN)/Time, Cable News Network (CNN)/Time Poll: February 1996, Yankelovich Partners, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1996).

politically weak. They campaigned on some \$220 billion in tax cuts, suggesting that a few, “specific, itemized, relatively painless spending cuts” would ease the potential pain of such a massive cut in revenue.²⁴⁵ With their electoral victory came a mandate for the populist fiscal conservatism exemplified by the “Contract with America” that so many new representatives felt propelled them into office. As a result, over a period of 26 days between 1995 and 1996, House Republicans refused to fund the government, shuttering operations, and furloughing workers. This example of political brinksmanship forced a balanced budget as intended, but it hurt Republicans politically, such that one experienced Hill observer cited “post-traumatic shutdown disorder” as endemic in the GOP leadership more than a decade later.²⁴⁶ During this period, freshman Republicans led the charge as the party refocused on fiscal discipline, challenging the merit of traditional welfare, fundamentally altering the program to save money and introduce work requirements.²⁴⁷ This characterized the political environment Buchanan waded into when he sought the nomination in 1996.

Why is this important? Buchanan never pitched himself as a Gingrich-style fiscal conservative. He was always a moral crusader, pleading for a return to his vision of a decent, socially just world that was not inherently predicated on lower taxes or balanced budgets. Increases in corporate profits, wealth concentration, and trickle-down economics might have appealed to Republicans of a certain vintage, but these ideas are anathema to the PRR campaign that Buchanan ran in 1996. The ongoing budget negotiations focused on entitlement reform and the new Republican vision of fiscal conservatism hung over the primary campaign. Republican

²⁴⁵ David E. Rosenbaum, “It’s the Economy Again, as Democrats Attack the ‘Contract With America,’” *New York Times*, November 1, 1994, <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/11/01/us/1994-campaign-republicans-it-s-economy-again-democrats-attack-contract-with.html>.

²⁴⁶ Major Garrett, “Republicans Say They’ve Learned From 1995 Government Shutdown,” *National Journal*, October 27, 2010, EBSCOHost.

²⁴⁷ Martin Carcasson, “Ending Welfare As We Know It: President Clinton And The Rhetorical Transformation Of the Anti-Welfare Culture,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9, no. 4 (2006), 655.

politicians wanted to talk about fiscal discipline. And, with the budget shutdown fresh in voters' minds, that is exactly what the campaign became about. For Buchanan, whose campaign required an electorate interested in cultural issues, this was not a good sign.

Immigration is the other key area where Buchanan's views differentiated him from the Republican mainstream. His anti-immigrant credentials were solid, and his anti-immigration sentiment endeared him to like-minded voters. Buchanan self-identified as a paleoconservative, a movement whose adherents argue that "the nation's cultural homogeneity was the basis of its greatness."²⁴⁸ For a time, the anti-communist crusade held the conservative movement together (Allitt calls anti-communism the movement's "glue"²⁴⁹), but as American political movements sought to manage the transition to post-communism, the movement began to fray. Free trade was one cleavage that emerged, and immigration became a hot-button issue as well. Buchanan pitched himself as a defender of essential Americanism, into which he rolled culture and language. In an autobiography, published in 1988, Buchanan called for a constitutional amendment to make English the national language of the United States. This would have little functional impact, but it is a potent symbol of Buchanan's views on the nation-state as a political unit ("if we are to remain one nation and one people, we need a common language.").²⁵⁰ For Buchanan, immigration was important. The rest of the conservative movement refocused on other issues.

News coverage from the primary period bolsters this assertion. A content analysis of the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* over the first quarter of 1996 reveals how mainstream media organizations covered the campaign. The issues that appeared most in news reporting

²⁴⁸ Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 249.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 255

²⁵⁰ Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 357.

were budget/debt limit battle that pitted the freshman Republicans against Clinton, tax policy more generally, and economic conditions/insecurity, all of which combined for a total of nearly a fifth of all news stories.²⁵¹ Immigration, in contrast, came up in only 1.9% of stories, while trade policy fared little better, with 3.5% of all stories.²⁵² On the editorial side, Buchanan's signature issues received more coverage, but they still paled in comparison to more novel and relevant ideas like Forbes's flat tax proposal, the debt and budgets, and even telecommunications policy and arms control.²⁵³

Neither the media nor the public were particularly attracted to Buchanan's message, forcing him to be creative in pushing his issues. At the primary debates, for example, where moderators and audience members questioned candidates about their opinions on the issues of the day, the flat tax and the economy were popular topics. In response, Buchanan had to pivot. When confronted with a question about income tax posed by a voter at a debate in January 1996, Buchanan listened to the other candidates discuss taxes and said:

I'm going to put a consumption tax on also, but it's going to be on Chinese communist goods coming into the United States, it's going to be on Japanese goods coming into the United States, and every dime of those tariffs will be used to cut the taxes on small business in America. And yes I am for a flat tax, but [I've] got one disagreement with it: you can't have trust fund babies down in Palm Beach clipping coupons and paying zero tax, as they would under Steve Forbes's tax, while working families pay 17%. So we need a flat tax that's fair to the working people of America and then we need to put our tariffs on those countries that deny equal fair access to America's goods to their markets. We need a trade hawk in the White House.²⁵⁴

Buchanan deftly took a domestic policy question on taxes and turned his answer into a plea for protectionism. It did not work. He lost in South Carolina largely based on his free trade views.²⁵⁵

²⁵¹ Wayne P. Steger, "Comparing News and Editorial Coverage of the 1996 Presidential Nominating Campaign," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (1999), 57.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid., 58.

²⁵⁴ "Republican Presidential Debate," debate held in Columbia, South Carolina, C-SPAN, January 6, 1996, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?69279-1/republican-presidential-debate>.

²⁵⁵ Stanley, *The Crusader*, 296.

Buchanan doubtless attracted the support of voters who prioritized PRR issues. But in a primary dominated by an ongoing government shutdown, a Republican revolution in the House of Representatives, and a novel tax proposal from Steve Forbes, the electorate was largely occupied with other policy ideas. Buchanan's message may have been salient to a core group of followers, but most voters were far more difficult to attract. To extend the argument that Buchanan's rhetoric both distinguished him from his colleagues and was largely peripheral in important ways, the next section reviews the results of a content analysis of several of the primary debates conducted throughout 1995 and 1996. The results demonstrate that Buchanan disproportionately invoked PRR terms, but that other policy topics dominated the debates.

2.5 The 1996 Televised Debates

Over the course of the 1996 nomination campaign, many of the candidates participated in televised debates hosted by media organizations, generally in advance of a primary election or caucus. These debates offered the candidates unique, unfiltered opportunities to speak about their qualifications, their position issues, and to respond to each other's views and messages. The debates were filmed at different times and moderated by different journalists but followed similar formats. Moderators introduced the candidates, asked questions, and moved the conversation along, sometimes cutting off candidates as they spoke. The candidates were offered opportunities to deliver opening and closing statements (the latter more frequently than the former), respond to questions posed by the moderators and others, and engage with each other on important issues. The final actors are the audience members. As non-candidate, non-moderator participants who engage by asking questions (generally pre-approved by the hosting organization) and applauding, cheering—or jeering—as the candidates deliver their messages, they stand in for the larger body politic.

The debates offer a compelling venue for analysis for several reasons. First, we can examine each candidate's unfiltered efforts to communicate directly with voters. Second, they represent a unique opportunity for the candidates to juxtapose themselves with their opponents, engaging directly with their opponents and with the audience. By allowing candidates the opportunity to respond directly to questions about their policy positions and attack their opponents, debates provide ideal venues for contrasting one's position with others in front of a wide audience. Outside of paid advertising, a luxury not equally available to all campaigns, primary debates are among the best platforms for candidates to push their preferred narratives and relative positioning. In fact, the debates are arguably even more important during the nomination phase of the contest, as voters do not have party cues to help them understand distinctions between candidates, the candidates themselves can use the debates as venues for free airtime, and because the debates can ultimately shape the policy propositions that are espoused by the party's eventual nominee.²⁵⁶ Even when candidates do not have a realistic prospect of winning, participation in primary debates can force higher profile opponents to respond to fringe issues and engage on topics that would not otherwise make it onto the agenda.

The first hypothesis reads: PRR candidates should be more likely to invoke PRR issues in their public rhetoric. This means, in practice, that the PRR candidate should refer frequently PRR themes, investing scarce time on the debate stage to talk about issues like trade, crime, and immigration instead of focusing on other issues like taxes or the budget. When those topics inevitably do come up, PRR candidates should attempt to frame them in a way that emphasizes PRR appeal—for example, making a conversation about employment in general one about immigration as well. Where the PRR candidate is ultimately successful, we should see other

²⁵⁶ David A. Hopkins, "Televised Debates in Presidential Primaries," in *Routledge Handbook of Primary Elections*, ed. Robert G. Boatright (New York, Routledge, 2018), 309.

candidates recognizing the importance of those PRR concepts and invoking them as well, fighting the campaign on PRR terms. To evaluate this assertion in the context of 1996, it is important to review how the candidates chose to use their limited time on the debates’ stages through the topics they chose to address and language they used.

To evaluate this, I collected and analyzed transcripts of each of the five debates. The relevant debates are recorded in Table 3.²⁵⁷ Using NVivo’s software, I analyzed the debate transcripts. By segmenting each candidate’s remarks and documenting the frequency of each word on a relative basis, I was able to generate a rough tabulation of the words each candidate used. Nvivo eliminates common words (prepositions like “the” and “if”) from the count, and I chose to exclude terms that did not highlight anything ideologically meaningful, like “going,” “want,” “think,” or a candidate’s name, like “Dole.” Words that indicated a policy priority like “budget” or “immigration” or “taxes” were included, along with their stems.²⁵⁸

Finally, to ensure the text I was analyzing was not spuriously communicated, the results reported in Table 3 only include words that were mentioned at least three times by any candidate, though not all candidates used every word more than three times, or even at all. This benchmark helped to further sift through the text and identify key patterns in the political messages.

Table 2: 1996 Primary Debates

Debate	Participants	Date	Approx. Word count
Republican Presidential Debate, South Carolina	Alan Keyes, Morry Taylor, Richard Lugar, Pat Buchanan, Lamar Alexander, Phil Gramm	January 6, 1996	11,000
Iowa Presidential Candidates Forum	Alan Keyes, Morry Taylor, Richard Lugar, Pat Buchanan, Lamar Alexander, Phil Gramm,	January 13, 1996	15,700

²⁵⁷ Note that this analysis covers only five of the seven primary debates—the ones recorded in C-SPAN’s archive. I commissioned a transcript of each debate, and the results should be read with the limitations of such a transcription exercise in mind.

²⁵⁸ This means that words like “tax” would include “taxing,” “taxes,” “taxed,” and so on.

	Steve Forbes, Bob Dornan, Bob Dole		
Arizona State Republican Presidential Candidates Debate	Pat Buchanan, Lamar Alexander, Steve Forbes, Bob Dornan	February 22, 1996	13,000
South Carolina Republican Presidential Candidates Debate	Pat Buchanan, Lamar Alexander, Steve Forbes, Bob Dole	February 29, 1996	11,600
WSBTV Atlanta Republican Presidential Candidates Debate	Lamar Alexander, Pat Buchanan, Steve Forbes	March 3, 1996	11,400

To produce Table 3, which indicates candidate emphasis across policy domains, I used the *weighted percentage* feature the NVivo software offers. This captures the relative proportion of a speaker’s words that a given word represents. This figure ranged from 0%, which occurred when candidates did not mention words at all, to 2.83%--Steve Forbes and the word “tax.” For each word, I calculated the average weighted percentage across all candidates and then plotted each candidate’s relative percentage of that calculated average. For example, if the average weighted percentage of the word “tax” (and its stemmed words) is 1.1% and Forbes’s weighted percentage use of the term is 2.83%, he used the word 258% of the average. Buchanan, who only mentioned taxes .87% of the time he spoke has a result that is 79% of the average, the number reported in the table. For clarity, the chart is colour-coded on a gradient with 0% of the average displaying as red, 100% as yellow, and 500% as green.

Table 3: Debate Analysis Results

	Keyes	Dole	Alexander	Taylor	Buchanan	Gramm	Lugar	Dornan	Forbes
Court	0	0	82	0	511	0	164	0	143
China	0	0	0	0	450	0	0	450	0
Japan	0	0	212	0	371	0	0	318	0
War	0	150	0	0	320	0	80	230	120
Export	0	273	109	0	300	0	218	0	0
Mexico	0	122	97	0	292	0	0	146	243
Trade	0	110	115	126	291	0	88	66	104
NAFTA	0	170	34	136	272	0	0	0	289
Women	0	47	122	216	234	122	0	159	0
Troops	230	0	115	0	230	134	0	0	191
Tariffs	66	0	165	88	220	0	0	0	362
Bosnia	117	0	39	157	176	137	157	117	0

Foreign	48	0	64	64	143	0	502	0	80
Homes	117	65	84	52	136	84	52	188	123
Drugs	0	529	53	0	132	0	0	0	185
Rights	164	83	131	17	129	112	33	168	64
Pensions	0	0	86	543	129	0	0	0	143
Schools	180	30	300	48	126	42	48	0	126
Republican	98	54	223	82	120	73	150	95	5
Business	24	41	61	369	114	53	32	24	182
Union	0	0	90	518	113	0	180	0	0
Flat	0	0	27	102	102	239	71	75	284
Crime	284	237	0	0	95	0	0	284	0
Immigration	0	0	244	0	94	0	0	431	131
Job	15	65	176	196	92	168	90	0	98
Education	109	114	141	0	91	91	105	55	195
Tax	72	88	105	83	79	104	78	32	258
Defense	0	75	90	0	75	195	345	90	30
Border	0	155	83	0	72	0	166	300	124
Character	108	0	0	0	72	0	0	720	0
Washington	152	14	227	147	69	130	22	33	105
Income	215	39	106	31	63	106	184	0	157
Security	45	57	38	30	61	49	442	87	91
Abortion	202	84	126	0	59	227	67	50	84
Cuts	61	71	34	260	46	204	46	24	153
Welfare	133	167	144	256	44	0	89	67	0
Children	0	257	34	0	43	231	0	249	86
Government	293	41	35	147	39	167	65	8	105
Budget	77	157	118	111	29	208	157	22	22
Politician	130	0	0	490	29	0	0	43	209
Balanced	0	212	126	99	29	194	183	31	26
Money	228	87	72	176	26	173	23	66	49
Economy	0	61	24	182	24	0	377	0	231
Bureaucrat	288	0	48	456	24	0	0	0	84
Family	467	64	88	0	20	62	29	115	53
Military	0	100	40	0	0	0	320	240	200
Growth	28	47	90	0	0	33	592	28	81
Corruption	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	338	563
Israel	0	0	212	0	0	0	212	159	318
Bureaucracy	138	0	0	531	0	0	0	0	231
Spending	181	0	43	0	0	521	0	52	103
Criminal	600	0	0	0	0	0	0	300	0
Healthcare	0	0	71	0	0	829	0	0	0

The results do align generally with the first hypothesis, especially given that the candidates were generally responding to the same prompts from the moderators. Buchanan was disproportionately likely to mention terms relating to trade and protectionism. The analysis does not align perfectly with the theoretical expectation, however. Some terms that should have been invoked more frequently by Buchanan like crime, immigration, and the border, were not particularly concentrated with Buchanan. In fact, Immigration—when it did come up in the debates—was largely attributable to Dornan, Alexander, and Forbes. Buchanan only mentioned

it three times. This subject was not especially appealing at all, though, as Dornan only mentioned it four times (albeit in a single debate).

Crime is another area where the results run somewhat counter to theoretical expectations. Buchanan invoked crime and criminals at a lower rate than Keyes, Dole, or Dornan, and drugs less than Dole or Forbes. In fact, he only mentions crime explicitly twice: once in reference to illegal immigrants and what some may do when they cross the border, and the other time in reference to a crime bill, which he said he would veto to bolster gun rights. Buchanan had historically been a proponent of a law-and-order narrative and used his speech at the 1992 convention to call for law and order. By 1994, however, the conversation had changed, and while crime is certainly a common theme in PRR campaigns, it was mentioned infrequently by candidates across the board. It made strategic sense for Buchanan to focus on trade, a clear area of differentiation between Buchanan on the one hand and the conservative establishment and Clinton administration on the other.²⁵⁹

The 1996 nomination contest was not fought over trade or immigration. The animating issues of the day did not include these terms and the candidates were not offered as many opportunities to opine on them as they were on other topics like taxes and the budget.²⁶⁰ For Buchanan, who often chose to invoke his position on trade when asked about taxes or the economy, the results of the analysis reflect his desire to pivot and the lack of interest in following suit among the other candidates. The results clearly indicate that Buchanan was waging a lonely war. Other candidates chose not to mirror his rhetoric, correctly believing that the nomination

²⁵⁹ Stanley, *The Crusader*, 215.

²⁶⁰ In fact, the terms with the highest weighted average across all candidates are the following (in order): tax, job, government, budget, family, cuts, rights, balanced, Republican, Washington, money, security, income, business, spending, flat, education, growth, and trade. The weighted percentages of Buchanan's use of these terms are consistently below the overall average, indicating that the top topics were not subjects he preferred to discuss.

would go to a candidate with an economic focus and more establishment credentials, and Buchanan was left to carry the PRR standard mostly on his own. He was unsuccessful—except in a handful of states including New Hampshire—where he eked out a single point victory over Dole in 1996 (27.2% to 26.2%).²⁶¹ New Hampshire offers a compelling case for analysis, as it is where Buchanan focused his efforts and where he found the most success. The next section evaluates hypotheses two and three in the context of this pivotal primary election.

2.6 New Hampshire Case Study

Hypotheses two and three concern the relationship between issue salience and support, reading “support for PRR candidates should be associated with the salience of their owned issues,” and “PRR candidates should be disproportionately likely to receive support from consumers of media that cover PRR issues and candidates favorably,” respectively. This section reviews Buchanan’s most notable victory and explores how issue salience factored into the campaign using a narrative case study and directly testing the two hypotheses using a regression analysis of an exit poll taken in conjunction with the primary.

Buchanan’s impressive showing in 1996 demonstrated both the power of his personal style of campaigning, and the limits of that approach. Its strong political culture, status as a venue for thousands of stump speeches, political rallies, and town hall meetings for candidates vying for the presidency every four years, along with its relatively small size make New Hampshire an ideal place for retail campaigners.²⁶² In 1996, it was home to a little more than a million people, and it ranks as the 46th-largest state in geographic area. It was also ground zero for the debate about globalization. The postindustrial northeast was hard hit by the economic

²⁶¹ Stephen J. Farnsworth and S. Robert Lichter, "The Manchester 'Union Leader's' Influence in the 1996 New Hampshire Republican Primary," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (2003), 296.

²⁶² Palmer, *The New Hampshire Primary*, 53-56.

changes that confronted the United States in the era of free trade. In these places, resentment brewed, and the free traders behind NAFTA made enemies of displaced workers.

It is therefore no surprise that Buchanan chose to concentrate his campaign there in 1996. The media environment was also uniquely favorable to Buchanan's candidacy. Right up until the 1990s, regional dailies, large papers, but also smaller papers like New Hampshire's own *Manchester Union Leader* served as powerful information gatekeepers. In 1996, it was the only statewide paper.²⁶³ Along with the broadcast networks, early cable news, and some national outlets like *The New York Times*, these local papers formed part of a small set of organizations that filtered information bound for the public with little threat of disintermediation and enormous profit margins.²⁶⁴ This all changed with the rise of the Internet, but in the mid-1990s the quantity and quality of web-based offerings was limited. *The Union Leader* was a powerful force in nomination politics in this pre-Internet era, and its management was never shy about endorsing candidates.²⁶⁵ One commentator, writing in a trade publication, put it this way:

To say that the *Union Leader* of Manchester, N.H. has influenced politics is like saying Michael Jordan has had an impact on basketball. For decades, the statewide daily has trumpeted its political views throughout its news and editorial pages during New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation primary, with impressive results.²⁶⁶

The *Union Leader*, the author suggests, was a tool of William Loeb, and, after Loeb's death in 1981, his wife, Nackey, maintained the paper's independent editorial position. Buchanan's ideological alignment with the *Union Leader* is a key part of the story, especially considering

²⁶³ Ibid., 47.

²⁶⁴ Pablo J. Boczkowski and Seth C. Lewis, "The Center of the Universe No More: From the Self-Centered Stance of the Past to the Relational Mindset of the Future," in *Trump and the Media*, eds. Pablo J. Boczkowski and Zizi Papacharissi (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2012), 178.

²⁶⁵ Palmer, *The New Hampshire Primary*, 98.

²⁶⁶ Joe Strupp, "Primary Colors Paper's Past, but School points the way to an Independent Future," *Editor & Publisher* 135, no. 4 (2002), 12.

how the role of the media in driving issue salience for the PRR in Western Europe is well-established.²⁶⁷

On September 8, 1995, the *Union Leader* endorsed Buchanan in an editorial.²⁶⁸ Nackey Loeb was a friend of Buchanan's and firmly believed in the anti-trade and globalization component of his message. In his victory speech after winning New Hampshire, Buchanan called Loeb his "political godmother."²⁶⁹ He cited the *Union Leader* as the reason for his victory and said as much to the crowd.

There are several reasons for the *Union Leader's* influence. First, New Hampshire is a notoriously libertarian state. Palmer argues that its large population of French Canadians, many of whom left Canada for tax reasons, contributes to its anti-tax, libertarian orientation.²⁷⁰ Consequently, the Republican electorate in 1996 did not busy itself with controversial social positions held by candidates, instead focusing on "trade policies and promises of greater job security."²⁷¹ In other words, Buchanan's position was favorable because the state was especially trade-oriented in its politics. This was the case for reasons of circumstance (industrial blight) and an anti-establishment political culture that empowered the *Union Leader* as a key agenda-setting organization. In fact, according to Palmer, "the power of agenda-setting was, and to a lesser extent remains, the *Union Leader's* greatest weapon."²⁷²

²⁶⁷ Ellinas, *The Media and the Far Right*, 7.

²⁶⁸ "New Hampshire Paper Endorses Pat Buchanan," *Orlando Sentinel*, September 8, 1995, http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/1995-09-08/news/9509080222_1_pat-buchanan-new-hampshire-nackey.

²⁶⁹ Patrick J. Buchanan. "1996 Victory Speech—Manchester N.H." *Patrick J. Buchanan: The Official Website*, February 20, 1996, <http://buchanan.org/blog/1996-victory-speech-manchester-nh-183>.

²⁷⁰ Palmer, *The New Hampshire Primary*, 38-39.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 123.

The *Union Leader* had a small reach. Its 66,250 daily (and 93,768 Sunday) 1996-1997 circulation numbers were “too small to convey much influence beyond the state.”²⁷³ But within New Hampshire, the paper’s influence was real—its coverage positively impacted Buchanan’s standings in tracking polls.²⁷⁴ The paper’s endorsement shaped its Buchanan coverage favorably. A content analysis reveals that in terms of both horserace coverage and editorial evaluations, the *Union Leader*’s messaging was overwhelmingly pro-Buchanan.²⁷⁵

Consistently positive coverage, a focus on Buchanan’s positions, and denigration of the other candidates allowed the *Union Leader* to contribute to Buchanan’s effort. “When the *Union Leader* spoke out in favor of Buchanan on its pages, voters listened.”²⁷⁶ Dole captured the power of the *Union Leader* best when, speaking on his defeat, he said, “I didn’t realize that jobs and trade and what makes America work would become a big issue in the last days of this campaign.”²⁷⁷ The next section reviews voter opinions on the campaign, gathered via exit polls.

2.6.1 Exit Poll Analysis

To evaluate the role issue salience played in the 1996 New Hampshire primary, I conducted an analysis using exit poll data gathered by the Voter News Service from 2556 voters as they left polling places on February 20th of that year.²⁷⁸ While the data was designed to provide horserace-style information for media organizations, it does have some useful variables that can shed light on the salience of issues during the campaign. The theoretical expectation of hypothesis two is simple: Buchanan’s voters should have been more likely to report PRR issues

²⁷³ Stephen J. Farnsworth and S. Robert Lichter, “The Manchester ‘Union Leader’s’ Influence in the 1996 New Hampshire Republican Primary,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (2003), 292.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 299.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 297.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 299.

²⁷⁷ Steger, “Comparing News and Editorial Coverage,” 56.

²⁷⁸ “Voter News Service Exit Poll: New Hampshire” Conducted February 20, 1996. *Roper Center for Public Opinion Research*. Item number: 31098452.

as the most important in making their vote selection. An associated theoretical expectation is dissatisfaction with Republicans in Congress, who did not prioritize PRR issues in the mid-1990s, and effectively endorsed NAFTA and free trade, much to Buchanan's chagrin.

Additionally, per the third hypothesis, we should expect those voters who received their political information from newspapers to be more likely to support Buchanan.

Fortunately, the 1996 exit polls make operationalization of these hypotheses possible. The dependent variable in the below analysis is a voter reporting having supported Pat Buchanan in the primary. To review the predicted correlation between issue salience and vote choice, I include the variable "trade as top issue." This captures the response to the question, "which issue mattered most in deciding how you voted?" Of the seven options, foreign trade is the only one that aligns closely with the standard PRR issue position, and it reflects Buchanan's emphasis during the campaign.²⁷⁹ The third question posed addresses satisfaction with Republicans in Congress. Led by Newt Gingrich, this group prioritized fiscal issues in the *Contract with America* that dominated US politics in the mid-1990s. The variable tested here is derived from the question, "In pursuing their conservative agenda have the Republicans in Congress... not gone far enough, struck the right balance, or gone too far?" The theoretical expectation here is that the Buchanan vote should be inversely correlated with belief that the Republicans in Congress have struck the right balance.²⁸⁰ That belief is captured in the variable "Republicans in Congress balanced." Finally, pollsters also asked voters about their media habits with the question, "where did you get your strongest impression about the candidate you voted for?"²⁸¹

²⁷⁹ The choices presented to voters included environment, foreign trade, taxes, education, economy/jobs, federal budget deficit, and abortion.

²⁸⁰ Note, the theory here does not specify a particular direction for voters' disappointment (whether having gone too far or not far enough), because candidates like Buchanan are multifaceted (more "conservative" on issues like abortion, less so on issues like taxes), and because the question itself does not specify conservative issue positions that the voters might be disappointed with.

²⁸¹ Options offered were friends and family, newspapers, contact with the candidate, radio, and television.

Based on the primacy of the *Union Leader* in New Hampshire primary politics and its outspoken support for Buchanan, per the third hypothesis, we should expect those who received their impressions about candidates from newspapers to break for Buchanan; the “newspaper source for cand. Impression” variable captures voters who received impressions primarily from newspapers.

Several additional control variables are included, including gender (1 if male, 0 if not), age group, education, ideology on a five-point liberal-conservative scale, and 1995 household income. I also included self-identification as an independent and the respondent’s household financial situation (a three-point scale comprising “worse today,” “about the same,” and “better today”). The former variable accounts for those who may have been drawn to Buchanan’s atypical approach to the Republican Party, while the latter variable is included to probe for any role that personal economic anxiety may have played in support for Buchanan as it has in the case of the Western European right.²⁸² The logistic regression results presented below are odds ratios with standard errors in parentheses. Note that two models are necessary, as some of the questions were asked of mutually exclusive audiences. No individual respondent was prompted with both a question about their newspaper consumption habits and a question about the appropriateness of the Republican Congress’s conservative agenda.

Table 4: New Hampshire Exit Poll Logistic Regression

Independent variable	Model 1 - balanced	Model 2 - newspapers
Gender (male)	1.31 (0.22)	1.25 (0.20)
Age group (1-8 [older])	0.89** (0.04)	0.97 (0.04)
Education (1-5 [more educated])	0.78** (0.06)	0.85* (0.07)
Ideology (1-5 [more conservative])	1.99*** (0.19)	2.00*** (0.19)
Household income (1-6 [more income])	0.96 (0.06)	0.83** (0.05)
Party ID Independent	0.58 (0.21)	-
Financial situation (1-3 [worse])	1.04 (0.12)	-

²⁸² Robert W. Jackman and Karin Volpert, “Conditions Favouring Parties of the Extreme Right in Western Europe,” *British Journal of Political Science* 26, no. 4 (1996), 516-517.

Trade as top issue	2.99** (0.95)	4.89*** (1.41)
Republicans in Congress balanced	0.58** (0.10)	-
Newspaper source for cand. impression	-	0.92 (0.68)
<i>Constant</i>	0.11*** (0.05)	0.09*** (0.04)
<i>n</i> count	892	913
Pseudo r-squared	0.10	0.11

Note: * = p < .05, ** = p < .01, *** = p < .001 | Standard errors in parentheses

2.6.2 Results

Those who reported voting for Buchanan were less educated and more ideologically conservative than supporters of other candidates, though gender was not significant in either model. Odds ratios for household income and age group are both less than one, older, wealthier voters were generally less likely to support Buchanan, though neither variable was significant at the 5% level in both models. An additional finding, there is no significant relationship between identification as an independent and support for Buchanan, nor is there such a relationship between voters’ perceptions of their individual financial situations and Buchanan support.

Of the three variables most relevant to the argument, it is indeed the case that those voters who prioritized trade were nearly three times as likely to report voting for Buchanan, significant to the 1% level, providing support for the second hypothesis. It is also the case that those voters who believed that Republicans in Congress had “struck the right balance” in enacting conservatism were .58 times as likely to report voting for Buchanan than for other candidates, a significant relationship at the 1% level, bolstering that support. Finally, the expected relationship between support for Buchanan and primary candidate perceptions coming from newspaper readership does not materialize in the second model. It is both directionally incorrect (odds ratio <1) and statistically insignificant. The next section reviews the findings in the context of the argument.

2.6.3 Discussion

That there is a relationship between voters' perceptions of issue importance (specifically trade) and support for Buchanan is not surprising. Buchanan was the most consistently vocal of the candidates on that subject, and in pounding that drum, he found a receptive audience. His supporters do not appear to have had a more generalized economic angst or to have been in particularly precarious financial situations relative to other candidates' supporters, so concerns about trade represent an important way to differentiate the candidates. In New Hampshire, where Buchanan was able to conduct a retail campaign with support from the local media establishment to a degree that he could not replicate across the country, his ability to "own" the issue of trade and to drive its salience was likely far greater than it would have been in a similar circumstance elsewhere. This finding aligns with the theoretical expectation set out in the review of the issue ownership and salience literature: Buchanan did well with people who agreed with him about the most important issue of the campaign, just as other populist radical right actors have benefited from the salience of their issues.

Similarly, the finding that Buchanan's voters were less likely to think the Republicans in Congress had "struck the right balance" in their conservatism aligns with theoretical expectations. As the case study above illustrates, those Congressional Republicans were far more concerned with federal spending, the budget deficit, taxation, and the economy in general. Theirs was a fiscal conservatism and Buchanan, despite his efforts to link his opposition to free trade and immigration to broader economic themes, was primarily fighting a culture war. The fact that believing Congressional Republicans had taken the correct approach to applying conservative principles aligns well with this interpretation of events in New Hampshire.

Finally, there is the role of newspapers in forming impressions. Based on the primacy of the *Union Leader* in New Hampshire politics, as articulated in this case study, the theoretical expectation is that those who form their impressions of candidates based on newspaper reports should have been more likely to support Buchanan. In practice, however, this was not the case. Why not? There are several possible interpretations. First, it could be that the *Union Leader* was not nearly as influential during the primary season as the existing literature suggests. This explanation is less plausible given the well-documented surge in support for Buchanan in areas where the *Union Leader* had the greatest penetration.²⁸³ A second possible explanation is the preponderance of other newspapers. Despite its role as New Hampshire's most influential paper, the *Union Leader* competed with national newspapers like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, along with local papers based in New Hampshire cities like Nashua and Concord.²⁸⁴ A final explanation concerns Buchanan's activity in the state. His experience in New Hampshire in 1992 and its importance to the national nomination contest as one of the first states to cast ballots, made New Hampshire a critical venue for Buchanan's retail campaign. Barnstorming the state, purchasing advertising, earning broadcast media attention—these all could have contributed to candidate impressions to a greater degree than newspaper reporting.

What is clear is that the data analyzed here do not support arguments about the role of newspapers in facilitating the formation of voters' impressions of candidates. It appears that issue salience matters, but the data presented cannot definitively speak to a specific channel as being the primary driver of ownership and salience during the campaign.

²⁸³ Farnsworth and Lichter, "The Manchester 'Union Leader's' Influence," 294.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 300

2.7 Conclusion

As the Western European example demonstrates, the populist radical right thrives when its issues are salient. From this extensive literature, I derived three key hypotheses. The first is that PRR candidates should be more likely to invoke PRR issues in their public rhetoric. Campaigns are about spreading a message, and the theoretical expectation here is that, rather than fight the campaign on terms dictated by the opposition, PRR candidates should be more likely to invoke their own issues. Second, support for PRR candidates should be associated with the salience of their owned issues. By associating themselves with PRR issues like trade, immigration, and crime, PRR candidates can cultivate issue ownership and should ultimately overperform among voters who share a similar issue priority. Finally, PRR candidates should be disproportionately likely to receive support from consumers of media that cover PRR issues and candidates favorably.

The first hypothesis is largely borne out by the case study. Buchanan disproportionately emphasized concepts relating to trade during the debates, and while the economy and the budget were generally much more important to voters than PRR issues (as evidenced by polling and by the frequency of mentions during the debates), Buchanan insisted on fighting the campaign on his terms. He challenged the consensus on NAFTA, pointed out the regressive nature of Forbes's flat tax, and sounded the alarm about foreign trade practices, but was not able to drive the overall campaign meaningfully towards these issues.

While Buchanan may not have been able to drive salience more broadly, he was disproportionately successful among those who shared his views. The New Hampshire exit poll analysis demonstrates that the core proposition of the second hypothesis is borne out: voters who listed trade as the most important issue in deciding their vote were overwhelmingly likely to

support Buchanan, a self-described trade hawk. Whether because he persuaded those voters to prioritize these views or because he found a natural constituency in displaced industrial workers, the relationship between issue salience and support for Buchanan holds, even when controlling for education, income, and financial situation.

Finally, in the case of the third hypothesis, we cannot reject the null, as there is no evidence that forming candidate impressions primarily based on newspaper reporting in New Hampshire is associated with support for Buchanan. While scholars of the Western European right demonstrate a relationship between the media and the populist radical right,²⁸⁵ and while other scholars document a strong relationship between the *Union Leader* newspaper and support for Buchanan in 1996, the data presented here does not add to the evidence for this phenomenon.

The issue salience argument, derived in part from the European literature on the populist radical right, does appear to have some utility in understanding American primary elections. Just as Western European parties encounter favorable opportunity structures when their issues are salient with the public at large, Pat Buchanan found his support among New Hampshireites who prioritized his primary issue: trade. Despite unique electoral systems, issue landscapes, and political cultures, issue salience does appear to unite Western European and American PRR actors.

²⁸⁵ Ellinas, *The Media and the Far Right*.

Chapter 3: Donald Trump and the Populist Radical Right: Reclaiming the Party?

3.1 Introduction

In 2021, Mitt Romney, the 2012 Republican nominee for president and US Senator from Utah, was booed at a Republican convention in the state after self-identifying as a Republican.²⁸⁶ Romney is far from the only target of such derision. As the populist wing of the Republican Party has been emboldened, more traditional conservatives are maligned as traitors, undermining the Party in the same way that left-leaning Democrats do. The battle for the Party's soul—its definitional principles—has been raging with varying degrees of intensity for many years, but the most notable recent flare-up is Donald Trump's successful bid for the Republican nomination in 2016. As he marched towards victory in 2016, Trump left a battered party in his wake, its political establishment weakened by direct attacks on its up-and-comers who he maligned as insufficiently committed to conservative causes, and its fundamental orthodoxy overturned in the face of a populist vision. That vision more closely resembled the populist radical right (PRR) movement born in Western Europe than the conservatism of George W. Bush, Mitt Romney, or Barry Goldwater.

This chapter aims to bring to bear the insights derived from the voluminous literature on the Western European far right to explore how voters perceive the party establishment figures in PRR campaigns in the United States. Put more specifically, the research questions explored here are as follows: how do American PRR candidates position themselves in relation to the Republican Party? Are voters who believe in party convergence more likely to support PRR actors in Republican primaries? Are PRR voters less likely to identify with the Republican Party?

²⁸⁶ Marie Fazio, "Mitt Romney is Booed by Members of His Own Party," *The New York Times*, May 2, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/02/us/politics/mitt-romney-booed.html>.

The first section of the chapter provides an overview of the literature on convergence in Western Europe and the recent history of Republican factionalism. This is followed by an overview of the theory, hypotheses, and methods. The remainder of the article is a case study of Donald Trump's 2016 bid for the Republican nomination in two parts. The first part is a detailed overview of Trump's approach to the campaign, his attacks on the Republican establishment, and field of candidates he confronted. The second part comprises a regression analysis of exit polls that took place across several states during the primaries. This section gauges the relationship between voter perceptions of betrayal by the Republican Party, identification as political independents, and support for Donald Trump in the primary. This exploration is essential to understanding how the Western European and American cases can be compared, highlighting how the phenomena underpinning the convergence concept may be fruitfully applied in a different institutional context. Ultimately, while Trump did use rhetoric of betrayal and convergence to attack the Republican Party and his fellow Republicans, those who report feeling betrayed by the Republican Party were not more likely to vote for Trump in the primary, nor were they more likely to identify as political independents, findings that contrast with theoretical expectations.

In addressing this argument and these hypotheses, the article proceeds in two parts. First, a case study of Trump's 2016 primary campaign outlines how he positioned himself as an insurgent candidate, using his record of public statements and an account of the campaign to argue that Trump's rhetoric reflected an insurgent argument, in line with expectations about the populist radical right. The second part includes a multinomial logistic regression analysis of a series of exit polls conducted as Republican primary voters left the voting booths across the first

few months of 2016. This section concludes with a discussion on the implications of the findings.

3.2 Literature and theory

In Western Europe, PRR parties often compete in general elections with mainstream conservatives and other issue-based or left-leaning parties. Characterized by populism, nativism, and authoritarianism,²⁸⁷ PRR parties include the French National Front/Rally, the Italian Northern League, and the Dutch Party for Freedom. These parties, anti-establishment by nature, seek to cast their opposition—whether of the left or of the right—in anti-establishment terms. “Mainstream parties and politicians are construed as a homogenous entity that embodies a corrupt status quo.”²⁸⁸ Despite contrasting views on many issues, the differences between the mainstream parties are cast aside: the choice between mainstream parties is illusory, a “choice between Pepsi and Coke,” to use Mouffe’s metaphor.²⁸⁹

There is significant literature on these dynamics in Europe. Kitschelt and McGann argue that ideological convergence between the moderate left and right create favorable conditions for the extreme right, as “established parties fail to attend to a wide uncovered field of more radical right-authoritarian voters who will search for a new political alternative,” labelling convergence as a necessary condition for extreme right success.²⁹⁰ Carter empirically tests this proposition, and finds that “convergence between the mainstream left and the mainstream right is linked to higher electoral scores for the parties of the extreme right,” validating Kitschelt and McGann’s

²⁸⁷ Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 25.

²⁸⁸ Gilles Ivaldie, Mariea Elsabetta Lanzone, and Dwayne Woods, “Varieties of Populism across a Left-Right Spectrum: The Case of the Front National, the Northern League, Podemos, and Five Star Movement,” *Swiss Political Science Review* 23, no. 4(2017), 358.

²⁸⁹ Alice Máselníková, “Chantal Mouffe on post-democracy: ‘It’s like a choice between Pepsi and Coke,’” *The European Strategist*, May 6, 2016.

²⁹⁰ Herbert Kitschelt and Anthony H, McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), viii, 275.

earlier observation.²⁹¹ Art finds a similar relationship in Austria in the 1990s,²⁹² and Betz reports that, in Italy, supporters of the Northern League, were overwhelmingly likely to agree that “the established parties were all the same.”²⁹³ Adding to the evidence for the role convergence plays in Western European elections, Spies and Franzmann find a significant relationship between a reduction in polarization on economic issues among the mainstream parties and the salience of extreme right parties’ preferred issues, driving support for those parties.²⁹⁴

Despite its prominence in the study of Western European right-wing movements, evidence for the convergence narrative is not universal: Bustikova finds no relationship between electoral success and mainstream party convergence;²⁹⁵ Arzheimer and Carter note an inverse relationship between polarization among mainstream parties and the success of right-wing extremist parties.²⁹⁶ Golder outlines this debate as one on the supply side—meaning explanations that focus on the parties/actors themselves rather than the broader political context—and highlights research focusing on the role of party competition.²⁹⁷ Not all scholars focus on this macro level, however: evidence for the importance of convergence extends down to the micro-level as well, with Loxbo demonstrating that short-term support for the Sweden Democrats, an anti-immigrant party, is correlated with voters’ perceptions that mainstream parties immigration policies have converged.²⁹⁸ In other words, convergence need not actually be occurring for

²⁹¹ Elisabeth L. Carter, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe: Success or Failure* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 141.

²⁹² David Art, "Reacting to the Radical Right: Lessons from Germany and Austria," in *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader*, ed. Cas Mudde (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 577.

²⁹³ Hans-George Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe* (New York: St. Martin's, 1994), 49.

²⁹⁴ Dennis Spies and Simon T. Franzmann, "A Two-Dimensional Approach to the Political Opportunity Structure of Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe," *West European Politics* 34 no. 5 (2011), 1061.

²⁹⁵ Lenka Bustikova, "Revenge of the Radical Right," *Comparative Political Studies* 47, no. 2 (2014), 1756. [1738-1765]

²⁹⁶ Kai Arzheimer and Elizabeth Carter, "Political Opportunity Structures and Right-Wing Extremist Party Success," *European Party of Political Research* 45, no. 3 (2006), 439-440.

²⁹⁷ Matt Golder, "Far Right Parties in Europe," *Annual Review of Political Science* 19, no. 1 (2016), 486.

²⁹⁸ Karl Loxbo, "Voters' Perceptions of Policy Convergence and the Short-term Opportunities of Anti-immigrant Parties: Examples from Sweden," *Scandinavian Political Studies* 37, no. 3 (2014), 254.

voters to behave as though it has. Many American elections are filled with this kind of rhetoric, which may impact support for PRR candidates.

3.2.1 *Convergence in the United States*

The American party system is, of course, fundamentally different from its European equivalents. It is dominated at the federal level by two parties, the Democrats, who sit generally to the left of the Republicans, the dominant conservative party. Most political activity in the United States occurs between or within these parties (with some exceptions²⁹⁹), and the battle for a PRR vision of American conservatism now takes place mostly within the Republican Party.

Internecine Republican conflict is therefore more appropriate as a comparator for the Western European PRR: Sides and his collaborators argue that “how Trump beat the odds to secure the Republican nomination is arguably the most important story of the 2016 election.”³⁰⁰ The PRR represents a faction within the Republican Party—focused uniquely on populism, nativism, and authoritarianism, in Mudde’s conception³⁰¹—and its 2016 success in the person of Donald Trump represented a rejection of the establishment, libertarian, socially conservative traditionalist wings of the Republican Party.³⁰²

The recent history of the Republican Party, from 2009 on, is a history of factionalism. The story of the shift from the staid conservatism of Mitt Romney, George W. Bush, and Bob Dole to the fiery, unorthodox populism of Donald Trump is a manifestation of that transition. Blum argues that the most influential factional conflict in early twenty-first century Republican politics was encapsulated in the Tea Party, which emerged as an archconservative, “insurgent

²⁹⁹ Major third-party bids have included Ross Perot’s 1992 and 1996 bids, and George Wallace’s 1968 candidacy for the American Independence Party.

³⁰⁰ John Sides, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck, *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 34.

³⁰¹ Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 22.

³⁰² Sides et. al., *Identity Crisis*, 40-42.

faction” willing to take on the establishment Republicans, even at the expense of general election victories, and that ultimately “paved the way for Donald Trump.”³⁰³ Skocpol and Williamson find that the Tea Party comprised older, white Americans,³⁰⁴ and Karpowitz demonstrates that its advocacy had a meaningful impact on primary elections.³⁰⁵ Crucially, in-line with Blum’s findings, evidence suggests that the Tea Party was far less likely to consider general electability when it endorsed candidates, resulting in Tea Party-backed candidates underperforming candidates endorsed by prominent Republicans (in the cited study, Sarah Palin).³⁰⁶

Whatever its success in endorsing candidates, the Tea Party was a manifestation of the burgeoning ideological conflict within the Republican Party. It used a sophisticated organizational apparatus to push a heretofore fringe brand of conservatism, forcing out top Republicans like House Speaker John Boehner and Majority Leader Eric Cantor, and ultimately rebuilding the Republican Party in its image.³⁰⁷ Candidates and lawmakers were confronted with a vocal base, fuelled by conservative media, that took them to task on issues ranging from the budget, to healthcare, to immigration.

While the Tea Party did lose steam, it did not disappear entirely. As the Tea Party’s ideological successor, Trump declared war on the Republican Party saying, “The Tea Party still exists—except now it’s called Make America Great Again.”³⁰⁸ Many of the same hardline beliefs made the transition from the Tea Party on to the Trump movement.

³⁰³ Rachel Blum, *How the Tea Party Captured the GOP: Insurgent Factions in American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 3.

³⁰⁴ Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 20, 7, 13. See also: Paul Street and Anthony DiMaggio, *Crashing the Tea Party: Mass Media and the Campaign to Remake American Politics* (Boulder: Paradigm, 2011), 9.

³⁰⁵ Christopher F. Karpowitz et. al., “Tea Time in America? The Impact of the Tea Party Movement on the 2010 Midterm Elections,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44, no. 2 (2011), 305-6.

³⁰⁶ Charles S. Bullock III and M. V. Hood III, “The Tea Party, Sarah Palin, and the 2010 Congressional Elections: The Aftermath of the Election of Barack Obama,” *Social Science Quarterly* 93, no. 5 (2012), 1434.

³⁰⁷ Blum, *How the Tea Party Captured the GOP*, 100-101.

³⁰⁸ Tim Alberta, *American Carnage: On the Front Lines of the Republican Civil War* (New York: Harper, 2019), 6.

Does the convergence narrative proffered in Western Europe fit here? I argue that it does apply. First, the populism of Donald Trump spurred a renegotiation of Republican orthodoxy (a definitional characteristic of a faction, according to Blum³⁰⁹), pivoting ideologically from the “three-legged stool” of “fiscal responsibility, social conservatism, and strong national defense,” towards a much more confrontational, grievance-driven focus on PRR issues like immigration and trade.³¹⁰ Backlash is a common theme in much of the explanatory literature on the Trump-era Republican party, paving the way for explanations based on convergence narratives and resulting feelings of betrayal. Hochschild explains the appeal of populism on the right in sociological terms as a function of economic anxiety and an enduring perception (a “deep story”) of social neglect.³¹¹ Other works, like Goldstein’s *Janesville*, explore the enduring consequences of the Great Recession on economic and social life in Middle America.³¹² Norris and Inglehart invoke the language of cultural backlash by social conservatives “who perceive that some of their core values are being eroded,” and argue that “leadership appeals and media cues can activate latent authoritarian attitudes.”³¹³ Meanwhile, Sides and his collaborators focus more narrowly on the 2016 election, finding that a Republican Party out of touch with its base on issues like race and immigration, combined with Trump’s ability to “‘activate’ ethnic identities and attitudes” facilitated his election victory.³¹⁴ Other scholars have focused on specific demand

³⁰⁹ Blum, *How the Tea Party Captured the GOP*, 101-102.

³¹⁰ Alberta, *American Carnage*, 38.

³¹¹ Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New York: The New Press, 2016), chapter 9.

³¹² Amy Goldstein, *Janesville: An American Story* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017), *passim*.

³¹³ Norris and Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash*, 43.

³¹⁴ John Sides, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck, *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 8-9. See also: Alan I. Abramowitz, *The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation, and the Rise of Donald Trump* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 137.

side variables, attributing Trump’s success to authoritarian attitudes, especially prevalent among Republican voters, or to the role of Evangelical voters.³¹⁵

Anxiety about one’s place in the world, the attitudes and priorities of Republican elites, and an opportunity to turn to an outsider who plans to upend the traditional consensus all align with the convergence narrative that is related to populist success in Western Europe. Neither of the major parties (their establishments) offer the correct mix of ideology and emphasis—they have fundamentally “converged”³¹⁶ on issues of importance, leaving the common man to wilt under the pressures of globalization and immigration, and opening up political space for an outsider who challenges this “consensus” to ride the wave of resentment and earn support among this group.

It should be noted that the parties have not converged meaningfully. Lee, for example, argues that magnifying policy differences has become electorally beneficial for the Republicans and Democrats, and that there is significant evidence that modern voters are more likely to identify these differences than voters have historically—with significant prodding from a communications infrastructure operated by the parties designed specifically for this purpose.³¹⁷

Yet as factions vie for the ideological leadership of the Party, it becomes logical to redefine what it means to be Republican. Just as Western European populists dismiss their opponents on the

³¹⁵ Matthew C. MacWilliams, "Who Decides When The Party Doesn't? Authoritarian Voters and the Rise of Donald Trump," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 49, no. 4 (2016), 720. See also: Matthew C. MacWilliams. *The Rise of Trump: America's Authoritarian Spring* (Amherst: The Amherst College Press, 2016); Jake Womick, Tobias Rothmund, Flavio Azevedo, Laura A. King, and John T. Jost, "Group-Based Dominance and Authoritarian Aggression Predict Support for Donald Trump in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election," *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 10, no. 5 (2019), 649-650; Janelle Wong, "The Evangelical Vote and Race in the 2016 Presidential Election," *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 3, no. 1 (2018), 101.

³¹⁶ Note that this is not an argument that the Republicans and Democrats have converged ideologically. If anything, elite polarization is greater than ever. This is an argument that among a certain class of voters, resentment about the Republican Party may be associated with a belief that the Republicans, with their emphasis on the “three-legged stool” at the expense of culture war issues, have abandoned what became the MAGA base and are functionally no different from the Democrats.

³¹⁷ Frances E. Lee, *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 140-142.

left and right as cut from the same cloth, PRR critics of establishment figures turn to attacks, labelling their opponents as insufficiently conservative, and therefore “Republican in name only” (RINOs). A RINO, the argument goes, is no better than a Democrat and should be excised from the Republican Party.³¹⁸ Factional conflict over the soul of the Party inevitably leads to accusations of traitorousness. For those Republican voters on the margins, who may have felt betrayed by an establishment primarily concerned with macro fiscal issues, the betrayal may have felt very real. The remainder of this article is devoted to assessing this idea.

3.2.2 Hypotheses and Methods

This article’s main argument is twofold. First, that as a manifestation of factional conflict within the Republican Party, we expect to find the 2016 campaign filled with attempts by the insurgent candidate, Donald Trump, to renegotiate the Republican consensus in a dramatic and confrontational way, launching vitriolic attacks against his Republican opponents and the Republican establishment. As consensus re-negotiators, insurgent candidates may not even attract party faithful to their ranks—Pat Buchanan’s 1992 bid against incumbent president George H. W. Bush attracted an “angry but unfocused protest vote” that drew support from across the political spectrum.³¹⁹ Animated and characterized by anti-establishment views, PRR actors the world over attack the right as much as they attack the left. Kitschelt and McGann argue that participation in government by moderate conservative parties creates an electoral opening for the radical right, as voters are induced to switch allegiance to new parties seen as more faithful to the cause.³²⁰ In most Western European countries, the vitriol is directed at other

³¹⁸ This metaphor may seem harsh, but it aligns with the rhetoric used by prominent Republicans in campaigns for office. In 2022, Missouri senate candidate and former governor, Eric Greitens, released an ad where he held a long gun and pledged to go “RINO hunting.” See Amy B. Wang, “Greitens slammed for ‘RINO hunting’ campaign ad,” *Washington Post*, June 20, 2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/06/20/greitens-rino-hunting-ad/>

³¹⁹ Busch, *Outsiders and Openness*, 160

³²⁰ Kitschelt and McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe*, 17.

parties; in the American system, attacks are reserved for other conservative actors within the Republican Party. The broader argument here is that PRR candidates should attack elites within their own party without regard for the consequences in the general election. This is a logical extension of the proposition that mainstream or moderate conservatives are the enemy, just as the left is, and a victory for either is damaging to the Party.

The theoretical expectation is that PRR candidates, unencumbered by loyalty to the mainstream political establishment, should use their campaigns to attack their putative allies to an atypical degree. The second component of the argument concerns the voters. Based on the literature cited above, it should be the case that those who feel that the conservative establishment—the Republican leadership—has not addressed their concerns and has betrayed them in favor of an unhelpful issue agenda, should be more likely to support the PRR candidate. The first formal hypothesis derived from this argument reads as follows: those who believe the Republican Party has betrayed them should be more likely to vote for PRR candidates in primaries. If PRR voters are more likely to feel betrayed by Republican Party, it should also be the case that they are less likely to identify with it. A second and related hypothesis is, therefore: political independents should be more likely to report supporting PRR candidates.

3.2.3 Case selection

Donald Trump's 2016 primary campaign is notable because it is the most successful PRR effort in the history of the competitive primary. Fueled by a populist, nativist, and authoritarian agenda, Donald Trump pursued a distinctly PRR vision—Mudde describes his administration as a “radical right dominated coalition.”³²¹ Norris and Inglehart identify him as an authoritarian-

³²¹ Cas Mudde, *The Far Right Today* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019), 97.

populist, along with parties like Austria's Freedom Party, the Belgian Flemish Block, the French National Front, and the Italian Northern League, claiming,

His speeches feature a mélange of xenophobic fear-mongering and Islamophobia, narcissism, misogyny and racism, conspiracy theories ('millions of fraudulent votes') and isolationist 'America First' policies.³²²

In the PRR pantheon, few figures have ascended to such great heights as Donald Trump. His primary victory fundamentally reshaped the Republican Party, and his insurgent campaign continued even after he lost the presidency. The fact that the 2016 nomination contest took place in a year with no Republican incumbent, featured a wide range of competitive candidates (libertarians like Rand Paul, social conservatives like Ted Cruz, moderates like Jeb Bush and John Kasich, and even outsiders like Carly Fiorina), and that the primaries themselves were competitive and decided the nomination, makes it a strong case to examine. The next section is an analysis of Trump's campaign and rhetoric, focusing on how he waged an insurgency against the Republican establishment, upending orthodoxy and ultimately burning a path to the nomination.

3.3 Betrayal Rhetoric and Trump's 2015-2016 Nomination Campaign

Donald Trump, New York businessman and television personality, launched his presidential campaign in June 2015 from his gilded skyscraper in Midtown Manhattan. A political neophyte, Trump's campaign for office was characterized by his irreverence, his disregard for political norms, and his PRR tendencies, best exemplified by his virulent diatribes directed towards immigrants from Mexico and other countries.

Crucially, Trump recognized and exploited fissures within the Republican Party. His policy program was vague in many areas, his political credentials limited, and his rhetoric

³²² Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 235, 245.

caustic. But he was effective at contrasting himself with other candidates—over the course of the primaries and caucuses that took place between February (Iowa) and May (Indiana), Trump set up figures as varied as Jeb Bush, Reince Priebus (the chair of the Republican National Committee), and the entire political establishment (the “swamp”) as convenient foils. He launched aggressive, often unprecedented attacks on his targets, and in the process indicted the political establishment in an often party-neutral way. He was willing to attack his ostensible allies in a bid to redefine what it meant to be a Republican—a textbook insurgent candidate, with a populist flavor.

Populism is a defining characteristic of the PRR, which Trump exemplified in 2016. An important component of any populist’s appeal is “everyman” status. In a quest to become the conduit through which the downtrodden express their anxieties about the world, one might think that a candidate would avoid ostentatious displays of wealth and hubris. Trump took a somewhat different tack. He made his name eschewing an ordinary life. He built his political brand by appealing to voters dissatisfied with elite dominance in politics. Below, I list several prominent examples of Trump’s populist, anti-establishment rhetoric. First, I argue that Trump’s attacks on the Bush family extend beyond normal campaign mudslinging. What Trump attacked on television, at rallies, and TV went beyond his immediate opponent, Jeb Bush. His attacks reflected a fundamental rejection of what had been Republican orthodoxy up to that point, and appealed not to committed Republicans, but to those dissatisfied with the party and its long-held beliefs and practices—renegotiating the consensus to use Blum’s phrase. Second, I argue that Trump’s frequent attacks on the Republican National Committee (RNC), which he successfully invoked as a convenient foil during the primary, served to buttress his insurgent credentials by putting the party’s national organization in the spotlight. Finally, I argue that his ability to paint

Ted Cruz, a reliably conservative senator from a conservative state, as an establishment figure represent the logical extension of the convergence rhetoric that underpins PRR efforts in Western Europe.

3.3.1 *The Bush Family*

Mudslinging during a competitive primary is hardly atypical. Candidates spar on stage, engage in ideological disagreements, and emphasize their differences to attract voters. But an insurgency is more fundamental. When voters have the same “ideal point,” valence issues—where “there is agreement on the ends of politics”—become critically important.³²³ In the Western European context, valence issues are most relevant when major parties converge programmatically on the left-right axis.³²⁴ “Competence and delivery matter more in valence politics than do ideology or sociology.”³²⁵ In the American context, intra-party competitions are logically a home for valence politics, as voters in primaries generally have a lot in common ideologically (demonstrated by their membership of, or interest in, a common political party). What Trump did in 2016 moves beyond traditional valence politics. In attempting to upend Republican orthodoxy, Trump engaged in a hostile takeover. This section focuses on Trump’s initial target during the 2016 campaign, arguing that Trump’s attacks on Jeb Bush represented a stern rebuke of the brand of establishment politics that has become wound up with the Bush name and legacy.

For decades, the Bush family ran as Republican standard-bearers. George H.W. Bush served as president for four years after eight years as Ronald Reagan’s vice president. George W.

³²³ Jane Green, "When Voters and Parties Agree: Valence Issues and Party Competition," *Political Studies* 55, (2007), 629.

³²⁴ *Ibid.* 630

³²⁵ Charles Pattie and Ron Johnston, "Positional Issues, Valence Issues and the Economic Geography of Voting in British Elections," *Journal of Economic Geography* 8, no. 1 (2008), 107-108.

Bush served as Texas governor and as the most recent Republican president. Jeb Bush, as a son and brother of presidents, and a former governor himself, represented an appealing target for Trump as an anti-establishment populist. While Bush campaigned on his economic record in Florida and attacked Trump for “hijacking” the Republican Party, Trump painted Bush’s experience as a liability, attacking Republican orthodoxy in the process.³²⁶

Over the course of the campaign, Trump repeatedly attacked Bush, deriding the former Florida governor as “low energy” and ridiculing his patrician roots.³²⁷ The best illustration of this anti-Bush sentiment came at the debate immediately preceding the South Carolina primary. Considered a must-win for Bush, whose disappointing placement in Iowa and New Hampshire was a threat to his candidacy, defeat in South Carolina would shatter what little momentum Bush eked out of his 10% performance in the Granite State.³²⁸ At the debate, Bush went on the offensive, supported by a friendly crowd. He attacked Trump as “a guy who gets his foreign policy from the shows,” and “insults his way to the nomination.”³²⁹ Later in the debate, Trump attacked George W. Bush’s record on Iraq, calling the war “a big, fat mistake,” and arguing forcefully that “[The United States] has destabilized the Middle East.” Jeb Bush drew applause

³²⁶ Hal Boedeker, “Jeb Bush: Trump ‘hijacked my party’,” *Orlando Sentinel*, February 16, 2016, <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/entertainment/tv-guy/os-jeb-bush-trump-hijacked-my-party-20160216-story.html>.

³²⁷ Ashley Parker, “Jeb Bush Sprints to Escape Donald Trump’s ‘Low Energy’ Label,” *New York Times*, December 29, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/30/us/politics/jeb-bush-sprints-to-escape-donald-trumps-low-energy-label.html>.

³²⁸ Momentum is a constant concern throughout the presidential primary contests. Iowa and New Hampshire are crucial tests of candidates’ electability—or are widely perceived as such—and poor performances in the early states can torpedo otherwise promising presidential campaigns. Bush campaigned extensively in New Hampshire, and his fourth-place finish likely would have doomed his campaign had it not been for his extensive fundraising efforts. For more on momentum, see John Aldrich, “The Invisible Primary and Its Effects on Democratic Choice” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 42, no. 1 (2009), 35. See also, Ashley Parker and Michael Barbaro, “Jeb Bush Bows Out of Campaign, Humbled and Outmaneuvered,” *New York Times*, February 20, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/21/us/politics/jeb-bush.html>.

³²⁹ These quotations (and subsequent quotations from the ninth debate) are drawn from *The Washington Post’s* annotated transcript, published on February 13, 2016, available online “CBS Republican Presidential Debate,” *Washington Post*, transcript, February 13, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/02/13/the-cbs-republican-debate-transcript-annotated/?utm_term=.6293b9fe4be6.

with a defense of his brother's administration. Trump fired back, blaming George W. Bush for 9/11: "The World Trade Center came down during your brother's reign, remember that." The audience in the hall booed Trump; commentators, like *The Washington Post's* Jennifer Rubin, declared the debate a "win" for Bush.³³⁰ But Trump would ultimately go on to win the primary, forcing Bush out of the race. What seemed like a Bush victory to those who attended the debate live or watched it from network command centers was, at best, a death rattle. But more importantly, it speaks to the power of the disaffection that Trump so eagerly sowed by indulging in gratuitous criticism of the Republican Party.

Seemingly without regard for Republican prospects in the upcoming general election, Trump felt no compunctions about viciously attacking his opponents, and in the process attacked George W. Bush, who, nearly a decade out of politics at the time, served as a symbol of an era of Republican orthodoxy on issues like Islamophobia more than a real political target. What is more remarkable, is that Trump was able to do so effectively. This speaks to the power of the dissatisfaction that Trump was able to sow. By dividing the world into two functional categories, the good and bad, the elite and the "silent majority" (a Nixonian phrase, initially coined by Pat Buchanan, that Trump came to embrace), and placing his Republican opponents in the former category, Trump was able to paint himself as the only viable solution to the problems he so frequently raised.³³¹ The Bush family was not his only target, however. He also fervently attacked the party's administrative and fundraising infrastructure: the Republican National Committee.

³³⁰ Jennifer Rubin, "Opinion: The Winners of the South Carolina Debate," *Washington Post*, February 13, 2016. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/wp/2016/02/13/who-won-the-south-carolina-debate/>.

³³¹ Willis Patenaude III, "Modern American Populism: Analyzing the Economics Behind the 'Silent Majority,' the Tea Party, and Trumpism." *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 78 no. 3 (2019), 796.

3.3.2 *Trump and the Republican National Committee*

The Republican National Committee (RNC), which comprises representatives of state party organizations,³³² plays a unique role in American politics. Unlike many other systems, where the *de facto* party leader is also the *de jure* leader, the head of the RNC is unelected, and, while he or she is generally influential, that influence does not rise much beyond administration. The Party's *de facto* leader is very often its highest-ranking elected official, the president—if the party happens to hold power—or, if election time is near, the party's presidential nominee. For example, the *de facto* head of the Republican Party has been Donald Trump since 2016, while Nancy Pelosi (former Speaker of the House) or Joe Biden, who was selected as the Democratic Party's presidential nominee in mid-2020, and has been president since 2021, helmed the Democrats for that period. Jaime Harrison, the DNC chair and RNC chair Ronna McDaniel, command much lower public profiles. At the time of the 2016 election, an attorney, Reince Priebus, served as RNC chair, and in many ways was Trump's primary foil in the campaign.

The RNC serves an important purpose, conducting polls, recruiting candidates nationwide, fundraising, and, at election time, organizing debates, and building “ground game.”³³³ It has historically engaged in political branding operations and has provided services to Republican candidates and organizations.³³⁴ Nomination conventions, where delegates meet to formally select their party's presidential nominee, are also within the purview of the respective national committees, which are responsible for the organization of the primary process

³³² Boris Heersink, “Trump and the Party-in-Organization: Presidential Control of National Party Organizations,” *The Journal of Politics* 80, no. 4 (2018), 1475.

³³³ Ground game is a reference to the party's get out the vote efforts targeted at partisans and potentially friendly independents.)

³³⁴ Boris Heersink, “Examining Democratic and Republican National Committee Party Branding Activity, 1953-2012,” *Perspectives on Politics* (2021), 14.

(including the debates and rules) and therefore serve as process referees. The RNC is also the closest thing to a national party establishment that exists.

The RNC's role as an establishment body made it, along with Priebus, its unassuming chair, targets for Trump's attacks, especially in the early stages of the campaign. Trump refused to pledge to endorse the eventual nominee for president and forgo a third party run when prompted at the first Republican debate. In a memorable exchange with host Bret Baier, who asked the candidates to raise their hands if they would not make the pledge, Trump explained what he thought he owed to the party establishment:

Baier: ...raise your hand now if you won't make that pledge tonight. [Trump raises hand.] Mr, Trump to be clear you're standing on a Republican primary debate stage.

Trump: I fully understand.

Baier: The place where the RNC will give the nominee the nod.

Trump: I fully understand.

Baier: And that experts say an independent run would almost certainly hand the race over to Democrats and likely another Clinton. You can't say tonight that you can make the pledge?

Trump: I cannot say.³³⁵

In refusing to pledge his support for the eventual nominee, Trump "dramatically transgressed... norms of candidate debate behavior."³³⁶ This rift continued through the campaign, right up until Trump won the nomination. In fact, the RNC circulated a loyalty pledge as a strategy to put pressure on Trump.³³⁷ One profile of the RNC chair highlighted the difficulty of his job even after the business of selecting a nominee had been completed: "The presumed Republican nominee [Trump] appears on many days to be at open war with the party that is about to

³³⁵ The first Republican debate took place in Ohio on August 7, 2015, and featured the top nine candidates. This quotation is drawn from the *Time Magazine* transcript of the night's proceedings, which is available online here: "Fox News Republican Primary Debate," *Time*, transcript, August 7, 2015, <http://time.com/3988276/republican-debate-primetime-transcript-full-text/>.

³³⁶ Michael Cornfield, "Empowering the Party-Crasher: Donald J. Trump, the First 2016 GOP Presidential Debate, and the Twitter Marketplace for Political Campaigns," *Journal of Political Marketing* 16, nos. 3-4 (2017), 215.

³³⁷ Robert Costa and Philip Rucker, "RNC asks Candidates to sign Loyalty Pledge, Boxing in Trump," *Washington Post*, September 2, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/09/02/rnc-asks-candidates-to-sign-loyalty-pledge-boxing-in-trump/>.

nominate him.”³³⁸ This section highlights the battles that made up that war, and, in the process, furthers the argument that Trump’s willingness to attack the Republican Party as an insurgent candidate differentiated him.

In July of 2015, less than a month into Trump’s campaign, top RNC officials, including Priebus, underscored the results of the post-2012 Autopsy and urged the wayward candidate to “tone it down” or risk sacrificing the progress made with Hispanic voters.³³⁹ After the 2012 election, the Republican institutional leadership was wary of sacrificing the opportunity to build a future-proof coalition that would better accommodate minority voters. Trump did not acquiesce, instead telling the media that “[Priebus] knows better than to lecture me.”³⁴⁰ Priebus also publicly took issue with a ban on Muslim travelers proposed by Trump, arguing that such a religious test would come “at the expense of our American values.”³⁴¹ Of course, as a writer for *Politico* put it shortly after Trump first made his controversial proposal, “[Priebus and the GOP establishment] must swallow the reality that many self-identifying Republicans prefer Trump’s nativism and bombast to their more mainstream, inclusive style of conservatism.”³⁴² For that reason, the RNC’s criticism of the candidate was relatively tame. In interviews, Priebus was

³³⁸ Mark Leibovich, “Will Trump Swallow the G.O.P. Whole?: Inside the identity crisis roiling the Republican Party,” *New York Times Magazine*, June 21, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/26/magazine/will-trump-swallow-the-gop-whole.html>.

³³⁹ Karen Tumulty, Philip Rucker, and Robert Costa, “GOP Leaders fear Damage to Party’s Image as Donald Trump Doubles Down,” *Washington Post*, July 8, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-could-damage-the-republican-image-party-leaders-worry/2015/07/08/2ec75b4c-25ab-11e5-b72c-2b7d516e1e0e_story.html.

³⁴⁰ Michael Barbaro, Maggie Haberman, and Jonathan Martin, “Can’t Fire Him: Republican Party Frets Over What to Do With Donald Trump,” *New York Times*, July 9, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/10/us/politics/donald-trump-republican-party-debate.html>.

³⁴¹ Politico Staff, “RNC’s Priebus condemns Trump’s Muslim Proposal,” *Politico*, December 8, 2015, <https://www.politico.com/story/2015/12/reince-priebus-trump-muslim-216549>.

³⁴² Eli Stokols, “GOP Struggles to Escape Trump Trap,” *Politico*, December 8, 2015, <https://www.politico.com/story/2015/12/donald-trump-gop-reaction-nomination-pledge-216556>.

generally measured, expressing dissatisfaction with some of Trump's remarks (like a racist comment about a judge³⁴³), while making real efforts to avoid antagonizing the man himself.

This moderate response from an even-tempered party apparatchik did not dissuade Trump. He made the RNC, which he painted for his followers as an enemy, a target of his wrath. Initially, he bristled at efforts to rein him in. Immediately following reports that the RNC had asked him to tone down his rhetoric, Trump quoted a follower on Twitter: "keep up the tempo and don't listen to the RNC! You are correctly presenting what people want."³⁴⁴ In late December of 2015, when the Virginia Republican Party announced that it would require primary voters to sign a "statement of affiliation" with the Republican Party, which would exclude Democrats and independent voters from participating in the election, Trump attacked the local party, and extended his attacks to the RNC as well.³⁴⁵ He again took to Twitter, blasting his disgust with the RNC out to his millions of followers: "It begins, Republican Party of Virginia, controlled by the RNC, is working hard to disallow independent, unaffiliated and new voters. BAD!"³⁴⁶

In fact, over the course of the early campaign, opinion polling demonstrated a substantial decline in support for the party, with Pew reporting an 18-percentage point drop in favorability towards the Republican party reported by self-identified Republicans between January and July

³⁴³ Al Weaver, "Priebus calls on Trump to 'Evolve' on Hispanic Outreach," *Washington Examiner*, June 5, 2016, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/priebus-calls-on-trump-to-evolve-on-hispanic-outreach/article/2593029>.

³⁴⁴ Donald J. Trump. Twitter Post. July 9, 2015, 9:50 AM
<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/619186980799315969>.

³⁴⁵ Andrew Cain, "Trump Blasts Virginia GOP for Requiring 'Statement of Affiliation' in March 1 Primary," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, December 27, 2015, https://richmond.com/news/local/government-politics/trump-blasts-virginia-gop-for-requiring-statement-of-affiliation-in-march-1-primary/article_9c3e822b-45c8-51c7-bec0-cd27e6d15b1f.html.

³⁴⁶ Donald J. Trump. Twitter Post. December 27, 2018. 11:04 AM.
<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/681143660705099776>.

of 2015, directly coinciding with Trump’s entry into the race.³⁴⁷ According to this poll, Democrats did not share this party skepticism. It is therefore entirely understandable that a misleading attack on the establishment, represented by the RNC, would be an effective tactic—a way to appeal to the sense of grievance he sought to cultivate among the voters that made up his base.³⁴⁸ This lines up with findings that suggest support for Trump in the primaries was strongest among those with the least trust in government.³⁴⁹ One example of the sort of vitriol Trump inspired comes from one of the commenters who replied to Trump’s tweet, writing, “Virginians, don’t let #ReincePriebus get away with it!” and attached an image, pictured below as Figure 3, which proclaimed, “The ”PARTY” is over, Reince Priebus.”³⁵⁰

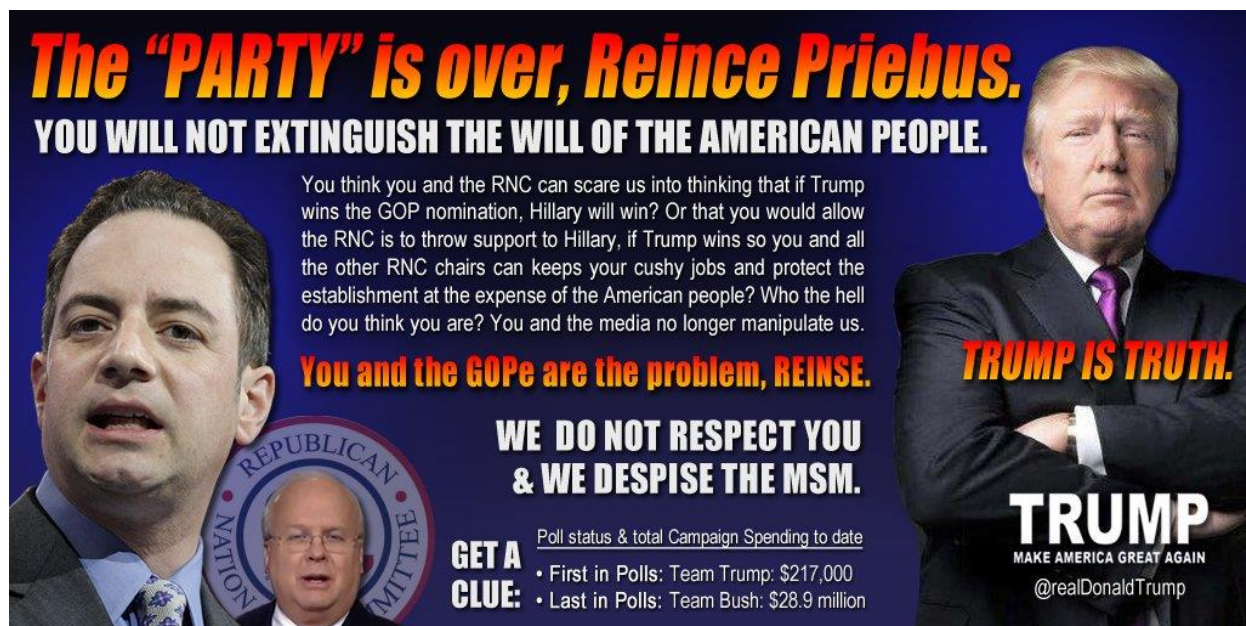
³⁴⁷ “GOP’s Favorability Rating Takes a Negative Turn,” *Pew Research Center*, July 23, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2015/07/23/gops-favorability-rating-takes-a-negative-turn/>.

³⁴⁸ The attack was misleading because by all indications the statement of affiliation was instituted by the State Board of Elections at the request of Virginia’s Republican Party, which is affiliated with the RNC, but is a separate entity. Andrew Cain, “Trump blasts Virginia GOP for Requiring ‘Statement of Affiliation’ in March 1 Primary,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, December 27, 2015, https://richmond.com/news/local/government-politics/trump-blasts-virginia-gop-for-requiring-statement-of-affiliation-in-march-1-primary/article_9c3e822b-45c8-51c7-bec0-cd27e6d15b1f.html.

³⁴⁹ Joshua J. Dyck, Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz, and Michael Coates, “Primary Distrust: Political Distrust and Support for the Insurgent Candidacies of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the 2016 Primary,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51, no. 2 (2018), 355-356.

³⁵⁰ Darren Jordan. Twitter Post. December 27, 2015, 8:49 AM. <https://twitter.com/DarrenJJordan/status/681154835085955072>

Figure 3: An Example of a Trump-Aligned Social Media Account's Attack on the RNC



The attacks on the RNC and the system did not end there, however. After the ninth candidates' debate, which took place immediately before the South Carolina primary on February 13, 2016, Trump accused the RNC of misusing his name in a fundraising email.³⁵¹ Trump issued a matching Tweet as well, writing "The RNC, which is probably not on my side, just illegally put out a fundraising notice saying Trump wants you to contribute to the RNC."³⁵² As the campaign progressed, however, using the RNC as a scapegoat for his concerns with the primary election process more generally, calling it "crooked," "phony," and perhaps most importantly, "rigged."³⁵³ He dismissed the RNC as an enemy as the primary campaign wound down and the "delegate math"—unfamiliar territory for a politically inexperienced real estate

³⁵¹ Sean Sullivan, "Republican Debate: Raised voices, Name Calling and Personal Attacks," *Washington Post*, February 13, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/all-eyes-will-be-on-trump-at-republican-debate/2016/02/13/bd30bae2-d274-11e5-abc9-ea152f0b9561_story.html.

³⁵² Donald J. Trump. Twitter Post. February 13, 2016. <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/698546455309611009> In a subsequent Tweet, Trump called on his supporters to avoid donating.

³⁵³ Peter W. Stevenson, "18 times Donald Trump Complained about Being Treated Unfairly," *Washington Post*, April 19, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/04/19/18-times-donald-trump-complained-about-being-treated-unfairly/>.

developer—began to appear favorable for Ted Cruz. Trump accused the RNC of not supporting him, suggested that the Committee did not want him to win the nomination, and accused the establishment of rigging the primary process against him: “I know the rules very well,” he suggested, “but I know that it’s stacked against me and by the establishment. I fully understand it. We had people out there and they weren’t heard.”³⁵⁴ In an interview with *The Hill* in April 2016, about three weeks before he locked down the nomination with a victory in the Indiana primary, Trump again attacked the primary process, singling out the RNC chair:

It’s a disgrace for the party. And Reince Priebus should be ashamed of himself. He should be ashamed of himself because he knows what’s going on.³⁵⁵

The RNC countered that the situation Trump complained about was normal and that Trump should have familiarized himself with delegate allocation rules in advance of the primaries.³⁵⁶ Trump’s attacks on the Republican establishment are reminiscent of attacks leveled by European populists against their conservative opponents and the party system more generally.

From his public proclamations it is apparent that Trump’s appeals were targeted at right-leaning populist voters who were disillusioned with the party system, even their putative allies, the Republicans. The system’s duality stymied these voters, who, for many years, felt constrained in the primaries by a choice between standard candidates drawn from the legislative or gubernatorial establishment, or fringe candidates with troublesome political associations and little in the way of popular support. The latter group might have said the right things some of the time, but few of these candidates had staying power and viability. For PRR voters, many of their

³⁵⁴ Nolan D. McCaskill, “Trump: RNC Doesn’t Want me to Win,” *Politico*, April 12, 2016, <https://www.politico.com/blogs/2016-gop-primary-live-updates-and-results/2016/04/donald-trump-rnc-nomination-221871>.

³⁵⁵ Bob Cusack, “Trump Slams RNC Chairman, calls 2016 Process ‘a Disgrace’,” *The Hill*, April 12, 2016, <https://thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/presidential-races/276054-trump-slams-rnc-chairman-calls-2016-process-a-disgrace>.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

candidates may have historically been well-aligned ideologically and prioritized the right issues but failed to pass the electability test.³⁵⁷ In the general election, populist conservative voters—who shared many views with mainstream Republicans on key social issues such as abortion and gun rights but may have differed on taxes and deficit spending—were again constrained. This time, the choice was between a clearly unacceptable Democrat, whose election would represent a complete rejection of the worldview, or a mainstream Republican who could be trusted to do the right thing at least some of the time.

A candidate like Trump offered an alternative to this tradeoff. Where other PRR candidates had been successfully cowed by the establishment, Trump offered a viable alternative to the tradition of compromise. Still, the idea that the RNC, the closest thing to a formal conservative establishment in the United States, had aided and abetted the dilution of the brand of PRR politics favored by a segment of the party base sowed disaffection. For this faction within the party, every eventual presidential candidate was a compromise candidate in one way or another.³⁵⁸ The candidacies of Ross Perot in 1992 and 1996 alleviated some of these concerns, but no president since the nineteenth century has belonged to a third party while president or sat as an independent, and membership in a third party proved an obstacle in the 1990s as well (Perot won many votes, but no states).

The only way an outsider can win is by hijacking one of the major parties by coordinating an insurgent faction,³⁵⁹ rallying the populist conservative base from within the Republican Party during the primaries and pulling perhaps reluctant moderate and economic conservatives along in

³⁵⁷ Wayne P. Steger, “Who Wins Nominations and Why? An Updated Forecast of the Presidential Primary Vote,” *Political Research Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2007), 97.

³⁵⁸ While it is true that other factions also experienced this compromise, the Republican leadership’s near exclusive focus on taxes, healthcare, and other more traditional issues gave fiscal conservatives more powerful voice in the party.

³⁵⁹ Rachel Blum, *How the Tea Party Captured the GOP: Insurgent Factions in American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 9.

the general election. George Wallace tried this in 1964 and 1972 but was unsuccessful.³⁶⁰ He was similarly unsuccessful with an independent run in 1968, though he did win several Electoral College votes. When Trump arrived on the scene in 2015, taking advantage of the open primary system that allows millions of Americans to vote in the party primaries, he represented a change.

With his name recognition, an ability to self-fund his campaign without help from Republican donors, and his social media profile, Trump was an electoral force to be reckoned with, even if commentators dismissed him as a sideshow at the time.³⁶¹ He quickly shot to the top of the polls, furthering talk of his viability.³⁶² Moreover, because Barack Obama had handily dispatched both John McCain in 2008 and Mitt Romney in 2012, men with markedly different political approaches and appeals than Trump, neither previous standard-bearer served as a good argument for doing things the establishment's way. In short, Trump was fundamentally an outsider. He sharpened the Party's ideological approach on immigration, showed disregard for establishment policy positions, particularly on healthcare and the economy, and he rose to leadership without ascending through Republican ranks. Trump knew that he would need major party affiliation to win the White House. But he bent the Republican Party to his whims rather than the inverse.

When examined in this context, Trump's attacks on Priebus and the RNC make strategic sense. Trump made the RNC his foil. He correctly understood that attacks on the political establishment and the Republican Party itself had broad appeal, pitting the base against the

³⁶⁰ Wallace ran as a Democrat, a choice that reflected the uneasy Democratic coalition of the 1960s and 1970s between northern liberals and southern conservatives.

³⁶¹ Chris Cillizza, "Why No One Should Take Donald Trump Seriously, In One Very Simple Chart," *Washington Post*, June 17, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/06/17/why-no-one-should-take-donald-trump-seriously-in-1-very-simple-chart/>.

³⁶² Peyton M. Craighill and Scott Clement, "Trump's Popularity Spikes Among Republicans," *Washington Post*, July 15, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/07/15/trumps-popularity-spikes-among-republicans/>.

political establishment. Far from putting out the fire, the RNC's criticism of Trump's campaign and policies merely fueled it. For Priebus and the rest of the RNC, the question of how to criticize a campaign—the fundamental appeal of which is rooted in such criticism—was one they never managed to solve. The RNC, despite its hold on the primary machinery, found itself unable to contain Trump. And once he had clinched the nomination, the party machine backed him. Both Jeb Bush and the RNC served as convenient foils for Trump in 2016. They represented a brand of patrician conservatism that was easy for a populist like Trump to attack. Another candidate, however, cast himself in a different role. Ted Cruz, Texas senator and conservative hardliner, competed for the nomination by attacking from the right. As Cruz's support began to grow, Trump went on the offensive. Understanding Trump's nomination campaign is impossible without addressing how he confronted Cruz, who entered the fray trumpeting his own brand of archconservatism.

3.3.3 *Ted Cruz*

For the PRR, the establishment is the enemy. The Ted Cruz example is perhaps the most powerful illustration of Trump's ability to malign even reliable conservatives as establishment sycophants. Unlike Jeb Bush, Cruz ran unencumbered by an extensive political legacy. Cruz began his political career working on the George W. Bush campaign in 2000, and later served as Texas's solicitor general.³⁶³ He won election to the Senate in 2012 after staging an insurgent campaign against David Dewhurst, a reliably conservative Republican lieutenant governor.³⁶⁴ Cruz ran a very Trump-like campaign in 2012. Berry and Sobieraj point to the Cruz campaign as

³⁶³ Christine Ayala, "As Solicitor General, Cruz Set the Stage for his Presidential Run," *Dallas Morning News*, January 6, 2016, <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/politics/2016/01/06/as-solicitor-general-cruz-set-the-stage-for-his-presidential-run/>.

³⁶⁴ Jeffrey M. Berry and Sarah Sobieraj, *The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and the New Incivility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 177-178.

an example of the outrage-fueled disruption common during the Tea Party-infected election cycles in the period, 2010 to 2014. Cruz and Dewhurst, they point out, had “no ideological differences,” and yet Cruz was able to use the popular conservative media to paint Dewhurst with the establishment brush.³⁶⁵

Joining the Senate in 2013, Cruz wasted no time burning bridges with his Republican colleagues. He led a government shutdown in 2013,³⁶⁶ called the Majority Leader, a fellow Republican, a liar on the Senate floor,³⁶⁷ and failed to garner any support from his Senate colleagues early in his presidential campaign.³⁶⁸ Fellow Republican senator (and 2016 presidential candidate) Lindsey Graham once joked, “If you killed Ted Cruz on the floor of the Senate, and the trial was in the Senate, nobody would convict you.”³⁶⁹ While Graham did later apologize for these remarks, they captured the overall attitude of Cruz’s Senate colleagues towards his legislative and executive ambitions. Candidate Trump even attacked Cruz for his lack of Senate support. At the CNN-Telemundo debate in Arizona in February 2016, Trump’s attacks on Cruz seemed only to buttress Cruz’s case for outsider status:

You get along with nobody. You don't have one Republican -- you don't have one Republican senator, and you work with them every day of your life, although you skipped a lot of time. These are minor details. But you don't have one Republican senator backing you; not one. You don't have the endorsement of one Republican senator and you work with these people. You should be ashamed of yourself.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ David A. Farenthold and Katie Zezima, “For Ted Cruz, the 2013 Shutdown was a Defining Moment,” *Washington Post*, February 16, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/how-cruzs-plan-to-defund-obamacare-failed--and-what-it-achieved/2016/02/16/4e2ce116-c6cb-11e5-8965-0607e0e265ce_story.html.

³⁶⁷ Mike DeBonis, “Ted Cruz calls Mitch McConnell a Liar on the Senate Floor,” *The Washington Post*, July 24, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/07/24/ted-cruz-calls-mitch-mcconnell-a-liar-on-the-senate-floor/>.

³⁶⁸ Burgess Everett and Seung Min Kim, “As Cruz gains GOP Senators rally for Rubio,” *Politico*, November 30, 2015, <https://www.politico.com/story/2015/11/ted-cruz-marco-rubio-gop-senators-support-2016-216195>.

³⁶⁹ Rebecca Savransky, “Graham Apologizes for Calling for Cruz’s Murder,” *The Hill*, January 12, 2017, <https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/313969-graham-to-cruz-i-want-to-apologize-to-ted-for-saying-he-should>.

³⁷⁰ This quotation is drawn from *The Washington Post*’s annotated transcription of the event, published February 25, 2016, and available online here: “CNN-Telemundo Republican Debate,” transcript, *Washington Post*, February 25, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/02/25/the-cnntelemundo-republican-debate-transcript-annotated/?utm_term=.950bbc062e89.

Trump and Cruz ultimately had different constituencies, with Trump aggressively courting the populist vote, seeming to back initiatives that would expand the role of government in areas like healthcare and trade, while Cruz was more of a hardliner on these and other issues.³⁷¹ But Cruz's canny ability to court an appreciable segment of the more conservative faction and outlast all but two of his opponents set him up for conflict with Trump.

Trump's attacks on Cruz typified one of his most important campaign strategies: divide the world into two oppositional groups ("us and them," an inherently populist distinction) and relegate all of his political opponents, Republicans, Democrats—anyone who denounced his candidacy—as "them." Trump often chose to frame this conflict through discussion of immigration. In the run-up to the South Carolina primary in February 2016, Trump ran an ad accusing Cruz of supporting amnesty for illegal immigrants.³⁷² This is misleading as Cruz had never supported "amnesty." He did introduce amendments to the original "Gang of Eight" bipartisan bill in 2013 that would have provided for legal status for some illegal immigrants with no pathway to citizenship in exchange for substantial concessions from Democrats on border security, in what he later called an attempt to introduce a poison pill that would sabotage the bill.³⁷³ Cruz presented himself as an immigration hardliner—and credibly so. Unconcerned with this context, Trump forged ahead with his critique and was able to start a conversation about how

³⁷¹ Trump frequently suggested expanding government programs in contravention of Republican orthodoxy. See: Robert Costa and Amy Goldstein, "Trump vows 'Insurance for Everybody' in Obamacare Replacement Plan," *Washington Post*, January 15, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-vows-insurance-for-everybody-in-obamacare-replacement-plan/2017/01/15/5f2b1e18-db5d-11e6-ad42-f3375f271c9c_story.html; Dan Mangan, "Trump asked 'Why can't Medicare simply cover everybody?' before pushing Obamacare Repeal," *CNBC*, January 5, 2018. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/01/05/trump-asked-why-cant-medicare-simply-cover-everybody.html>. On trade see Manu Raju, "The GOP's 2016 Trade Divide," *Politico*, June 23, 2015, <https://www.politico.com/story/2015/06/the-gops-2016-trade-divide-119350>.

³⁷² Michelle Ye Hee Lee, "Donald Trump attacks Ted Cruz by Repeating False Claims about Illegal Immigration," *Washington Post*, February 15, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2016/02/15/donald-trump-attacks-ted-cruz-by-repeating-false-claims-about-illegal-immigration/>.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

an anti-immigration hardliner was actually a closeted dove aligned with the party establishment against ordinary people.³⁷⁴ In other words, Cruz was in cahoots with the Republican establishment and—by extension—the Democrats. The addition of a nickname—“Lynin’ Ted”—was also a unique characteristic of the campaign.³⁷⁵

Another focus of Trump’s ire was Cruz’s relationship with major banks. Cruz’s wife worked for Goldman Sachs, and the bank gave the Cruz family a low interest loan that the candidate failed to properly disclose.³⁷⁶ The Cruz family also took out a similar loan from another major bank. All told, it was a relatively minor oversight, but it allowed Trump to paint Cruz as an opportunist who would criticize Wall Street’s excesses, while quietly accepting its money. In the run-up to the Iowa Caucuses, Trump used news of the loans as a cudgel, repeatedly suggesting that they made Cruz an illegitimate candidate. In January 2016, for example, he tweeted, “Was there another loan that Ted Cruz FORGOT to file. Goldman Sachs owns him, he will do anything they demand. Not much of a reformer!”³⁷⁷

The suggestion that the large financial institutions run by coastal elites held sway over Cruz represented yet another effort by Trump to paint the Texas senator as a member of the political elite. Trump also tried to paint Cruz as a liberal, pushing the party convergence narrative, when he attacked Cruz for supporting John Roberts’s ascension to the Supreme Court, tweeting “Just a reminder that Ted Cruz supported liberal Justice John Roberts who gave us #Obamacare.”³⁷⁸ Again, whether this allegation was actually true (Roberts was hardly a “liberal”

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Gard D. Bond, et al, “‘Lynin’ Ted’, ‘Crooked Hillary’, and ‘Deceptive Donald’: Language of Lies in the 2016 US Presidential Debates,” *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 31, no. 6 (2016), 668.

³⁷⁶ John Cassidy, “Ted Cruz’s Goldman Sachs Problem,” *New Yorker*, January 14, 2016, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/john-cassidy/ted-cruzs-goldman-sachs-problem>.

³⁷⁷ Donald J. Trump. Twitter Post. January 16, 2016. 3:52 AM. <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/688328034651361280>

³⁷⁸ Donald J. Trump. Twitter Post. January 18, 2016. 6:50 AM. <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/689097594182725632>

justice, and Cruz was not a liberal senator) is immaterial. When Trump tweeted it, his intention was to position Cruz as more of the same—a liberal who would not effectively execute on the policy program favored by the PRR. In effect, Trump was making the argument that a vote for Cruz was effectively the same as a vote for a Democrat. For those voters concerned about immigration, economic nationalism, and similar issues, a Cruz victory would be a disastrous continuation of the *status quo*.

In pushing back against Trump’s efforts to paint him as a tool of the establishment, Cruz targeted Trump’s putative “outsider” persona, holding up the longtime real estate developer’s political donations to Democrats over the years. This, Cruz argued, is evidence as his “insider” status, and as a Trump victory became more likely, Cruz stepped up his efforts.³⁷⁹ But these attacks were too little, too late—at least in part because of a miscalculation on Cruz’s part. His approach to the surge of support for outsiders in 2016 was to avoid going on the attack. As Trump and Ben Carson—a retired neurosurgeon with a solid medical reputation and a history of fierce criticism of Barack Obama—gained popularity, Cruz avoided criticizing them. Instead, he remained cordial, hoping to pick up their voters when their campaigns veered off track. As one journalist points out, this was ineffective, and, in the process, “Cruz did more than any other Republican to validate the reality-TV star as a true conservative.”³⁸⁰

This was Cruz’s fatal error. Donald Trump was no insider. While Trump was attacking Cruz as an establishment patsy, Cruz held his tongue, contributing to the critique’s legitimacy. He realized far too late that Trump’s campaign would not wilt in the face of media or voter

³⁷⁹ Patrick Healy and Jonathan Martin, “In Republican Debate, Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio Wage Urgent Attacks on Donald Trump,” *New York Times*, March 3, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/04/us/politics/republican-debate.html>.

³⁸⁰ Ryan Lizza, “Can Ted Cruz Beat Donald Trump on Conservative Principles?” *New Yorker*, February 14, 2016, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/can-ted-cruz-beat-donald-trump-on-conservative-principles>.

scrutiny. Cruz, an experienced political operative, confronted Trump like he would any other political candidate in a Republican primary. Cruz attempted to “out-conservative” his opponents, picking apart policy positions, pointing out liberal ideas, and suggesting Trump would bring “New York values” to Washington.³⁸¹ None of this worked because Trump was fundamentally unlike any other candidate. He was not appealing because he was more conservative, or because he had a better record on policy. He talked about the right things—went “hunting where the ducks are,” to use Sides et. al.’s phrase. Critically, “what changed in 2016 was not so much the voters, but the choices they were given.”³⁸²

While it is true that Trump’s politics were not as conservative as Cruz’s on many issues like Medicare, Social Security, and other entitlements, this did not hamper Trump for three reasons. First, not all Republicans are “very conservative,” though many are. As the analysis below demonstrates, Trump’s base of support was not among the most extreme conservative primary voters, measured by self-identification. Second, talk of tax and entitlement reform did not get to the heart of the issues that the populist conservative contingent cared about. The movement is not focused on economic issues. Finally, and perhaps most important, Trump was able to change the terms of the debate. It did not matter that he expressed support for Planned Parenthood, the women’s health organization widely despised on the right for the abortion services it provides.³⁸³ It did not matter that he donated money to Democrats and waved it off by saying, “I got along with everybody.”³⁸⁴ Trump successfully made the campaign a battle for the

³⁸¹ Marc Santora, “New Yorkers Quickly Unite Against Cruz After ‘New York Values’ Comment,” *New York Times*, January 15, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/16/nyregion/new-yorkers-quickly-unite-against-cruz-after-new-york-values-comment.html>.

³⁸² John Sides, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck, “Hunting where the Ducks Are: Activating Support for Donald Trump in the 2016 Republican Primary,” *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 28, no. 2 (2018), 136.

³⁸³ Eliza Collins, “Trump backs off Planned Parenthood Defunding Push,” *Politico*, August 11, 2015, <https://www.politico.com/story/2015/08/donald-trump-backs-off-push-defund-planned-parenthood-121267>.

³⁸⁴ Nick Gass, “Donald Trump was for the Clintons before he was against Them,” *Politico*, December 29, 2015, <https://www.politico.com/story/2015/12/donald-trump-hillary-bill-clinton-relationship-217191>.

Republican Party's direction. And like his more moderate colleagues, John Kasich and Marco Rubio, who were perhaps much easier to malign, Ted Cruz ended up in the establishment camp.

3.3.4 Discussion

An insurgent candidate is characterized by a willingness to aggressively renegotiate the party consensus, per Blum's framework. Trump's 2016 campaign fit this definition such that, despite being "neither the most Republican Republican nor the most conservative conservative in the field,"³⁸⁵ he was nevertheless able to capture a plurality of votes—winning the nomination and effectively capturing the Republican Party. His redefinition of the Republican Party resonated with voters and years later MAGA Republicanism remains the dominant strain, such that Republican figures like Mitt Romney and Mitch McConnell are derided as "Republicans in Name Only." If Trump was able to successfully rebrand the Republican Party establishment, it is logical that he should have received more support from those who felt that the Party, under its faltering leadership, has betrayed them. It is to that question, and to the question of party identification, that we now turn.

3.4 Betrayal and Independence: Support for Donald Trump

Donald Trump's campaign was rooted fundamentally in his embrace of PRR ideas. As part of his populist appeal, Trump attacked the political establishment, a nebulous concept that, in his view, included both the Democrats and craven Republicans who, when push came to shove, would not stand up for the party's base and values. As demonstrated in the literature review, the idea that the mainstream parties have ideologically converged is an important consideration when theorizing about the success of the Western European PRR. This inspires

³⁸⁵ David Fortunato, Matthew V. Hibbing, and Jeffery J. Mondak, "The Trump Draw: Voter Personality and Support for Donald Trump in the 2016 Republican Nomination Campaign," *American Politics Research* 46, no. 5 (2018), 789.

two hypotheses. First: those who believe the Republican Party has betrayed them should be more likely to vote for PRR candidates in primaries. Second: political independents should be more likely to report supporting PRR candidates. To test these hypotheses, I use a multinomial logistic regression of exit polls taken during the primaries, comparing support for Trump with support for Ted Cruz and for other candidates (Kasich, Rubio, etc.) and controlling for a variety of theoretically relevant factors.

3.4.1 Method and Operationalization

While general logistic regression is preferable when analyzing dichotomous variables, multinomial logistic regression is a suitable method for making predictions based on nominal variables with unordered outcomes.³⁸⁶ This method has the benefit of efficiency over running multiple binomial models, producing better specified results in relation to a base (reference) category, and the relative risk ratios produced (as displayed in the table below) can be interpreted in much the same way as odds ratios.³⁸⁷ A relative risk ratio (RRR) greater than 1 indicates increased likelihood of the dependent variable occurring in the case of exposure to an independent variable. The inverse, an RRR less than one, is an indication of a reduced likelihood of the dependent variable occurring with exposure to the independent variable. In all cases here, the hypotheses suggest an RRR that should be significant and greater than 1, indicating a positive effect of the independent variable on support for Trump or Cruz relative to other candidates, the dependent variables captured in the model below.

The model is built around exit polls conducted as respondents left polling stations in 26 states, starting with Iowa on February 1, 2016, and ending in Indiana on May 3, the last

³⁸⁶ John P. Huffman, *Regression Models for Categorical, Count, and Related Variables: An Applied Approach* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 111.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 113-116

contested primary. These polls were conducted by Edison Research on behalf of a media consortium, the “National Election Poll Pool,” which comprised ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, Fox News, and the Associated Press. The dataset, acquired from the Roper Center at Cornell University, includes the results of 25 primaries and a single caucus, totaling some 37,944 respondents who voted for Republicans.³⁸⁸ Not all questions were asked in all surveys, so the number of observations included in the analysis below is considerably lower than the total number of responses collected.

The dependent variable is support for the candidates. It is based on the exit poll results, is the responses to the prompt, “In today’s Republican presidential primary, did you just vote for: [Trump, Cruz, or someone else].” Seven control variables are included in this model as well. Age is a continuous 1-8 scale ranging from 17-24 to 65+. Sex is also included, operationalized dichotomously here as whether the respondent self-identified as male. This is in line with research on the European PRR, which has been a consistently gendered phenomenon.³⁸⁹ Defined as it is by nativism, the PRR should be more appealing to those in the majority group. Race is therefore operationalized here as respondents’ racial self-identification. The variable captures those respondents who self-identified as white. Education is another control variable. Trump famously appealed to marginalized Republicans, once proclaiming that he “loves the poorly educated,” and educational attainment has historically had a strong relationship with voting the extreme right in Europe.³⁹⁰ It is captured here as a four-point scale ranging from high

³⁸⁸ The exit polls used here are available from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research at the University of Cornell. I combined the 26 datasets for the purposes of the analysis here, and the numbers reflect the amalgamated dataset I compiled.

³⁸⁹ Terri E. Givens, “The Radical Right Gender Gap,” in *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader*, ed. Cas Mudde (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 292.

³⁹⁰ Josh Hafner, “Donald Trump loves the ‘Poorly Educated’—and They Love Him,” *USA Today*, February 24, 2016, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/onpolitics/2016/02/24/donald-trump-nevada-poorly-educated/80860078/>; Kai Arzheimer, “Electoral Sociology--Who votes for the Extreme Right and Why--and When?” in *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader*, ed. Cas Mudde (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 284.

school or less to postgraduate study. Whether or not a respondent self-identified as an Evangelical Christian is also included here.

The final two control variables in the exit poll model are conservatism, which is a four-point scale ranging from “liberal” to “very conservative,” and the month that the primary occurred. The month is relevant because the dataset examined here has been aggregated across several different exit polls that occurred after different elections between February and May. It controls for the narrowing of the field as the Republican candidates dropped out.

Another set of variables capture the answer to the following question: “which one of these four issues is the most important facing the country?” The options presented are limited and include immigration, economy/jobs, terrorism, and government spending. The theoretical expectation is that those Republican voters who perceived immigration to be more important issues than the economy and government spending should be more likely to support Trump, based on his particular appeal.³⁹¹ Presumably, given that the differentiator for Trump was his distinct appeal on a key subset of issues—particularly immigration—when presented with a choice, those who believed that immigration was the most important issue should have been more likely report supporting him (see chapter 2 for exploration of the salience argument).

As a corollary, those primary voters who were more concerned with economic issues should have been more likely to support other candidates—chief among these the “other” category of candidate, which includes Marco Rubio and John Kasich. It should also be the case that economically-inclined voters were more likely to support Cruz, who tweeted in the final days of the campaign, “My number one priority is bringing back jobs and economic growth.”³⁹²

³⁹¹ Note that including all four variables is not possible because of collinearity. I ultimately elected to include immigration, as Trump’s signature issue, government spending as a contrasting issue, and the economy for its general importance to the population.

³⁹² Ted Cruz. Twitter Post. April 26, 2016, 7:56 PM <https://twitter.com/tedcruz/status/725111437543247874>

Trump, of course, also made a show of his commitment to this plank of the Republican platform, but either did so disingenuously (i.e. promising cuts while also promising maintained or expanded services) or through other mechanisms like immigration enforcement, consistently linking immigration with competition for American jobs.³⁹³ Other independent variables include “economy/jobs” for those who prioritized those issues, and “government spending” for those who prioritized the government’s debt and spending.

To operationalize the first hypothesis, I include the response to the question, “Do you feel betrayed by the Republican Party?” captured below in the variable “Betrayed by Rep. Party” as a dichotomous variable. It appears that pollsters were looking to plumb discontent within the Republican ranks. The observable implication of the hypothesis is that Trump’s supporters should be more likely than Cruz or “other” supporters to feel betrayed by the party, due in part to Trump’s attacks on the RNC and Republicanism more generally. Cruz, as a candidate with some anti-establishment *bona fides*, should have had support among this group, while the “other” category, mainly comprising Rubio and Kasich supporters, should have the least support.

Independent identification is also relevant and comprises the second hypothesis. If voters bought Trump’s attacks, it should be the case that they would be less likely to self-identify as Republicans. Pollsters asked respondents how they identified politically—whether they were Republicans, Democrats, independent, or “something else.” This is captured below as “Party ID (independent).” The theoretical expectation here is that PRR voters should be more likely to report identifying as independents or otherwise outside of the political mainstream. Because the

³⁹³ Aaron Blake, “Trump warns GOP on Immigration ‘They’re taking your Jobs’,” *The Washington Post*, March 6, 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2014/03/06/trump-warns-gop-on-immigration-theyre-taking-your-jobs/>; Katie Glueck, “Lindsey Graham throws Support to Ted Cruz,” *Politico*, March 17, 2016, <https://www.politico.com/blogs/2016-gop-primary-live-updates-and-results/2016/03/lindsey-graham-endorses-ted-cruz-220932>.

prominent “other” candidates, particularly Ohio governor John Kasich, embraced their relationships with the Republican Party to a degree much greater than Trump or Cruz, it stands to reason that those who identified as Republicans would be more likely to support candidates in that category who have traditionally carried the Republican standard. Trump’s supporters, based on the hypothesis, should have been less likely to identify as Republicans, given their candidates’ frequent invocations against the party establishment.

3.4.2 Results

The results generally do not align with the hypotheses. Compared to the reference category of “other voters,” Trump’s supporters were slightly older, more likely to be male, white, and had less education, as expected. Trump’s voters were also somewhat more conservative than those who supported the “other” group, but significantly less conservative than Cruz supporters in general, again, in-line with the theory. The “month” variable is also significant and substantial—as the campaign progressed and candidates dropped out, the remaining candidates accrued a greater proportion of the remaining votes, an effect more pronounced for Cruz, who emerged as the strongest alternative to Trump in the closing days of the campaign.

On the issues, both Trump and Cruz supporters were more likely to prioritize immigration, suggesting that Cruz’s attempt to present himself as tough on immigration was somewhat effective, though the effect is much stronger for Trump supporters—those who prioritized immigration were 2.35 times as likely to report supporting Trump versus the “other” candidates, while the same number is 1.64 times for Cruz. This aligns with expectations (and the result in chapter 2). Both Trump and Cruz supporters were more likely to be white than other candidates’ supporters, but only Cruz disproportionately attracted evangelicals. The economy/jobs and government spending are not significant predictors of support for Trump or

Cruz relative to the “other” category, though the findings are directionally correct (in Cruz’s case, he emphasized spending and the RRR is greater than 1).

Table 5: Multinomial Logistic Regression--Support for Trump and Cruz vs. Other Candidates

Independent variable	Trump vote	Cruz vote
Age	1.04* (0.02)	0.93*** (0.02)
Sex	1.46*** (0.11)	1.05 (0.09)
Race (white)	1.79*** (0.28)	1.76*** (0.30)
Education	0.64*** (0.03)	0.81*** (0.04)
Evangelical	1.11 (0.09)	1.41*** (0.13)
Conservatism	1.19*** (0.06)	2.23*** (0.13)
Month	3.16*** (0.22)	3.88*** (0.28)
Immigration	2.35*** (0.37)	1.64** (0.28)
Economy/jobs	0.91 (0.09)	0.85 (0.09)
Government spending	0.83 (0.08)	1.23 (0.13)
Betrayed	1.08 (0.09)	1.25** (0.11)
Party ID (independent)	1.02 (0.09)	1.20 (0.12)
<i>Constant</i>	0.06*** (0.02)	0.00*** (0.00)
<i>n</i> count	4577	
Pseudo r-squared	0.11	

Note: * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

Standard errors in parentheses

The most interesting finding relates to the betrayal question. The hypothesis suggests that Trump, who attacked the Republican Party, its orthodoxy, and its luminaries with an unparalleled enthusiasm, should have performed disproportionately well among those voters who felt betrayed by the party. This does not appear to have been the case, however. Those who felt betrayed by the Republican Party were more likely to support Ted Cruz (by 1.25 times). The results indicate that there was no relationship between betrayal and support for Trump, the most prominent PRR candidate. The results are similar for the second hypothesis. Identification as an independent is not significant in either case, bucking the theoretical expectation that Trump’s supporters should be disproportionately likely to identify as something other than Republicans.

In fact, the RRR is both insignificant and insubstantial in magnitude at 1.02. We therefore cannot reject the null hypotheses in either case.

3.4.3 Discussion

Despite Trump's rhetoric about the role of the Republican Party establishment in subverting the will of the people, his support was not disproportionately concentrated among those who felt betrayed by the party. In the years since his primary victory, Trump and his allies have captured the Republican Party, effectively shaping the party in his image, and sidelining traditional Republicans like 2012 presidential nominee Mitt Romney. But in 2016 the Party was very much in the throes of a reckoning—Trump was not yet “the establishment,” even if he would one day be Republican kingmaker. Why did Ted Cruz, who represented the last and most serious resistance to Trump's nomination bid, have a constituency among the betrayed that Trump could not muster?

There could be several reasons for this. First, it is entirely possible that as the campaign progressed and Trump continued to gather more of the vote, his supporters may have felt that they had successfully captured the Republican Party. Recall that for many years the Republican mainstream endorsed smaller government, low tax rhetoric to the exclusion of many other issues. These voters, concerned about immigration above all else, may well have been pleased with the party's general change in tone on immigration to favor more hardline policy positions. Rather than feeling betrayed by the party, they may have felt that, with Trump's ascendance, the party was finally listening.

During the 2016 campaign, some Trump supporters attacked Republican politicians who refused to support the self-described outsider as a RINO (a pejorative short for “Republican in

Name Only”).³⁹⁴ By the time he entered office in early 2017, Trump had so perverted Republicanism that a major supporter, Lou Dobbs of *Fox Business*, attacked Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan for his opposition to a budget deal Trump had cut with the Democrats.³⁹⁵ Trump’s uncanny ability to galvanize the PRR faction within the Republican Party base appears to have heralded a dramatic shift in perceptions of Republican ideas, cementing his ideological leadership, even if this made some of his new colleagues in Washington uncomfortable.³⁹⁶ In other words Trump may have been the purest vision of Republicanism for the PRR base, a redeemer rather than a true outsider.

An additional possible explanation for this finding is that many who may have felt betrayed by the Republican Party—particularly those who identified as more conservative—did find a candidate they liked: Ted Cruz. Cruz had done little to ingratiate himself with the Washington establishment and may have seemed to be more of an outsider to the rank-and-file Republicans who ultimately made up his base. Even Trump, who attacked the Party with as much gusto as any candidate, acknowledged Cruz’s unpopularity with his colleagues. Of Cruz he said, “Nobody likes him. Nobody in Congress likes him. Nobody likes him anywhere once they get to know him.”³⁹⁷ Trump, who pitched himself as a dealmaker and bragged about how he “[gets] along with everybody,” attacked Cruz for his inability to get along with even Republican

³⁹⁴ Dan Freedman, “Elise Stefanik won't say Donald Trump's name, but pledges GOP Loyalty,” *The Times Union*, May 5, 2016, <https://www.timesunion.com/tuplus-local/article/Elise-Stefanik-won-t-say-Donald-Trump-s-name-but-7396796.php>. Carl Paladino, a New York gubernatorial candidate, attacked as a RINO a Republican representative for her unwillingness to explicitly endorse Donald Trump.

³⁹⁵ Conor Friedersdorf, “The RINO Hunters Become the Hunted,” *Atlantic*, September 7, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/09/the-rino-hunters-become-the-hunted/539067/>.

³⁹⁶ Kyle Dropp and Brendan Nyhan, “Republicans Have One Big Incentive to Stick With Trump,” *New York Times*, January 30, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/30/upshot/republicans-have-one-big-incentive-to-stick-with-trump.html>.

³⁹⁷ Jose A. Del Real, “Trump on Cruz: ‘Nobody likes Him’,” *Washington Post*, January 17, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/01/17/trump-on-cruz-nobody-likes-him/>.

colleagues.³⁹⁸ Antipathy towards Cruz by the Republican establishment class may well have bolstered his support among those dissatisfied with the Party but holding conservative views on the economy and the role of government.

Contrary to my theoretical expectations, identifying as an independent was not a significant predictor of Trump support, though it did, again, have a positive association (though just barely insignificant) with Cruz support. This may be explained by Cruz's roots in the Tea Party movement, which was animated not by PRR concerns, but primarily by fiscal conservatism, and whose membership were far more likely to report eschewing party labels.³⁹⁹ There is also the compelling challenge of self-identification: partisans and independents behave similarly and many of the people who self-identify as independent are more akin to partisans who associate negative traits with party politics.⁴⁰⁰

These results taken together do not support the hypotheses. Trump's supporters did not disproportionately identify as independents. They did not feel betrayed by the Republican Party. Cruz's supporters were more likely to feel betrayed, in fact. In any case, both major candidates—while they did not share political views—represented a dramatic shift away from Republican orthodoxy. A significant portion of the Republican base was clearly enamored with Trump, but not because they specifically felt a sense of betrayal. Despite his consistently negative approach to the Republican Party, it does not appear that betrayal drove support for Trump in the 2016 primaries.

³⁹⁸ Catherine Garcia, "Donald Trump to Ted Cruz: 'You don't get along with Anybody,'" *The Week*, February 25, 2016, <https://theweek.com/speedreads/608628/donald-trump-ted-cruz-dont-along-anybody>.

³⁹⁹ Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 26-28.

⁴⁰⁰ Samara Klar and Yanna Krupinov, *Independent Politics: How American Disdain for Parties Leads to Political Inaction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 8-9.

3.5 Conclusion

Donald Trump's 2016 nomination campaign is a textbook example of an insurgent candidacy. In many ways an unlikely candidate—Trump had previously identified as an independent and a Democrat and had flirted with a presidential run under the Reform Party banner—Trump publicly renegotiated the Republican consensus. He pulled the Party to the right in some areas but offered vague or atypical policy propositions in others (healthcare is one example, though his position did shift towards Republican orthodoxy after he won the nomination⁴⁰¹). Just like Western European populist radical right figures, Trump focused much of his effort on pushing a restrictive immigration policy and attacking the political establishment. The case study in this chapter illustrates how Trump's slash-and-burn approach to politics impacted his relationship with the Party and ultimately the messaging that came from his campaign. The argument that, as a PRR candidate, Trump was willing to attack the Republican Party is well supported by his record and the way he approached politics aligns with the Western European example set by other PRR actors. The Bush family, the Republican National Committee, and even conservative hardliner Ted Cruz were all targets, painted as enemies of the American people and of democracy—elites and oligarchs when compared to the executor of the general will, Donald Trump. The data analysis, however, paints a more nuanced picture.

The first hypothesis holds that those who believe the Republican Party has betrayed them should be more likely to vote for PRR candidates in primaries. The second reads, political independents should be more likely to report supporting PRR candidates. The data analysis reveals that those who feel betrayed were not more likely to report supporting Trump. Nor were those who identified as political independents. It may well be the case that Republican voters

⁴⁰¹ Jacob Molyneux, "Donald Trump's Health Care Platform," *The American Journal of Nursing* 116, no. 7 (2016), 23.

were attracted to Trump for reasons other than his virulent anti-establishment attacks—prioritization of immigration correlates strongly with support for Trump in the analysis, as an example. It could also be the case that the relationship between opinions and support works the other way, that Republican voters “followed the leader.”⁴⁰² Whatever the cause of Trump support, the evidence here does not align with theoretical expectations about the relationship between support for PRR candidates and feelings of betrayal.

If not a sense of betrayal, what could have motivated support for Trump during the campaign? One possible explanation that does align with the findings simple: Trump activated the anti-immigrant wing of the Republican Party, benefited from a coordination problem among Republican elites, and successfully leveraged the media to drive support.⁴⁰³ Indeed, other scholars point to xenophobia and racism more generally as predictors of Trump support in the primaries, though the impact of “white ingroup favoritism” is mixed.⁴⁰⁴ This issue-based explanation—Trump said the right things on social issues that mattered to primary voters—aligns with the findings presented here and has support in the literature, with Hooghe and Dassonneville finding no relationship between Trump support and political trust or anti-democratic ideas, support for Trump was tied closely to anti-immigrant views and racial resentment.⁴⁰⁵ This might be phrased as follows: Republican voters found their candidate—the person who espoused the right views and issue positions, had the media cachet to publicize those views and activate the base, while the Republican elite suffered from coordination problems in

⁴⁰² Gabriel S. Lenz, *Follow the Leader? How Voters Respond to Politicians' Policies and Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

⁴⁰³ Sides et. al., “Hunting Where the Ducks Are,” 135-136.

⁴⁰⁴ Beyza Buyuker et al, "Race Politics Research and the American Presidency: Thinking about white Attitudes, Identities and Vote Choice in the Trump Era and Beyond," *The Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 6, no. 3 (2021), 601.

⁴⁰⁵ Marc Hooghe and Ruth Dassonneville, "Explaining the Trump Vote: The Effect of Racist Resentment and Anti-Immigrant Sentiments," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 51, no. 3 (2018), 529-532.

addressing the insurgent challenge. If this is the case, Trump’s victory, however surprising, “is not difficult to explain.”⁴⁰⁶

A primary goal of this article is to apply the insights gleaned from the Western European example, where there is a substantial existing literature, to the American context. Given the similarity of the various global radical right movements, there is value in applying explanations across these diverse contexts. This article also demonstrates the limits of that approach: while the rhetoric employed by Trump during his 2016 run for the presidency is like that employed by PRR actors in Western Europe, it is not clear that convergence or betrayal—as examined in detail here—were related to support for Trump in the primaries. The analysis presented here contributes to an international approach to the study of the populist radical right, which is an increasingly global movement. There are doubtless other insights that scholars of the Western European PRR can apply to the United States, and *vice versa*.

This analysis is limited in important ways, however. The betrayal metric is not a perfect approximation for convergence, though the argument here is that the former is a reasonable operationalization of the underlying relevant concept. Difficulty finding polls that asked about party differences during the primary is a key reason for the choice to apply the theory in this way. Second, Trump is only one candidate—an especially unique candidate. An avenue for future research could include applying the betrayal concept across a larger number of similar legislative candidates, taking a large-n approach to better tease out causality and improve the generalizability of the findings.

⁴⁰⁶ Sides et. al., “Hunting Where the Ducks Are,” 135.

Chapter 4: The Populist Radical Right in the US: New Media and the 2018 Arizona Senate Primary⁴⁰⁷

4.1 Introduction

In 2016, Donald Trump shocked observers by winning the Republican nomination and the presidency. Trump, a politically inexperienced real estate developer, reality television star, and conservative commentator, was hardly a favored candidate. He spewed anti-elite invectives, rejected the Republican establishment, and challenged Republican doctrine on issues like immigration and trade. Trump's unorthodox policies, charisma, and media profile set him apart as a different breed of Republican. Party loyalty, combined with an uninspiring Democratic alternative in Hillary Clinton, may help explain Trump's general election victory, but neither of these factors can explain how he bested his Republican competitors to win the party's nomination. Nor can they explain the success of Trump-like candidates in primaries around the country.

Some answers may lie in Western Europe. Trump is not a traditional Republican, but he does share ideological predilections with European right-wing populists. While some scholarship has explored the transatlantic right, comparisons between the US and Western Europe often underemphasize the particularities of the US party system, and the importance of radical right actors mobilizing through a mainstream conservative party.⁴⁰⁸ Scholars seeking to explain the American radical right's recent surge have not taken advantage of the insights from across the Atlantic.⁴⁰⁹ This article bridges these gaps while building on recent literature on the social media's role in American elections.

⁴⁰⁷ This chapter was originally published in 2020 as Jeremy C. Roberts, "The Populist Radical Right in the US: New Media and the 2018 Arizona Senate Primary," *Politics and Governance* 8, no. 1 (2020), 111-121.

⁴⁰⁸ Cas Mudde, *The Far Right in America* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 51.

⁴⁰⁹ Cas Mudde, *The Far Right Today* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019), 97.

In the wake of Trump’s victory, pitched battles for the Republican Party’s soul broke out in primaries across the country. I argue that Trump and post-Trump candidates represent an American incarnation of what Mudde calls the “populist radical right” (PRR), which emphasizes populism, nativism, and authoritarianism in its appeals.⁴¹⁰ I explore party convergence as a necessary precondition for PRR success, per Kitschelt and McGann,⁴¹¹ and consider the role of new media in relation to two hypotheses: (1) the PRR should be attractive to voters who believe the major parties have converged; and (2) PRR voters should be more likely to get their news from social media sources. I test these hypotheses using a survey of Arizona Republicans conducted before the 2018 Senate primary—the first electoral cycle of the Trump era. I find that PRR voters are more likely to perceive convergence between the mainstream party establishments and to use social media for news, but that this only holds for the candidate that emphasized anti-establishment rhetoric. In Arizona, the most credible anti-immigrant voice was more likely to attract voters concerned about the economic impact of immigration, lending support to demand side theories of PRR success.

4.1.1 Defining the PRR

What do we mean by “populist radical right”? The “radical” label denotes hostility to elements of liberal democracy, such as institutional pluralism and safeguards for minority rights.⁴¹² Populists invoke the “general will” and view politics as a conflict between the “pure people” and the “corrupt elite.”⁴¹³ Mudde’s term, PRR, which comprises actors that are populist, nativist, and authoritarian, accurately describes the Trump and post-Trump political phenomena

⁴¹⁰ Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁴¹¹ Herbert Kitschelt and Anthony J. McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 17.

⁴¹² Marc F. Plattner, "Populism, Pluralism, and Liberal Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 1 (2010), 84.

⁴¹³ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*, 23.

in the US, and meets definitional requirements of analytical utility and cross-contextual portability.

PRR appeals border on anti-liberal democratic: Both American and Western European populists exhibit contempt for the independent judiciary. Donald Trump has been criticized for his attacks on a judge overseeing a lawsuit against him, for pardoning former Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio in a contempt of court case, and for the 2016 Republican platform, which called for the impeachment of activist judges.⁴¹⁴ In appealing to their own definition of “the people” as opposed to liberal democratic institutions, these figures are populist.

The PRR is nativist, advocating exclusionary nationalism. Trump’s racially-charged comments about immigrants, along with his “Muslim ban,” push him firmly into nativist territory. European PRR parties have also stoked anti-immigrant sentiment. According to Ellinas, “[t]he glue that ties these parties together is their shared understanding that the political should be congruent with the national.”⁴¹⁵ Finally, authoritarian appeals—those that emphasize conformity, deference, skepticism, and aggression in defense of those values— further distinguish the PRR. Authoritarian candidacies tend to focus on immigration, law and order, and the military.⁴¹⁶

4.1.2 Explanations for the Success of the PRR

Explanations for PRR success fall into two main categories: supply side and demand side.⁴¹⁷ Demand sides suggest that so-called “losers of modernization,” voters who feel left

⁴¹⁴ Bruce G. Peabody, “The Curious Incident of Trump and the Courts: Interbranch Deference in an Age of Populism,” *British Journal of American Legal Studies* 7, no. 2 (2018), 243-245.

⁴¹⁵ Antonis A. Ellinas, *The Media and the Far Right in Western Europe: Playing the Nationalist Card* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 12

⁴¹⁶ Jonathan Knuckey and Komysha Hassan, “Authoritarianism and Support for Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election,” *The Social Science Journal* (2019), 2-3.

⁴¹⁷ Matt Golder, “Far Right Parties in Europe,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 19, no. 1 (2016), 482.

behind by globalization and the postindustrial economy, may find the PRR appealing.⁴¹⁸ The PRR's electorate is less-educated, more likely to be unemployed, and more likely to work in blue collar occupations.⁴¹⁹ Macroeconomic factors are also important. Voters who are economically anxious and fear immigrant labor competition have reason to vote for the PRR. Jackman and Volpert highlight unemployment as a key explanatory variable, providing "the pretext for mounting the xenophobic political appeals that characterize these political movements."⁴²⁰ Overall, however, support for unemployment as an explanatory variable is mixed.⁴²¹

Cultural explanations, Golder's third demand side category, matter as well. These arguments hold that PRR support can be explained by cultural change brought about by mass immigration. To test this proposition, scholars have compared PRR success to immigration levels. Results are mixed.⁴²² Lubbers and Scheepers find that extreme right support increased in Germany in regions where more asylum seekers settled, while Knigge finds that "heightened levels of immigration...are conducive to the electoral success of extreme right-wing parties."⁴²³ Mudde provides a good overview of the literature.⁴²⁴ Other scholars offer versions of the cultural backlash thesis, arguing that the radical right succeeds where voters push back against

⁴¹⁸ Hans-George Betz, "The New Politics of Resentment: Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe," *Comparative Politics* 25, no. 4 (1993), 413-427; Kitschelt and McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe*, 56, 275.

⁴¹⁹ Tim Imerzeel and Mark Pickup, "Populist Radical Right Parties Mobilizing 'The People'? The Role of Populist Radical Right Success in Voter Turnout," *Electoral Studies* 40 (2015), 358.

⁴²⁰ Robert W. Jackman and Karin Volpert, "Conditions Favouring Parties of the Extreme Right in Western Europe," *British Journal of Political Science* 26, no. 4 (1996), 516-517.

⁴²¹ Hilde Coffé, Bruno Heyndels, and Jan Vermier, "Fertile Groups for Extreme Right-Wing Parties: Explaining the Vlaams Blok's Electoral Success," *Electoral Studies* 26 no. 1 (2007), 144; Golder, "Far Right Parties in Europe," 484; Pia Knigge, "The Ecological Correlates of Right-wing Extremism in Western Europe," *European Journal of Political Research* 34 (1998), 266; Marcel Lubbers and Peer Scheepers, "Explaining the Trend in Extreme Right-Wing Voting: Germany 1989-1998," *European Sociological Review* 17, no. 4 (2001), 443.

⁴²² Coffé et. al., "Fertile Groups for Extreme Right-Wing Parties," 149; Golder, "Far Right Parties in Europe," 485.

⁴²³ Lubbers and Scheepers, "Explaining the Trend in Extreme Right-Wing Voting," 443; Knigge, "The Ecological Correlates of Right-Wing Extremism," 70.

⁴²⁴ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 212-216.

concessions for minorities,⁴²⁵ or where intergenerational transitions in values create a cultural backlash among older voters.⁴²⁶

Supply side explanations for PRR success have become more common in recent years, as demand side explanations have consistently failed to explain results across different countries.⁴²⁷ Supply siders hold that the key to a PRR party's success lies within the party itself. Explanatory factors include administrative competence and party organization,⁴²⁸ leadership charisma,⁴²⁹ and favorable opportunity structures, including effective number of parties⁴³⁰ and convergence of left and right parties.⁴³¹

Ideology is another factor: Scholars have evaluated the extent to which policy programs appeal to PRR voters. The most famous of these explanations is the “winning formula,” which holds essentially that PRR parties succeed when they combine authoritarian appeals with neoliberal economics.⁴³² Muis and Scholte invoke ideological flexibility—that is, a shift to the economic left—in explaining the Dutch Party for Freedom's spike in electoral success.⁴³³ Hartevelt analyzed ten radical right parties, and found that a shift to the economic left attracts

⁴²⁵ Lenka Bustikova, “Revenge of the Radical Right,” *Comparative Political Studies* 47, no. 12 (2014), 1757-1758.

⁴²⁶ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

⁴²⁷ Golder, “Far Right Parties in Europe,” 486.

⁴²⁸ Edward G. DeClair, *Politics on the Fringe: The People, Policies and Organization of the French National Front* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 189; Antonis A. Ellinas, “The Rise of Golden Dawn: The New Face of the Far Right in Greece,” *South European Society and Politics* 18, no. 4 (2013), 561.

⁴²⁹ David Art, *Inside the Radical Right: The Development of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 8.

⁴³⁰ Jackman and Volpert, “Conditions Favoring Parties of the Extreme Right.”

⁴³¹ Kitschelt and McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe*, 58, 72.

⁴³² Kitschelt and McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe*; Sarah L. de Lange, “A New Winning Formula?: The Programmatic Appeal of the Radical Right,” *Party Politics* 13, no. 4 (2007), 429-430.

⁴³³ Jasper Muis and Michel Scholte, “How to Find the ‘Winning Formula’? Conducting Simulation Experiments to Grasp the Tactical Moves and Fortunes of Populist Radical Right Parties,” *Acta Politica* 48, no. 1 (2013), 42.

more working-class votes at the expense of the highly-educated and highly-skilled—demonstrating that economic policy programs do explain at least some party appeal.⁴³⁴

Other supply side explanations focus on the media's role in facilitating PRR success.⁴³⁵ The PRR and the media have a symbiotic relationship: controversial policy positions help media outlets generate compelling content, while media attention helps the PRR build credibility with voters.⁴³⁶ As the media landscape changes, new media, including Internet-based social media, has factored into analyses of PRR success. Stockemer and Barisione find that social media activism contributed in part to gains the French National Front saw in the early 2010s, while Karl draws a similar conclusion about Hungary's Jobbik.⁴³⁷

This review provides a list of variables to be considered as part of an explanation for PRR success in the US. It remains necessary, however, to consider how insights drawn from the Western European literature apply in the American context. Arguably, the most important differences rest in the respective party systems. In the US, the Republicans and Democrats dominate political competition. Representatives of the PRR must compete against fellow right-leaning candidates in Republican primaries. Consequently, in the US, intra-party competition is the crucial battleground for the PRR, unlike in much of Western Europe, where proportional electoral systems facilitate diverse party systems.

Literature on the radical right in the US has neglected Republican intra-party competition and mobilization.⁴³⁸ In intra-party competitions, the key actors are individual candidates who

⁴³⁴ Eelco Harteveld, "Winning the 'Losers' but Losing the 'Winners'? The Electoral Consequences of the Radical Right Moving to the Economic Left," *Electoral Studies* 44 (2016), 226.

⁴³⁵ Hajo G. Boomgaarden and Rens Vliegenthart, "Explaining the Rise of Anti-Immigrant Parties: The Role of News Media Content," *Electoral Studies* 26, no. 2 (2007), 413; Ellinas, *The Media and the Far Right*.

⁴³⁶ Golder, "Far Right Parties in Europe," 488.

⁴³⁷ Daniel Stockemer and Mauro Barisione. "The 'New' Discourse of the Front National under Marine Le Pen: A Slight Change with a Big Impact." *European Journal of Communication* 32, no. 2 (2017), 111; Philipp Karl, "Hungary's Radical Right 2.0," *Nationalities Papers* 45, no. 3 (2017), 353.

⁴³⁸ Mudde, *The Far Right in America*, 51.

only have the relatively short primary campaign to declare, articulate, and defend their ideological programs against criticism from fellow conservatives. Ideological positions are still important—libertarians, religious conservatives, and neoconservatives all compete in primaries—but differentiation can come down to effective messaging. In a fast-paced primary campaign where voters cannot rely on party cues (all candidates compete for the same party’s nomination) and candidates may not have much name recognition (particularly in primaries for lower offices), the role of the media and information about candidates becomes especially important, as scholars have articulated in reference to the Western European example.

Of special importance is the relationship between social media and support for the PRR. While this literature is relatively underdeveloped in the Western European context, the details of the 2016 election have inspired some American literature. For example, Gunn claims that “without Twitter or an equivalent social media platform, it would have been difficult for a candidate like Trump...to come across as viable.”⁴³⁹ Groshek and Koc-Michalska find that social media were a critical part of Trump’s 2016 victory, along with several other factors (including “television reliance” and “passive and uncivil social media users”).⁴⁴⁰ New media— particularly social media—offers an appealing avenue for populist candidates to circumvent the media establishment (a frequent target of populist ire) and reach voters directly.⁴⁴¹ It therefore stands to reason that those who turn to these new media sources should be more likely to support PRR candidates in primaries.

⁴³⁹ Enli Gunn, “Twitter as Arena for the Authentic Outsider: Exploring the Social Media Campaigns of Trump and Clinton in the 2016 US Presidential Election,” *European Journal of Communication* 32, no. 1 (2017), 59.

⁴⁴⁰ Jacob Groshek and Karolina Koc-Michalska, “Helping Populism Win? Social Media Use, Filter Bubbles, and Support for Populist Presidential Candidates in the 2016 US Election Campaign,” *Information, Communication, & Society* 20, no. 9 (2017), 1402.

⁴⁴¹ Bethany Anne Conway, Kate Kenski, and Di Wang, “Twitter Use by Presidential Primary Candidates During the 2012 Campaign” *American Behavioral Scientist* 57, no. 11 (2013), 1597.

Golder’s invocation that future research should be at the intersection of supply and demand is apt, as both schools of thought are critical to explaining PRR success.⁴⁴² The key point of intersection is with the source of information available to voters: the media—particularly in the form of new media that offer populists a direct route to their voters.

4.1.3 New Media, Party Convergence, and the PRR Vote

The explanatory factors highlighted above have one thing in common: none is complete without understanding how voters see the world. Voters are not always well-equipped to evaluate the nature or extent of phenomena cited by the PRR. As Norris and Inglehart point out, “[t]he public may misperceive the extent of ethnic diversity, and of the crime rates and unemployment.”⁴⁴³ If voters are rational actors whose political choices are based on how they perceive events, media diets matter.

In both Western Europe and the US, certain media outlets have had a special relationship with PRR figures. Ellinas finds that the Western European far right’s success is largely a function of media exposure.⁴⁴⁴ Such exposure is the product of a symbiotic relationship:

The political repertoire of the Far Right satisfies the thirst of the media for sensational, simplified, personalized, and controversial stories. Exaggerated references to violent crime and urban tension, which are typical ingredients of Far Right appeals, match the growing tendency of the media to dramatize news. The “simplism” that also characterizes Far Right appeals (Lipset and Raab, 1978) is in line with a media appetite for monocausal explanations and for the delivery of easy solutions to complex phenomena.⁴⁴⁵

In the US, changes in technology and the regulatory environment have facilitated the rise of reactionary outlets that thrive on this “simplism” and controversy. Among other qualities, these “outrage” outlets are reactive, engaging, ideologically selective, and centered on personality.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴² Golder, “Far Right Parties in Europe,” 490.

⁴⁴³ Norris and Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash*, 181.

⁴⁴⁴ Ellinas, *The Media and the Far Right*, 8, 34.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 34

⁴⁴⁶ Jeffrey M. Berry and Sarah Sobieraj, *The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and the New Incivility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 14.

Talk radio hosts stoke controversy to generate audience engagement, Fox News dominates cable, and right-wing websites flood the Internet with dubiously factual attack pieces.

Of course, not all media are equal. The growth of the competitive 24-hour news market in the 1990s, along with satellite radio and the Internet, changed the game for outrage media. New media outlets are appropriate venues for outrage content. These outlets make no—or weak—claims to objectivity, and the Internet makes news more accessible than ever. A blog run out of a basement can draw millions of monthly visitors. The mode of dissemination also matters. New media, characterized by its embrace of new technology, along with “plurality, accessibility, and participation,”⁴⁴⁷ best exemplified by social media, should be more likely to mobilize support for PRR candidates, for several reasons.

The first key reason is the combination of purity testing and convergence rhetoric. According to Kitschelt and McGann, convergence between the mainstream right and the mainstream left is a necessary condition for the radical right’s success in Western Europe.⁴⁴⁸ In promoting themselves as an alternative to the mainstream left and right, the PRR often conflates them. As anti-establishment brands, PRR candidates are well-positioned to take advantage of disaffection with establishment parties. In Western Europe, distinct parties emerge. In the US, where the majoritarian political system freezes out third parties, I suggest that this competition should instead be found within Republican primaries. Instead of fringe parties accusing mainstream parties of collusion, American PRR candidates accuse mainstream Republicans of being insufficiently Republican, and attack the party establishment itself, as Donald Trump did in 2016. The conservative media indulges such controversy, and moderate members of the party

⁴⁴⁷ Natalie Fenton, "Drowning or Waving? New Media, Journalism, and Democracy," in *New Media, Old News: Journalism & Democracy in the Digital Age*, ed. Natalie Fenton (London: SAGE, 2010), 6.

⁴⁴⁸ Kitschelt and McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe*, 17-25.

caucus—those “insufficiently conservative” Republicans—can expect to be attacked as “Republicans in Name Only” (RINOs).⁴⁴⁹ This leads to a first hypothesis:

H1: If a conservative voter believes that the mainstream liberal and conservative parties have “converged,” that is, adopted similar positions on important issues, he or she is more likely to support a PRR candidate.

Leading up to 2016, making a case for party convergence would have been difficult. Polls have indicated that over time Americans have become more inclined to differentiate the parties.⁴⁵⁰ The question, then, is how do voters come to believe that supporting an establishment Republican is essentially the same as supporting a Democrat?

I suggest that the answer aligns with the second reason that new media and the PRR are synergistic: The PRR’s claims and proposed solutions are eye-catching, and are likely to be treated skeptically by the mainstream press. Exaggerations about crime, along with unconstitutional or poorly articulated policy proposals, may draw ridicule from trained journalists. But the same is not necessarily true of new media. Whereas legacy media have standards intended to prevent journalists from reporting misleading stories, social media feeds and partisan blogs are not beholden to traditional editorial standards. Once a story is released, editors have no control over the commentary readers attach as they share it with their personal networks, and those networks’ insularity magnifies the message and shields audiences from rebuttal.⁴⁵¹

The melding of outrage media with social media provides a powerful platform for the PRR. Social media can support upstart candidacies because it allows ideas to permeate networks uncritically. Social media is also conducive to purity testing, in which we would expect PRR

⁴⁴⁹ Jonah Goldberg, “Who’s the RINO?” *National Review* 65, no. 22 (2013), 10.

⁴⁵⁰ Frances E. Lee, *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 140.

⁴⁵¹ Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Joseph N. Cappella, *Echo Chamber: Rush Limbaugh and the Conservative Media Establishment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 76.

politicians to have a distinct advantage, given that most PRR candidates have never held elected office and so have never had to compromise. It therefore stands to reason that exposure to the sort of information that is likely to propagate in a social media environment reinforces support for PRR politicians among ideologically susceptible conservatives. In their discussion of the 2016 presidential election, Groshek and Koc-Michalska find that “loosening of gatekeeping certainly opened the doors to a mediated information environment that while diverse and expansive was also hostile and prone to misinformation that may well have reinforced citizens’ pre-existing viewpoints.”⁴⁵² I therefore hypothesize that social media use should be related to support for the PRR:

H2: If a conservative voter is exposed to social media news, he or she is more likely to support a PRR candidate.

Because the theory outlined here should apply to the PRR beyond the presidency, I employ a state-level case study to evaluate these hypotheses.

4.2 Case Study: The Arizona US Senate Primary, 2018

After Donald Trump’s 2016 victory, Republicanism became a contested concept. Trump’s irreverent use of social media, his attacks on the establishment, and his embrace by American conservatism’s Internet fringe created a new playbook for the fresh crop of PRR candidates who began competing in Republican primaries around the country.

The next round of primaries for federal office took place in summer 2018. While the general election decides who goes to Washington, the battle between conservative factions takes place at the primary stage. In the American majoritarian system, once the parties have selected candidates, voters essentially have a choice between the Republican and the Democrat, and many

⁴⁵² Groshek and Koc-Michalska, “Helping Populism Win?,” 1402.

will default to their party's candidate out of loyalty, or as a strategic vote against the opposition.⁴⁵³ The primary is therefore a better venue for analysis of the PRR.

A suitable primary meets several conditions. First, it is for federal office, since many of the issues the PRR emphasizes are federal responsibilities. Second, there should be clear competition between the PRR and the Republican establishment. Third, it should have no incumbent, in order to better isolate the impact of explanatory variables on a PRR candidacy. Finally, a Senate election is preferable, because states cannot be gerrymandered, and because states are often larger and more diverse than districts.

4.2.1 Background and Candidates

On August 28, 2018, Arizona Republicans selected their nominee for the Senate seat vacated by Jeff Flake. Flake was a moderate Republican who decided to leave on account of what he saw as the erosion of traditional Republican values in the Trump era. Flake's withdrawal signaled that the party's radical wing had made his moderation politically untenable. In stepping down, Flake created a vacuum. Three major candidates contested the primary

4.2.1.1 Martha McSally: The Establishment Candidate

Martha McSally is a military veteran elected to Congress in 2015. In her early career, McSally's views were moderate: She supported pro-life positions on abortion, traditional marriage, and immigration reform with a path to legalization.⁴⁵⁴ Dubbed by Politico "the House GOP's top recruit," McSally also supported a bipartisan equal pay bill and refused to endorse

⁴⁵³ Mudde, *The Far Right in America*, 76.

⁴⁵⁴ Ashley Parker, "After Career of Firsts in Air Force, G.O.P. Challenger Has a New Mission," *New York Times*, February 25, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/26/us/politics/after-career-of-firsts-in-air-force-gop-challenger-martha-mcsally-has-a-new-mission.html>.

Tea Party principles.⁴⁵⁵ McSally's candidacy represented progress for the establishment GOP, and their female recruitment project cited her primary victory as a success.⁴⁵⁶

In the Trump era, McSally has been forced to balance criticism of the party's leader with maintaining the base's support. When Trump attacked McCain for being captured in Vietnam, McSally was the only member of the Arizona delegation to speak out.⁴⁵⁷ Even after Trump secured the nomination, McSally declined to endorse him.⁴⁵⁸ Of course, Trump won Arizona, and has remained popular with Republicans. McSally made overtures to Trump's base throughout the 2018 campaign, highlighting her interactions with the President and hinting at the existence of a working relationship.⁴⁵⁹ Despite these efforts, McSally did not credibly represent the PRR in 2018, and was instead a target of convergence rhetoric from her opponents in the primary.⁴⁶⁰ McSally also ran a much more traditional campaign: Even after her appointment to the Senate, she still has fewer "likes" on Facebook and followers on Twitter than Ward or Arpaio, and she attracted far more establishment support.

⁴⁵⁵ Alex Isenstadt, "The House GOP's top Recruit," *Politico*, June 9, 2014,

<https://www.politico.com/story/2014/06/martha-mcsally-house-republicans-107628>.

⁴⁵⁶ Nia-Malika Henderson and Jackie Kucinich, "GOP sees Progress, more Work on Gender Gap," *Washington Post*, March 17, 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/she-the-people/wp/2014/03/17/gop-sees-progress-more-work-on-gender-gap/>.

⁴⁵⁷ Dan Nowicki, "Arizona GOP Congressmen Mum on Donald Trump slam of John McCain," *Arizona Republic*, July 24, 2015, <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/azdc/2015/07/24/arizona-gop-congressmen-mum-donald-trump-john-mccain-matt-salmon-martha-mcsally/30644967/>.

⁴⁵⁸ Richard J. Hansen, "Paul Babeu, Martha McSally Struggle to Respond to Donald Trump Fallout," *Arizona Republic*, October 9, 2016, <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/elections/2016/10/09/paul-babeu-martha-mcsally-struggle-respond-donald-trump-fallout/91805874/>.

⁴⁵⁹ Yvonne Wingett Sanchez, "In Arizona's Senate race, Martha McSally cozies up to Donald Trump," *Arizona Republic*, July 24, 2018, <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/arizona/2018/07/24/martha-mcsally-cozies-up-donald-trump-arizonas-senate-race/798813002/>.

⁴⁶⁰ Sean Sullivan, "Establishment Republicans Grow Optimistic about Winning Bruising Arizona Primary," *Washington Post*, August 23, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/establishment-republicans-grow-optimistic-about-winning-bruising-arizona-primary/2018/08/23/bbc444a0-a4bb-11e8-8fac-12e98c13528d_story.html.

4.2.1.2 Joe Arpaio: The Anti-Immigrant Crusader

Before his Senate campaign, Joe Arpaio served as Republican elected Sheriff of Maricopa County from 1993 until 2017, where he became notorious for housing prisoners in tents, reinstating chain gangs, and cutting meal costs.⁴⁶¹ He also aggressively pursued an anti-illegal immigration agenda.

As Sheriff, Arpaio denounced the dangers of illegal immigration from Mexico. He called for a “war” on illegal immigration, citing threats to culture and sovereignty. He asks his readers, “[a]re we prepared to give up our sovereignty? Are we willing to give up our national identity?”⁴⁶² Though he often frames it as law enforcement, Arpaio is making a nativist cultural argument familiar to observers of the European right.

Arpaio’s office consistently violated Latino citizens’ civil rights by illegally detaining them as part of its war on illegal immigration. When a judge issued an injunction to halt this practice, Arpaio ignored it, and was convicted of criminal contempt.⁴⁶³ Trump later pardoned the Sheriff, leading Breitbart to run the headline, “Trump Defends Arpaio Pardon as GOP Establishment Joins the Left.”⁴⁶⁴ These events highlight fault lines in the post-Trump conservative movement, and place Arpaio in the anti-establishment camp.

For Arpaio, the 2018 campaign proceeded familiarly. On his signature issue he supported hardline policies, suggesting that foreigners brought to the country illegally as children should be deported, and that the military should be deployed to Mexico to combat drug smuggling.⁴⁶⁵ In

⁴⁶¹ Joe Arpaio and Len Sherman, *Joe's Law: America's Toughest Sheriff Takes on Illegal Immigration, Drugs, and Everything Else That Threatens America* (New York: AMACOM, 2008). 96-97, 213.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.* 244

⁴⁶³ Richard Pérez-Peña, “Former Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio Is Convicted of Criminal Contempt,” *The New York Times*, July 31, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/31/us/sheriff-joe-arpaio-convicted-arizona.html>.

⁴⁶⁴ Ian Mason, “Trump Defends Arpaio Pardon as GOP Establishment Joins the Left,” *Breitbart*, August 28, 2017. <https://www.breitbart.com/politics/2017/08/28/trump-defends-arpaio-pardon-as-gop-establishment-joins-the-left/>.

⁴⁶⁵ Simon Romero, “In Arizona Primary, Joe Arpaio Is Making His Last Stand,” *New York Times*, August 27, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/27/us/arpaio-arizona-senate.html>.

line with the convergence theme, Arpaio said of McSally, “she sounds like a Democrat.”⁴⁶⁶

When it came to the party’s right fringe, however, Arpaio had competition.

4.2.1.3 Kelli Ward: *The Outsider*

Kelli Ward burst onto the national stage in 2016 with an unsuccessful primary challenge against John McCain. Shortly after her defeat, she announced that she would challenge Flake. Ward, a former state legislator, became a PRR darling for her anti-establishment politics. By 2018, Ward had established herself as “the perfect spokesperson for the Trump wing of the GOP.”⁴⁶⁷ Ward also received endorsements from radical right figures. Representative Paul Gosar, known for his radical positions and relationship with the European right, called McSally an “establishment patsy,” and endorsed Ward,⁴⁶⁸ as did Sebastian Gorka, a former Trump deputy with European far right ties.⁴⁶⁹

This contest attracted the Republican establishment. The Senate Majority Leader’s allies poured money into the race, bolstering McSally as an immigration hardliner, and drawing fire from the Ward campaign, which attacked McSally’s record on Trump, the border wall, and “dozens of votes for amnesty.”⁴⁷⁰ Combat between the Republican establishment and the PRR flared throughout the summer. Ward attacked McSally’s conservatism and attempted to tie her to

⁴⁶⁶ Sean Sullivan, “Establishment Republicans Grow Optimistic about Winning Bruising Arizona Primary,” *Washington Post*, August 23, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/establishment-republicans-grow-optimistic-about-winning-bruising-arizona-primary/2018/08/23/bbc444a0-a4bb-11e8-8fac-12e98c13528d_story.html.

⁴⁶⁷ Sarah Posner, “Kelli Ward is the Perfect Spokesperson for the Trump wing of the GOP,” *Washington Post*, August 22, 2017. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/wp/2017/08/22/kelli-ward-is-the-perfect-spokesperson-for-the-trump-wing-of-the-gop/>.

⁴⁶⁸ Eric Garcia, “Gosar Endorses Ward Over McSally in Arizona Senate Race,” *Roll Call*, July 18, 2018. <https://rollcall.com/2018/07/18/gosar-endorses-ward-over-mcsally-in-arizona-senate-race/>.

⁴⁶⁹ Antonia Noori Farzan, “‘Making America Safe Again’: Sebastian Gorka Stumps for Kelli Ward,” *Phoenix New Times*, March 30, 2018. <https://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/news/sebastian-gorka-campaigns-for-kelli-ward-in-scottsdale-10283174>.

⁴⁷⁰ James Arkin, “McConnell allies jump into critical Senate primary,” *Politico*, June 15, 2018. <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/06/15/mcconnell-allies-martha-mcsally-senate-primary-arizona-648029>.

the left, by alleging that McSally had voted for amnesty “11 times” in a misleading radio ad.⁴⁷¹

Ward immersed herself in anti-establishment convergence rhetoric, and in a further step away from the establishment, she attempted to leverage the conservative Internet media ecosystem.

Ward campaigned with far right Internet personality Mike Cernovich, whom *The Washington Post* called, “[her] newly minted campaign surrogate.”⁴⁷² Breitbart editor and Trump strategist Steve Bannon participated in Ward’s campaign launch,⁴⁷³ and until September 2017, several senior campaign aides were former Breitbart reporters.⁴⁷⁴ These Breitbart connections are especially important in evaluating the theory presented here, as Faris et al. find that Breitbart formed “the nexus of conservative media” in 2015–2016, and was the most popular source for social media sharing on the right during the 2016 election.⁴⁷⁵ Ward was also among a group of insurgent Republicans who benefited from websites masquerading as legitimate news sites that produced antiestablishment content and endorsed candidates under the guise of independent journalism.⁴⁷⁶

4.3 Methodology

The research question posed here is “Does use of social media for news drive support for the PRR in Republican primaries?” To test the hypotheses that perceptions of convergence and

⁴⁷¹ Philip Athey, “Kelli Ward Claims Martha McSally has Supported Amnesty 11 Times. Is She Right?” *The Arizona Republic*, August 10, 2018. <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/fact-check/2018/08/10/fact-check-does-martha-mcsally-support-amnesty-kelli-ward-claims/836310002/>.

⁴⁷² Avi Selk, “Mike Cernovich steps into the U.S. Senate race in Arizona. A ‘Gonzo Thing,’ he says,” *The Washington Post*, August 25, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/mike-cernovich-steps-into-the-us-senate-race-in-arizona-a-gonzo-thing-he-says/2018/08/25/d0fe9ece-a7bd-11e8-a656-943eefab5daf_story.html

⁴⁷³ Dan Nowicki, “Bannon Endorses Ward, Signaling Trump Supporters have Settled on a Challenger to Flake,” *The Arizona Republic*, October 17, 2017. <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/elections/2017/10/17/steve-bannon-endorse-donald-trump-supporters-settling-kelli-ward-their-pick-against-sen-jeff-flak/769872001/>.

⁴⁷⁴ Lindsay Moore, “Bannon Rips ‘Globalist Elite’ at Kelli Ward’s Senate Campaign Fundraiser,” *Phoenix New Times*, October 17, 2017. <https://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/news/kelli-wards-shady-senate-kickoff-9791084>.

⁴⁷⁵ Robert M. Faris et al., *Partisanship, Propaganda, and Disinformation: Online Media and the 2016 Presidential Election*, (Cambridge, MA: Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society, Harvard University, 2017), 11-13.

⁴⁷⁶ Jason Schwartz, “Kelli Ward Touts Endorsement from Fake-News Site,” *Politico*, February 14, 2018. <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/02/14/arizona-senate-kelli-ward-fake-news-407281>.

use of social media drive support for PRR candidates, I employed Qualtrics to distribute an online survey to 1052 self-identified Arizona Republicans in the week leading up to the primary in August 2018. Qualtrics offers the following disclaimer: “Qualtrics panel partners randomly select respondents for surveys where respondents are highly likely to qualify ...Each sample from the panel base is proportioned to the general population and then randomized before the survey is deployed.”⁴⁷⁷

4.3.1 Variables

To capture attitudes about immigration, I used several American National Election Survey (ANES) measures, including one that asks how worried respondents are about illegal immigration, and one that asks if immigrants are “generally good for America’s economy.” To capture economic anxiety, I asked voters how worried they were about employment status using another ANES measure. To measure authoritarian values, I included four standard ANES child-rearing questions and created an index (see also MacWilliams).⁴⁷⁸ To test convergence, I asked voters if there were any important differences between the Republican establishment and the Democratic Party. I also asked about perceptions of corruption and concern about RINOs to gauge disaffection with the party. To measure exposure to social media, I asked voters where they get their news.

The dependent variable (DV) is the answer to the question “if the 2018 Arizona Republican Senate Primary election were held today, which of the candidates would you vote for?” Support for each candidate is the DV for each model reported in Table 6.

⁴⁷⁷ Qualtrics, “ESOMAR 28: 28 Questions to help Research Buyers of Online Samples,” brochure, 2014, 4.

⁴⁷⁸ Matthew C. MacWilliams, “Who Decides When The Party Doesn’t? Authoritarian Voters and the Rise of Donald Trump,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 49, no. 4 (2016), 716-721.

4.3.2 Method

I use logistic regression because the DV is dichotomous. Logistic regression coefficients are difficult to interpret because they represent log odds, so I have reported the results as odds ratios (ORs). The OR “describes how much more likely an outcome is to occur in one group as compared to another group,” representing the relative odds of two related outcomes occurring.⁴⁷⁹ For example, in Table 6, the OR for the variable “Race (white)” in the McSally model is the odds that a McSally supporter is white divided by the odds that he/she is not. This OR is less than one, indicating that a McSally supporter is 0.75 times as likely as a non-McSally voter to be white (though this is not significant). For ordinal independent variables, the OR increases or decreases exponentially, so for each additional year of age, a voter is 1.02 times as likely to vote for McSally.⁴⁸⁰

4.4 Results

The results, displayed below in Table 6, largely support the hypotheses proposed above. H1 holds that PRR voters should be more likely to perceive convergence between the parties, and this is the case. As expected, McSally voters are less likely to perceive corruption to be widespread, and while the other two variables of interest (party similarity and RINOs are a detriment) are not significant, they are directionally correct. Ward’s voters are nearly twice as likely to agree that there are no differences between the Republican establishment and the Democratic Party, and they are substantially more likely to agree that RINOs are a detriment to the Republican Party. H1 does little to explain Arpaio support, however.

⁴⁷⁹ Sanford L. Braver, Felix Thoemmes, and Stephanie E. Moser, "Odds Ratio," in *Encyclopedia of Research Design*, ed. Neil J. Salkind (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2010), 957.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 958

H2 holds that PRR voters should be more likely to get their news from social media sources. The data support H2 in the McSally and Ward cases. McSally's supporters are roughly half as likely to use social media for news, and nearly twice as likely to turn to Fox News. Ward's supporters are more likely to turn to social media for news, as expected, while Arpaio's supporters are less likely to watch Fox or listen to talk radio. Neither fear of job loss nor authoritarian attitudes are significant, though Arpaio's supporters are substantially more likely to perceive immigrants as bad for the economy, as would be expected according to economic demand side theories. Finally, McSally's supporters are slightly older and Ward's slightly younger, while Arpaio's supporters have lower levels of education and are less conservative.

4.5 Analysis

H1 predicts that PRR voters should be likely to perceive convergence between the parties. This is borne out in Ward's case, but not in Arpaio's case. Voters who believe that establishment Republicans and the Democratic Party are indistinguishable are nearly twice as likely to support Ward. It appears that efforts to paint McSally as an establishment patsy were successful, but that antiestablishment voters do not view Arpaio, an experienced politician, as a suitable outlet for their disaffection. The fact that Ward's voters are also more likely to identify "fake" Republicans ("RINOs") as a detriment indicates that, for many Republicans, mainstream offerings are impure. McSally's voters, perhaps tired of their candidate drawing criticism as insufficiently Republican, do not perceive RINOs to be a threat. Corruption perceptions among likely voters tell an interesting story as well. Populists, including Trump, paint the world as full of corruption. They pledge to "drain the swamp" and make government work for the people again, claiming that both parties have contributed to the status quo. I therefore expect that PRR supporters should believe corruption to be more problematic. Although this variable is not

significant in either the Ward or Arpaio models, McSally’s voters are less likely to perceive corruption—providing some corroboration for the hypothesis.

Table 6: Analysis of online survey: Arizona US Senate primary, 2018

Independent variable	McSally support	Ward Support	Arpaio Support
Issue importance: immigration (0-4 [most important])	0.99	0.93	1.13
Issue importance: the economy (0-4 [most important])	0.96	1.15	0.94
No differences between Rep./Dem. Establishments	0.75	1.80*	0.99
Perception of corruption (1-4 [most])	0.78*	1.26	1.08
RINOs are a detriment (1-5 [strongly agree])	0.88	1.45***	0.89
Social media news consumer	0.60*	1.84**	1.21
Talk radio news consumer	1.11	1.16	0.60*
Fox News viewer	1.71**	0.77	0.63*
Fear of job loss (1-5 [extremely worried])	1.03	1.01	0.95
Authoritarianism (0-4 [most authoritarian])	0.98	0.97	1.20
Immigrants good for the economy (1-5 [strongly disagree])	0.85*	0.94	1.42***
Education (1-5 [highest])	1.07	1.11	0.76*
Income (1-5 [highest])	1.10	1.04	0.83
Age (years)	1.02**	0.98	0.98*
Ideology (1 [extremely liberal] - 7 [extremely conservative])	1.05	1.23*	0.81*
Race (white)	0.75	2.31	0.74
Gender (female)	0.78	1.10	1.32
<i>Constant</i>	1.27	0.01***	3.24
<i>n</i> count	739	739	739
Pseudo r-squared	0.07	0.07	0.12

Note: * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

The supply side literature suggests that the PRR succeeds where convergence between mainstream parties creates a favorable opportunity structure.⁴⁸¹ The analysis here indicates that voters who believe in party convergence do, in fact, disproportionately support Ward, a PRR

⁴⁸¹ Kitschelt and McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe*, 17.

candidate. This finding provides evidence that a supply side explanation derived theoretically from Western European party systems and patterns of communication (convergence rhetoric) can travel to American party primaries, where a first-past-the-post electoral system makes multi-party competition untenable.

There are, however, some caveats that limit the scope of this finding. While convergence explanations are typically applied at the party system level,⁴⁸² here I operationalize convergence at the level of individual perception. I have done so for two reasons. First, the DV examined is support for individual candidates, not organized parties. Even the most ephemeral parties typically outlast individual candidacies. Second, voters' perceptions may not align with reality. I do not claim here that actual party convergence explains PRR success, but rather that when a voter believes that the parties have converged, the PRR becomes a rational selection. The best way to operationalize perception is at the individual level.

Endogeneity limits my ability to make causal inferences about convergence. It is not possible to determine if anti-establishment attitudes caused Ward support or vice versa based on this cross-sectional analysis. That said, the fact that those Republican primary voters that support a PRR candidate also believe that the Republican establishment is indistinguishable from the Democrats sheds light on how the PRR can successfully mobilize within an existing conservative party.

The second part of the story concerns the reason for these beliefs. H2 holds that PRR voters should be more likely to get their news from social media, at least in part because social media offer an environment for voters to consume and share belief-affirming information. H2 is also borne out in the Ward case, but, again, not for Arpaio. While McSally supporters are more

⁴⁸² Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, "The Cartel Party Thesis: A Restatement," *Perspectives on Politics* 7, no. 4 (2009), 753-766.

likely to watch Fox News, Ward supporters are nearly twice as likely to use social media for news. This suggests that the characteristics of social media news are appealing to PRR voters and may therefore benefit PRR candidacies. In line with previous research,⁴⁸³ consumption of social media news does appear to correlate with support for populists in primaries. Ward's willingness to embrace new media, conspiracy theories, convergence rhetoric/purity testing, and outlandish claims drew criticism from the mainstream press, but endeared her to the Internet fringe, who disproportionately turned out for her in the primary at Arpaio's expense.

Surprisingly, neither Fox nor talk radio boost support for either PRR candidate, perhaps because Trump did not endorse any candidate after Flake dropped out, or because national conservative hosts were less likely to cover a state's primary competition. It is also possible that, although conservative outlets like Fox and major talk radio hosts (e.g., Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity) often position themselves as counterweights to the liberal establishment, committed anti-establishment primary voters may consider those outlets part of the establishment themselves. If anti-establishment voters consider traditional conservative media to be part of the establishment, social media would be even more attractive for these voters—especially in light of characteristics such as the ability for candidates to speak directly to voters on platforms like Twitter and Facebook, the “loosening of gatekeeping,”⁴⁸⁴ and the potential for stories to spread quickly without any official endorsement. Social media's grassroots, viral nature is especially appealing to the PRR. While this cross-sectional analysis cannot establish causality, the evidence presented strongly suggests that when voters are exposed to the (relatively) gatekeeper-free world of social media news, PRR talking points become more prominent and more compelling.

⁴⁸³ Groshek and Koc-Michalska, “Helping Populism Win?,” 1389-1407.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid. 1402

4.5.1 Sheriff Joe and the PRR

Arpaio's voters have less in common with Ward's voters than expected. While both groups trend younger, Arpaio's voters appear to be driven by concerns about immigration. In Western Europe, PRR parties often appeal to both anti-establishment and anti-immigration voters. The Arizona Senate primary included two candidates vying for largely the same base, each appearing to attract only part of it. Arpaio, because of his tenure as a Republican official with a national profile built on crime and immigration, is the natural choice for committed Republicans who prioritize those issues. This would explain why Arpaio's supporters are less likely to agree that immigrants are good for the economy. The fact that Arpaio's supporters are also less educated offers a partial explanation for the economic threat of immigration they perceive, as expected by some of the demand side literature.⁴⁸⁵

Arpaio's voters are less likely to identify as "very conservative." Moderate Republicans who feel economic pressure from immigration might find the scorched earth, conspiratorial politics of the PRR appealing, but prioritize effective immigration policy over "draining the swamp." It appears that Arpaio appealed to antiimmigrant Republicans, while Ward attracted the antiestablishment camp. The PRR coalition was split: Arpaio successfully drew the nativists, while Ward appealed to the populists.

It is unclear, however, how much of Arpaio's success is due to his outsized public profile. As a long-time local politician with national name recognition, Arpaio may have gained some of the advantages of incumbency without holding the desired office. For example, his name recognition may have led the electorate to perceive him as more viable.⁴⁸⁶ However, I do not

⁴⁸⁵ E.g., Jackman and Volpert, "Conditions Favoring Parties of the Extreme Right," 501-521.

⁴⁸⁶ Cindy D. Kam and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister, "Name Recognition and Candidate Support," *American Journal of Political Science* 57, no. 4 (2013), 983.

believe that Arpaio’s name recognition is sufficient to explain the results for two reasons. First, leading up to the primary, much of the news coverage about Arpaio concerned either the pardon he received from Trump or commentary on his “irrelevance.”⁴⁸⁷ Second, while name recognition is powerful in local elections contested by relative unknowns, the 2018 Arizona Senate primary was a high-profile race. All three candidates had claims to relevance. Ward and Arpaio both drew Donald Trump’s attention in 2016, and McSally served in Congress. The primary received national media coverage, and the results had potential to carry national implications (i.e., the Senate may have flipped from Republican to Democratic control). Voter turnout was also record-breaking: More than 670,000 voters participated in the Republican primary.⁴⁸⁸

4.6 Conclusion

This analysis offers evidence that theoretical expectations about party convergence and social media use can explain some PRR success in the US. In Arizona, among Republicans, Kelli Ward’s supporters are more likely to see the Republican establishment as functionally Democratic and to report accessing social media news. Joe Arpaio’s supporters, on the other hand, do not share these characteristics: They are more likely to perceive immigration as economically disadvantageous, and to have lower levels of education. These findings indicate that the PRR coalition comprises both anti-immigrant and anti-establishment supporters, and that the two groups are not coterminous. The PRR encompassing two distinct camps is consistent with the theory that populism is a thin-centered ideology (or “toolkit,” or style) that is not inherently tied to other left or right ideologies like nativism.⁴⁸⁹ The results also support the

⁴⁸⁷ Simon Romero, “In Arizona Primary, Joe Arpaio Is Making His Last Stand,” *New York Times*, August 27, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/27/us/arpaio-arizona-senate.html>.

⁴⁸⁸ Melissa Daniels, “Arizona Voters Break Record for Primary Turnout,” *Associated Press*, September 7, 2018. <https://apnews.com/article/a11f2a61775c4490976685df18f3a842>.

⁴⁸⁹ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 23; Tuukka Salu Santeri Ylä-Anttila, “The Populist Toolkit: Finnish Populism in Action 2007–2016,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Helsinki, 2017), 8.

supply side idea that there is a symbiotic relationship between social media and the PRR. Though this evidence is not definitively causal, it offers a compelling circumstantial case for social media's power.

Furthermore, these results suggest that transitioning from experienced party politician to insurgent is difficult, and that while long experience in office may establish credibility on issues, it is detrimental in attracting antiestablishment support.

The theory presented here is drawn from European literature on both the supply side and the demand side, with a specific focus on the part convergence and new media play in facilitating PRR success. The American party system produces different constraints than many of its Western European counterparts, forcing PRR competition into the intra-party arena. Nevertheless, the evidence demonstrates that, when properly contextualized, similar phenomena facilitate support for the PRR on both sides of the Atlantic.

Future research should expand the scope of the analysis to include independents. Participants in the examined survey self-identified as Republicans, but non-Republicans can and do vote in primaries. PRR candidates like to position themselves as alternatives to left-right politics. Self-identified independents could therefore have an important role to play in explaining PRR success in the US. This is a promising area for future inquiry.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

I initiated my study of the populist radical right in the United States before Donald Trump was elected to the presidency in 2016. In the intervening years, the role of the populist radical right in fundamentally reshaping American politics has only become more significant. As recent events have shown, the influence of the PRR on American democracy cannot be overstated. Amidst the upheaval that accompanied the coronavirus pandemic, Trump's bid for re-election in the fall of 2020 was unsuccessful. He never accepted the facts of his defeat and his base, infuriated with Republican officials' refusal to overturn the lawful election results, protested across the country. This coordinated effort culminated in a violent assault on the U.S. Capitol by a Trump-supporting mob in January of 2021. In the aftermath of the Capitol Riot the Republican Party was further fractured; the event pried open the Party's seams and exposed the turmoil within. Even at the time of writing (April of 2023), Donald Trump remains the most prominent Republican leader, continuing to deny his election loss, and inspiring other candidates to do the same—all while campaigning for president and fighting criminal charges, the first ever levelled against a former president. The PRR, with Trump at its spiritual head, remains the most potent force in American politics today.

In this dissertation I have sought to place the American PRR movement within its broader global and historical context. The fact that the PRR phenomenon is primarily a European one offers a fruitful opportunity for comparison, leading to a unifying research question: “do the lessons gleaned from scholarship on the Western European populist radical right provide insight into the American movement?” In other words, can we delve into the robust scholarship that has developed to explain aspects of the European PRR and apply it to the American context? The chapters that comprise the body of this work, each of which is designed to apply concepts

derived this way to Republican nomination contests, seeks to answer this question. The results are mixed, but nonetheless demonstrate the similarities between American and PRR actors and contribute generally to the conversation around the PRR.

Chapter 2 focuses on issue salience—an important factor used to explain PRR success in Western Europe. Pat Buchanan, a conservative powerhouse who represented the apotheosis of the PRR movement at the time, took the Republican Party by storm in 1996, running a competitive campaign for the nomination based on his unabashed cultural conservatism and anti-trade positions. Buchanan’s most notable issue position was trade—specifically opposition to NAFTA, which he believed would impact the American standard of living—and he spent his time on the campaign trail arguing for this. This chapter demonstrates that, while Buchanan was talking about trade, the general campaign moved on other issues, reflecting a different issue prioritization that was not favorable for him. This aligns with theoretical expectations derived from the extensive European literature and more general issue salience theories. As expected, Buchanan disproportionately emphasized PRR issues like trade and was disproportionately successful among those who shared his emphasis. He was not, however, especially successful among those who reported forming candidate impressions based on newspaper reporting, which runs counter to theoretical expectations.

The key takeaway here is that favorable opportunity structures exist for PRR candidates in the United States, just as they do in Western Europe. The increasing salience of immigration or crime—common issues of concern among PRR candidates in Europe—has been invoked to explain variations in their success. While this article cannot make a definitive causal claim and focuses primarily on the observed correlation between Buchanan support and issue salience, specifically around trade, many of the same themes are present. Scholars looking to better

understand how American PRR candidacies can look to the Western European right for clues about what they emphasize, what conditions are favorable, and how their issue positions relate to support. Despite operating in an electoral system with different rules, a country with a different political culture, and as a candidate for a party nomination rather than another office, Buchanan had much in common with PRR parties and candidates around the world.

The findings in chapter 3 are somewhat less convincing as evidence for the applicability of a different European theory. In 2015 and 2016, Donald Trump ran a decidedly populist radical right campaign for the Republican nomination. He was ultimately successful, ushering in a new era of conservative politics in the United States and bringing European PRR-style rhetoric to the United States. This chapter examines Trump's campaign through the lens of convergence: specifically, the idea that Trump tapped a vein of discontent within the Republican Party by viciously attacking its "establishment" and openly disputing its orthodoxy. Just as parties ideologically converging creates a favorable opportunity structure for the Western European PRR, I hypothesize that a similar phenomenon was associated with support for Trump. Using measures of "betrayal" and political independence as imperfect operationalizations of this concept, this analysis does not demonstrate a convincing relationship between Trump support and a lack of faith in the Republican Party as the vehicle for PRR conservatism. Trump's supporters were no more likely to report feeling betrayed by the Republican Party, nor were they more likely to identify as political independents. This is somewhat surprising given Trump's rhetoric during the campaign.

A finding from this analysis is that voters who reported supporting Ted Cruz, an archconservative Texas senator, were more likely to feel betrayed by the Republican Party, while Trump's supporters were more likely to prioritize immigration as an issue, suggesting that

Republican voters were not primarily animated by anti-establishment animus in selecting Trump over Cruz (or over other candidates like Marco Rubio or John Kasich, who handled their relationships with Republican political elites and the establishment much less acrimoniously). Despite its importance in the European literature, this narrative appears to have much less explanatory power at the individual level in this case.

Chapter 4 covers the Arizona senate primary and uses an original survey of likely Republican primary voters to assess two hypotheses. The first: can party convergence explain PRR success? The second question concerns the role of the media, specifically new forms of media that have been touted as especially influential in recent elections. Does exposure to this “new media” correlate with support for PRR candidates? In both cases, evidence from the analysis indicates an affirmative. Supporters of PRR darling and state representative Kelli Ward were, in fact, more likely report that the party establishments had converged and were similarly likely to report getting political news from social media, as expected. But this chapter’s findings do not all meet theoretical expectations.

Unlike the other cases, the Arizona senate primary included two viable PRR candidates, Kelli Ward and Joe Arpaio. The results of the analysis indicate that these two candidates effectively courted different constituencies, despite espousing similar rhetoric and vying publicly for Donald Trump’s support. Arpaio, an experienced county sheriff known for his anti-immigrant policies, fared disproportionately well with those who perceived immigration as a threat, while Ward was more successful with those reported anti-establishment sentiments and consumption of new media. This is an important finding—as the PRR grows and cements its hold as a dominant political faction, candidates may choose to emphasize and establish ownership over different elements of a PRR agenda, with some candidates focusing on policy issues like trade and

immigration, while others focus on systemic issues like establishment corruption and party convergence. This case study offers a compelling real-world view of this phenomenon, and as the battle for the 2024 Republican nomination heats up, a similar dynamic may play out nationally.

Each of the chapters is designed to stand alone as a contribution to the scholarship on the American right. Several themes emerge as threads running through the individual analyses, however. One such thread concerns the role that issues play. In all cases, the PRR candidates were most successful among those who shared PRR beliefs. Buchanan scored highly among New Hampshire voters who prioritized trade; Trump did well with those who prioritized immigration; Arpaio did well with those who perceived immigration as a net negative. Whatever inclination scholars might have to dismiss PRR voters as a mere protest contingent—a disaffected minority screaming into the void—should be set aside. The findings across all three main chapters demonstrate that PRR voters have specific issue preferences and that politicians who can credibly cater to those preferences will receive support. These three chapters demonstrate the role that PRR politicians have in channeling the preferences of a portion of the Republican primary electorate.

An additional unifying theme is the significance of issue ownership. While this was a primary focus only of chapter 2, in all cases, the candidates performed well where they had credibility on issues popular with the PRR electorate. As discussed above, Buchanan performed well with trade hawks in New Hampshire because he carved out a niche in a policy area underserved by the Republican Party of the 1990s. Trump used his celebrity, stage presence, and political acumen to drive ownership (and ultimately salience) of immigration and other PRR issues during the campaign, winning among voters who shared his views and prioritization. In

Arizona, Kelli Ward capitalized on the populist base that trafficked in skepticism of the political establishment but was unable to make significant inroads with immigration skeptics, who broke largely for her fellow PRR candidate Joe Arpaio, who had spent much of his political career building a reputation on the immigration issue.

Taken together, these three cases offer compelling insights into the populist radical right in the United States, taking theories and concepts germinated and refined in Western Europe and applying them to American nomination elections featuring candidates with similar ideologies. While the overall results are mixed, there are some important inter-contextual parallels: issue salience, convergence, and media consumption appear to have relevance in some circumstances. The research question that inspired this project asks if there are important insights for American politics that can be gleaned from Western European cases. The chapters evaluate this across three unique case studies, each of which produces individually compelling results while also meaningfully contributing to untangling the research question. The next section reviews these contributions.

5.1 Contributions

A key overarching contribution comes from the subject matter: there are compelling similarities between Western Europe and the United States, and concepts and theories used to explain Western European phenomena can be repurposed for use across the Atlantic, as I demonstrate here. While other scholars have alluded to these relationships, in this study I have sought to draw and evaluate the explicit connections between the two contexts and have leveraged the case studies included here for this purpose. The PRR is a global phenomenon, and this dissertation represents way to ensure that the well of existing insight is tapped and that the

United States is not treated as fundamentally exceptional in global comparative politics, especially considering the global importance of the PRR in recent years.

Another important contribution comes from the cases selected for analysis here. While it is true that scholars have been exceptionally interested in Donald Trump's 2016 campaign (though, this interest is often focused on the general election rather than the nomination contest), both the 1996 election—Buchanan's campaign specifically—and the 2018 Arizona senate primary have received relatively little in the way of scholarly attention. This dissertation therefore offers insight into two political events that have not previously been closely examined. In fact, to the best of my knowledge there exists no other scholarly analysis of the 2018 Arizona primary.⁴⁹⁰ It is also worth noting that the Arizona case study is not built on publicly available polling data, but original data, gathered in the weeks leading up to the primary for the specific purpose of evaluating hypotheses generated based on the European literature.

The case selection is incredibly important because the recent success of the American PRR is not an ahistorical phenomenon. Renewed attention to Buchanan's unsuccessful campaign, viewed through the lens of PRR insurgency, offers context for Trump's eventual rise, just as an analysis of a post-Trump campaign in Arizona measures the ongoing prospects of Trumpism. In addition to the ability to generalize somewhat across time, space, and electoral context, these cases offer compelling information about the context in which candidates and voters make decisions, and the depth they provide will be a useful resource for subsequent scholarship on PRR topics, both general and specific. What that subsequent scholarship might look like is an important consideration and the subject of this chapter's final section.

⁴⁹⁰ This research was so interesting to Arizonans that I was actually interviewed by a local National Public Radio affiliate about the article published based on Chapter 7.

5.2 Future Research and Final Thoughts

The theories evaluated in the cases are subject to several limitations, reviewed above, but these limitations offer opportunities for future scholarship. Chief among these limitations is application across multiple contexts. Deeper case research on actors like Tom Tancredo and George Wallace would shed further light on the PRR in the United States and could offer opportunities for expanding the scope of the argument beyond post-McGovern-Fraser primaries, in Wallace's case. At any rate, there is significant opportunity to bring European insights to bear in analyzing other campaigns and constructing a broader theory of PRR success that is grounded across the American political landscape and better incorporates elements of the US narrative that are absent in Western Europe. More specifically, the centrality of racial issues and the legacy of Southern conservatism in shaping modern American political dynamics.

Also worth highlighting is the exploratory nature of the three studies captured here. Each chapter brings compelling insights to bear that are themselves grounds for future research, but the models themselves are not endowed with overwhelming explanatory power. Future research, specifically including custom question wording to test theoretical propositions around convergence, issue ownership, and media consumption, can build on the preliminary insights derived here and contribute to a more fulsome transatlantic understanding of PRR dynamics.

Another area that is out of the present dissertation's scope but is otherwise interesting from a scholarly perspective, is the direct relationship between PRR figures in Western Europe and in the United States—that is, how individual members of the groups in different contexts collaborate and share information. As this work has established, there are important similarities in what these groups believe and the factors that contribute to their overall success, but there is relatively little available on their direct interactions. How, for example, do the two groups learn

from each other? Are PRR figures more successful when they invoke or endorse candidates from across the Atlantic? What value is there in campaigning together?⁴⁹¹ Answers to these questions would constitute valuable original research.

Another potentially fruitful avenue for further study is in expanding the research beyond the confines of the United States. Other areas of the world have long traditions of populism, though not always of the radical right variety, and an exploration of a similar research question with a view to understanding how the mountains of literature on the populist history of Latin America can contribute to explanations for the American movement would introduce some additional value into the equation. Populists have also taken root in Asia and Oceania and understanding how those phenomena can contribute to an understanding of the broader, global movement should be a top priority.

In addition to expanding the geographic focus of study, further research within the United States would be valuable as well. This dissertation focuses on presidential elections and the US Senate, but there is ample opportunity to explore the phenomenon of the PRR at other levels of government as well. One obvious opportunity is a “large-n” study focusing on the House of Representatives and Republican candidates for office. Such a study could bring a much larger sample into play, as there are 435 representatives who are elected every two years. There would be methodological challenges, considering that districts are often drawn with partisan motives, but the value of such study would be in its ability to generate generalizable findings that apply to important legislative contests.

⁴⁹¹ Donald Trump and UK Independence Party leader Nigel Farage had a close relationship, and Trump brought Farage to stump with him across the United States. See: Nick Corasaniti, “Trump Calls Clinton a Bigot as British ‘Brexit’ Leader Stumps for Him,” *New York Times*, August 24, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/25/us/politics/nigel-farage-brexit-donald-trump.html>.

Finally, an area of research that is unfortunately omitted here is the Republican Party machinery at the state-level. As important institutional actors, state Republican officials wield wide influence and understanding how they contend with PRR challenges in a formal way would be a valuable contribution. As recorded in chapter 4, the Arizona Republican Party was the eventual destination for Kelli Ward, a PRR firebrand who later used her position to challenge the results of the 2020 election. As the PRR continues to maneuver for control of the Republican Party, the role that apparatchiks like Ward and her companions in state Republican Parties around the country will continue to play will be critical in understanding the broader PRR movement.

The populist radical right is a global phenomenon—and an increasingly urgent one as the world grapples with the sort of upheaval that empowers fringe figures. Politicians like Donald Trump, Pat Buchanan, and Kelli Ward have much in common with each other, but also with European figures who have been the subject of extensive study. The goal of this dissertation has been to understand if the lessons gleaned from the extensive Western European literature can be applied to the United States. Ultimately, this research is valuable in that it brings two scholarly traditions together. It is not perfect—as an exploratory project subject to the usual constraints—but the findings validate some of the assertions derived from the Western European literature. PRR figures continue to dominate political discussion around the world, and in the United States specifically. The implications of PRR success for democracy make the study of the phenomenon among the most important topics in modern political science. Any research that sheds light on this incredibly important movement is valuable. I hope this dissertation meets that bar.

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Appendix 1: 2018 Arizona Survey Questionnaire

Variable	Question	Possible answers
Issue importance ⁴⁹²	What do you think are the most important problems facing this country today? (Please drag your top four problems to the right and order them)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economy in general • Unemployment/jobs • Federal budget deficit/federal debt • Foreign trade/trade deficit • Taxes • Immigration/Illegal aliens • Dissatisfaction with government/Poor leadership • Race relations/Racism • Unifying the Country • Lack of respect for each other • Healthcare • Ethics/moral/religious family decline • Poverty/hunger/homelessness • Guns/Gun control • Education • Judicial system/Courts/Laws • Environment/Pollution • Crime/violence • The media • National security • School shootings • Children’s behavior/Way they are raised • Drugs • Other (please specify) • No opinion
No differences between Rep./Dem. Establishments ⁴⁹³	Do you think there are any important differences in what establishment Republicans and the Democratic Party stand for?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, differences (1) • No, no differences (2) • Don't know (3)

⁴⁹² Gallup. “Most Important Problem.” Web. Accessed July 18, 2021. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1675/most-important-problem.aspx>.

⁴⁹³ American National Election Studies, “ANES 2012 Time Series Post-election Questionnaire,” University of Michigan and Stanford University, 2012. https://electionstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/anes_timeseries_2012_qnaire_post.pdf.

Perceptions of corruption ⁴⁹⁴	How widespread do you think corruption such as bribe taking is among politicians in the United States?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very widespread (1) • Quite widespread (2) • Not very widespread (3) • Hardly happens at all (4) • Don't know (5)
RINOs are a detriment	"Republicans in name only" (RINOs) are a detriment to the Republican Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree (1) • Somewhat agree (2) • Neither agree nor disagree (3) • Somewhat disagree (4) • Strongly disagree (5) • Don't know (6)
Social media news consumer	Where do you get your political news? [Select all that apply]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network TV including their websites (1) • Cable news including their websites (2) • Social networks or video streaming services (3) • Talk radio (4) • Print newspapers including their websites (5) • Newsmagazines including their websites (6) • Other web news (7) • I do not regularly consume news (8)
Talk radio news consumer	Where do you get your political news? [Select all that apply]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network TV including their websites (1) • Cable news including their websites (2) • Social networks or video streaming services (3) • Talk radio (4) • Print newspapers including their websites (5) • Newsmagazines including their websites (6) • Other web news (7) • I do not regularly consume news (8)
Fox News viewer	Which of the cable networks do you follow? [Select all that apply]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CNN (1) • Fox News (2) • MSNBC (3) • Other (4)
Fear of job loss ⁴⁹⁵	How worried are you about losing your job in the near future?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely worried (1)

⁴⁹⁴ American National Election Studies, "ANES 2016 Time Series Post-election Questionnaire," University of Michigan and Stanford University, 2016. https://electionstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/anes_timeseries_2016_qnaire_post.pdf.

⁴⁹⁵ American National Election Studies, "ANES 2012 Time Series Pre-election Questionnaire," University of Michigan and Stanford University, 2012. https://electionstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/anes_timeseries_2012_qnaire_pre.pdf.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very worried (2) • Moderately worried (3) • Slightly worried (4) • Not at all worried (5) • Don't know (6)
Authoritarianism ⁴⁹⁶	<p>Parents are the most important figures in their children's lives, and this can have implications for society as a whole. To explore this, we'd like to ask you about your values when it comes to raising children.</p> <p>Which one is more important for a child to have?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence (1) • Respect (2) <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curiosity • Good manners <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obedience • Self-reliance <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being considerate • Well behaved
Immigrants good for the economy ⁴⁹⁷	Immigrants are generally good for America's economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree (1) • Agree (2) • Neither agree nor disagree (3) • Disagree (4) • Strongly disagree (5) • Don't know (6)
Education	What is the highest level of education you have completed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than high school (1) • High school (2) • Some college/university (3) • Bachelor's degree (4)

⁴⁹⁶ American National Election Studies, "ANES 2012 Time Series Post-election Questionnaire," University of Michigan and Stanford University, 2012. https://electionstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/anes_timeseries_2012_qnaire_post.pdf. See also: Matthew C. MacWilliams, "Who Decides When The Party Doesn't? Authoritarian Voters and the Rise of Donald Trump," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 49, no. 4 (2016), 716-721.

⁴⁹⁷ American National Election Studies, "ANES 2016 Time Series Post-election Questionnaire," University of Michigan and Stanford University, 2016. https://electionstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/anes_timeseries_2016_qnaire_post.pdf.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-graduate study (5) • Don't know/prefer not to answer (6)
Income	Different political issues and candidates attract supporters across the income spectrum. With that in mind, we'd like to ask a little bit about your financial situation. What is your household income?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$0-29,999 (1) • \$30,000-49,999 (2) • \$50-99,999 (3) • \$100,000-\$199,999 (4) • \$200,000+ (5) • Don't know/prefer not to answer (6)
Age	In what year were you born? Please enter your birth year in the box below. (YYYY)	Birth year
Ideology ⁴⁹⁸	Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely liberal (1) • Liberal (2) • Slightly liberal (3) • Moderate; middle of the road (4) • Slightly conservative (5) • Conservative (6) • Extremely conservative (7)
Race	What is your race/ethnicity? [Select all that apply] [Re-coded to "white" and "non-white"]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black or African American (1) • White (2) • American Indian/Alaska Native (3) • Hawaiian Native/Pacific Islander (4) • Asian (5) • Other (6) • Prefer not to answer (7)
Gender	What is your gender?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male (1) • Female (2) • Other (3) • Prefer not to answer (4)

⁴⁹⁸ American National Election Studies, "ANES 2012 Time Series Post-election Questionnaire," University of Michigan and Stanford University, 2012. https://electionstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/anes_timeseries_2012_qnaire_post.pdf.

Appendix 2: Ethics Approval



Date: 20 August 2018

To: Peter Ferguson

Project ID: 112025

Study Title: The populist radical right in the United States

Application Type: NMREB Initial Application

Review Type: Delegated

Full Board Reporting Date: September 7 2018

Date Approval Issued: 20/Aug/2018

REB Approval Expiry Date: 20/Aug/2019

Dear Peter Ferguson

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the above mentioned study, as of the date noted above. NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the expiry date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

This research study is to be conducted by the investigator noted above. All other required institutional approvals must also be obtained prior to the conduct of the study.

Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Arizona Republican Survey 29-05-018	Online Survey		
Letter of consent (survey) 16-08-2018	Implied Consent/Assent	16/Aug/2018	2

Documents Acknowledged:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Survey screening document	Screening Form/Questionnaire		

No deviations from, or changes to the protocol should be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB, except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazard(s) to study participants or when the change(s) involves only administrative or logistical aspects of the trial.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kelly Patterson, Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

Appendix 3: Chapter 4, Multinomial Logistic Regression

Table 7: Multinomial logistic regression analysis of custom survey of 2018 Arizona US Senate primary voters

Independent variable	Ward Support	Arpaio Support
Issue importance: immigration (0-4 [most important])	0.93	1.12
Issue importance: the economy (0-4 [most important])	1.13	0.95
No differences between Rep./Dem. Establishments	1.78*	1.16
Perception of corruption (1-4 [most])	1.31	1.14
RINOs are a detriment (1-5 [strongly agree])	1.43***	0.96
Social media news consumer	2.03**	1.54
Talk radio news consumer	1.06	0.61
Fox News viewer	0.67	0.55**
Fear of job loss (1-5 [extremely worried])	0.99	0.95
Authoritarianism (0-4 [most authoritarian])	0.98	1.17
Immigrants good for the economy (1-5 [strongly disagree])	1.02	1.44***
Education (1-5 [highest])	1.06	0.77*
Income (1-5 [highest])	0.99	0.83
Age (years)	0.98*	0.98**
Ideology (1 [extremely liberal] – 7 [extremely conservative])	1.16	0.84
Race (white)	2.21	0.90
Gender (female)	1.18	1.39
<i>Constant</i>	0.02**	2.46
<i>n</i> count		721
Pseudo r-squared		0.07

Note: * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

While general logistic regression is preferable when analyzing dichotomous variables, multinomial logistic regression is a suitable method for making predictions based on nominal

variables with unordered outcomes.⁴⁹⁹ This method has the benefit of efficiency over running multiple binomial models, producing better specified results in relation to a base (reference) category, and the relative risk ratios produced (as displayed in the above table) can be interpreted in much the same way as odds ratios.⁵⁰⁰

Table 7 reports the results of a multinomial logistic regression analysis of the original survey data gathered from Arizona voters in the runup to that state's 2018 Senate primary. The reference category here is support for Martha McSally, the "establishment" pick for the nomination, while the dependent variables compared against this reference are support for former Maricopa County Sheriff, Joe Arpaio, and former state senator, Kelli Ward, both of whom sought to represent the PRR contingent of the primary electorate. These results tell a similar story to those reported in chapter 4. The interpretation of this analysis does not vary substantially from that conducted in main text. Ward's supporters are still far more likely than McSally's supporters to perceive no differences between the major parties and remain substantially more likely to report that Republicans in Name Only (RINOs) are a detriment to the Republican Party. Social media remains an important predictor of support for Ward; the inverse is true of Fox News viewership and support for Arpaio. Relative to McSally's supporters, Arpaio's supporters were substantially less likely to report consuming the network's content. Other consistencies include the relationship between support for Arpaio and education (those with lower levels of education were more likely to support Arpaio) and age. Both Arpaio and Ward's supporters were younger than McSally's. This analysis confirms that major conservative

⁴⁹⁹ John P. Huffman, *Regression Models for Categorical, Count, and Related Variables: An Applied Approach* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 111.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 113-116

ideology is a key differentiator between Ward and Arpaio, not between either of these candidates and McSally.

Curriculum Vitae

Jeremy C. Roberts

Education

University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario
PhD candidate, political science, 2015-present

University of Oxford, St. Antony's College
Oxford, UK
MSc, politics research, 2014-2015

University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario
BA, political science, 2010-2014

Awards

Andrew Grant Scholarship in Third Year Political Science, 2013
S.F. Glass Gold Medal, 2014
Ontario Graduate Scholarship, 2017, 2018, and 2019

Publication

Roberts, Jeremy C. "The Populist Radical Right in the US: New Media and the 2018 Arizona Senate Primary." *Politics and Governance* 8, no. 1 (2020): 111-121.

Related work experience

Graduate teaching assistant
University of Western Ontario, 2015-2016