

**Populism Reloaded:  
Challenges to Governance and Democracy in the Early 21st Century**

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**Abstract**

*Populism is a generally ill-defined label, often used to describe a discourse critical of current democratic systems, that juxtaposes a romanticized people versus the corrupt and evil elites that lead them. In the context of South American politics, populism is frequently a feature of the left. In Europe, it is associated with the radical right. Despite the lack of consensus on what populism is, there is an increasing trend in anti-establishment literature to quantify and measure the degree of populism among contemporary anti-mainstream but also mainstream parties. Few works, however, seek to explore the link between populist discourses and political party ideology. Even fewer explore the implications that populism has towards electoral success. Consequently, this article asks two questions; is populism in Europe related to a certain type of party or is it a feature of many parties transcending left-right divisions? And secondly, is the degree of populism related to the electoral success of political parties? Using classical standard content analysis of party manifestos in order to measure populism and the ideological location of twelve anti-establishment parties emergent during the past decade, this paper argues that there is a strong correlation between electoral success and the populist score of political parties. Furthermore, it claims that there is also a strong correlation between populism and economic-leftist positions, regardless of the broader ideological families to which political parties belong to.*

## **Introduction**

Two general directions characterize academic literature concerning non-mainstream political parties in Europe. The first deals with the political space such parties occupy on specific given issues: the economy, the role of the state, personal freedom, the environment, EU integration, views on globalization, etc. The second focuses on their anti-mainstream party message, their people-centrism and anti-elitism; in other words, on their populism (Mudde 2004). Despite the lack of consensus on what populism is, there is an increasing trend in anti-establishment literature to quantify and measure the degree of populism among contemporary anti-mainstream but also mainstream parties. Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011), for instance, illustrate how both computer-based content analysis as well as text analysis can be used to measure populism. Similarly, Jagers and Walgrave (2007) conduct a comparative discourse analysis for Belgian political parties.

Few such works measuring populism, however, make further inferences about the link between populist discourses and political party ideology (see Jagers and Walgrave 2007). Even fewer explore the implications that populism has towards electoral success. With an eye towards new anti-establishment parties formed during the last decade and building on recent efforts in academic works to measure populism, this paper poses the question: is the degree of populism related to the electoral success of political parties? And secondly, is populism in Europe related to a certain type of party such as the radical-right, extreme-right or is it conversely a feature of a number of parties that transcend right-left divisions? Related to this is the question, is populism in Europe solely the universe of the radical right party family among non-centrist parties?

To answer these questions, this article employs a content analysis of party programs and manifestos using the standard method. It compares the populism score of political parties with their score on left-right and authoritarian-libertarian issues as well as with their score in national and European-level electoral competitions. Ultimately, it argues that there is a strong correlation between the populist score and the electoral score obtained by political parties. Furthermore, it claims that there is also a strong correlation between the populism of a given party and its leftist position on the economy, regardless whether it is radical-right, extreme-right, new-left or libertarian.

### **Theoretical Implications of Populism**

Academic literature does not hesitate to remind readers that *populism* is a fluid concept - often ill-defined - and that there is no consensus on what it actually means. At the same time, it is claimed to be employed differently by different authors. Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011) note that for Mudde (2007) it is an ideology; for Taggart (1995), it is an organizational form; for Hawkins (2009), it is a discourse; and for Jaegers and Walgrave (2007), it is a style. Despite the differences, however, a thin consensus *is* building around what the term ‘roughly’ means. The centrality of the people (Mudde 2004), the triangular framing of politics with elites on the top and the people (as well as populist parties) on the bottom, the division between rulers and ruled are all fundamentally used to define the term ‘populism’. Ultimately, it highlights a partition of society to one of its most ancient cleavages, one that has managed to transcend historical periods and political changes – the cleavage between *the elites* and *the people*. It is in relation to this division of society that populism is ultimately employed and this paper will thus not deviate from the thin definition conceptualized by Taggart (2000) and Mudde (2004) – that is to say a

simplistic framing of politics creating a dichotomy between a homogeneous romanticised ‘good’ people and the demonized, corrupt and disinterested elite that lead them.

The link between populism and ideology however is heavily under-theorized. In the context of European and western politics, populism is, however, often assumed to be associated with a specific type of party family, the new radical right. Therefore, quite frequently, we find the disclaimer ‘populist’ next to the label radical right or new radical right in contemporary European politics. Attempts to measure populism make similar inferences. Jagers and Walgrave (2007) for instance argue that while both Belgian Greens and Vlaams Belang are anti-establishment parties, it is only the latter that is marked by a populist style while the discourse is almost completely absent among the Greens (325). This paper does not challenge previous conclusions regarding other party families but it does explore the presence of populism among current anti-establishment parties which are not necessarily radical-right.

The reasoning behind populism being associated with specific radical ideologies - be they on the left or right of the political spectrum – is because these are the ideologies outside the mainstream centre-left and centre-right. As mainstream parties have watered down their ideological differences and have seized state resources to keep themselves in power (Katz and Mair 1996), the populist anti-mainstream parties not only adopt an anti-elitist message against the mainstream but also attempt at presenting the voter with a broader variety of ideological options.

### **Case Studies and Research**

The recent decade has witnessed a proliferation of new (or reinvented), anti-establishment parties from the radical-right but also the extreme-right such as Golden Dawn in Greece, Swedish Democrats, Party for Freedom in Netherlands, ATAKA in Bulgaria, People’s

Party in Romania, Jobbik in Hungary and Ordinary People in Slovakia. This has coincided with a parallel proliferation of leftist-libertarian<sup>1</sup> parties such as the Pirate party family (particularly in Sweden and Germany), Politics-can-be-Different in Hungary, Five Star Movement in Italy as well as a resurgence of more traditionally Marxist parties such as Podemos in Spain, SYRIZA in Greece, Die Linke in Germany or Parti de Gauche in France. All these parties have formed (or in some instances, have been reformed) since the mid-2000s and subsequently surged in electoral competitions. The aim of this paper is to measure the populism of this newer wave of suspects and test whether populism continues to be employed by the radical-right instead of the left-libertarian camp.

Equally important, is the aim to investigate whether there is a correlation between a certain type of party discourse and electoral success. The reasoning behind this is that new parties which are ideologically moderate as well as non-populist would have a harder time convincing voters that they are a viable alternative to the mainstream as opposed to new populist parties which consistently point out *to* the mainstream as being the source of voters' discontent.

To this end, I use a small-n comparison of twelve new anti-establishment radical fringe political parties, emergent after the mid-2000s, from both the radical-right as well as left-libertarian camp in six EU member states. This article focuses on the latest wave of such parties, and it deliberately leaves out older suspects such as Front National in France, FPO in Austria or the already established Green parties. This is because they can hardly be called new as they have been around for decades. Secondly, many of them have already been co-opted by the mainstream so they are no longer anti-establishment or populist. Since this paper asks about the success of new parties, I focus on parties that have been formed or reinvented after the year 2000.

Therefore, Die Linke and the Pirate Party in Germany, the Pirate Party in Sweden, the Swedish Democrats, SYRIZA in Greece, the Greek Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS), Golden Dawn in Greece, the Five-Star-Movement in Italy, Hungary's Politics-can-be-Different (LMP), Hungary's Jobbik, Romania's New Generation Party as well as the Romanian People's Party (PPDD) are the focus of this paper. The article thus centres on six EU-member states: Germany, Greece, Italy, Sweden, Hungary and Romania. The aim is to compare countries where there are two or more significant non-mainstream parties within the political system. This includes parties with similar ideologies or parties from different party families. The reasoning for this is to compare new parties in similar political systems since the dynamics of political competition for a new populist party in a political system with no other new parties are very different than those for multiple new parties that have to compete with the mainstream as well as each other.

The paper also intends to compare countries with significant similarities including comparable electoral systems. All cases chosen have mixed member proportional (MMP) systems or modified proportional systems which tend to favour major parties. Greece, for instance, allocates a bonus of 50 seats out of 300 to the party that wins a plurality of votes. Sweden prevents small parties from having their own ballot papers thus handicapping their capacity to receive votes (IFES 2012). All other states use MMP which similarly favours larger parties but also allows for at least part of the seats to be allocated proportionally to the percentage of votes received. In this sense, the proportional part of MMP is not much different from outright PR systems.

At the same time, this paper seeks to avoid a West vs. East separation. This separation has persisted in academic studies despite the quarter of a century that has transpired since the fall

of communism in Eastern Europe. However, some of the more recent works, such as those by Cas Mudde in 2007 or McDonnell and Newell (2011), employ a comparative approach of both east and west. As the surge of non-establishment parties in the mid and late 2000s is a pan-European phenomenon simultaneously present in both old and new EU member states, this paper has deliberately included case-studies involving states from both sides of the former Iron curtain.

Ultimately, the content analysis is based on the political party manifestos and programs of each of the twelve parties involved. Textual content analysis was performed for all manifestos from the most recent national election in each respective state. The measurement proposed is one examining a discourse that claims a disconnect in society between *people* and *elites* and identifies mainstream political parties, governments, political leaders, surveillance and law enforcement agencies, multinational corporations, foreign-powers, the IMF or the EU as self-interested corrupt elites, profiteering and ultimately preying on the people. It is also a discourse claiming to repair democracy, restore people's sovereignty and re-engage with society by ensuring that individuals gain access to political decision-making through direct democracy as opposed to current forms of representative democracy. An index is presented below of statements (regardless of their left/right position) within party manifestos that fall within the definition above. In other words, statements which claim to defend a 'pure' and 'honest' *people* and their interests from a conglomerate of corrupt and evil set of adversaries.

Thus, in this representation, party manifestos for all twelve parties studied were broken down into statements and each statement received either a value of 0 or 1 based on its qualification as a populist stance. Thus, a sentence for example such as "Yes to a Europe of Nations, no to a Europe of capital and loan sharks" is broken down into two statements. One is

“yes to a Europe of Nations” implying greater emphasis on the traditional native community and a return to a natural and popular form of organization – the nation - as opposed to an unpopular, alienated, artificial and increasingly centralized government in Brussels. It thus scores 1 on the populist scale. The second is “no to a Europe of capital and loan sharks”. The negative pejorative label “loan sharks” implies a populist statement which the voter would recognize as aimed against those profiteering or preying on the people. Therefore as the message is anti-capitalist and assumed to be popular with some voters, the statement receives a value of 1.

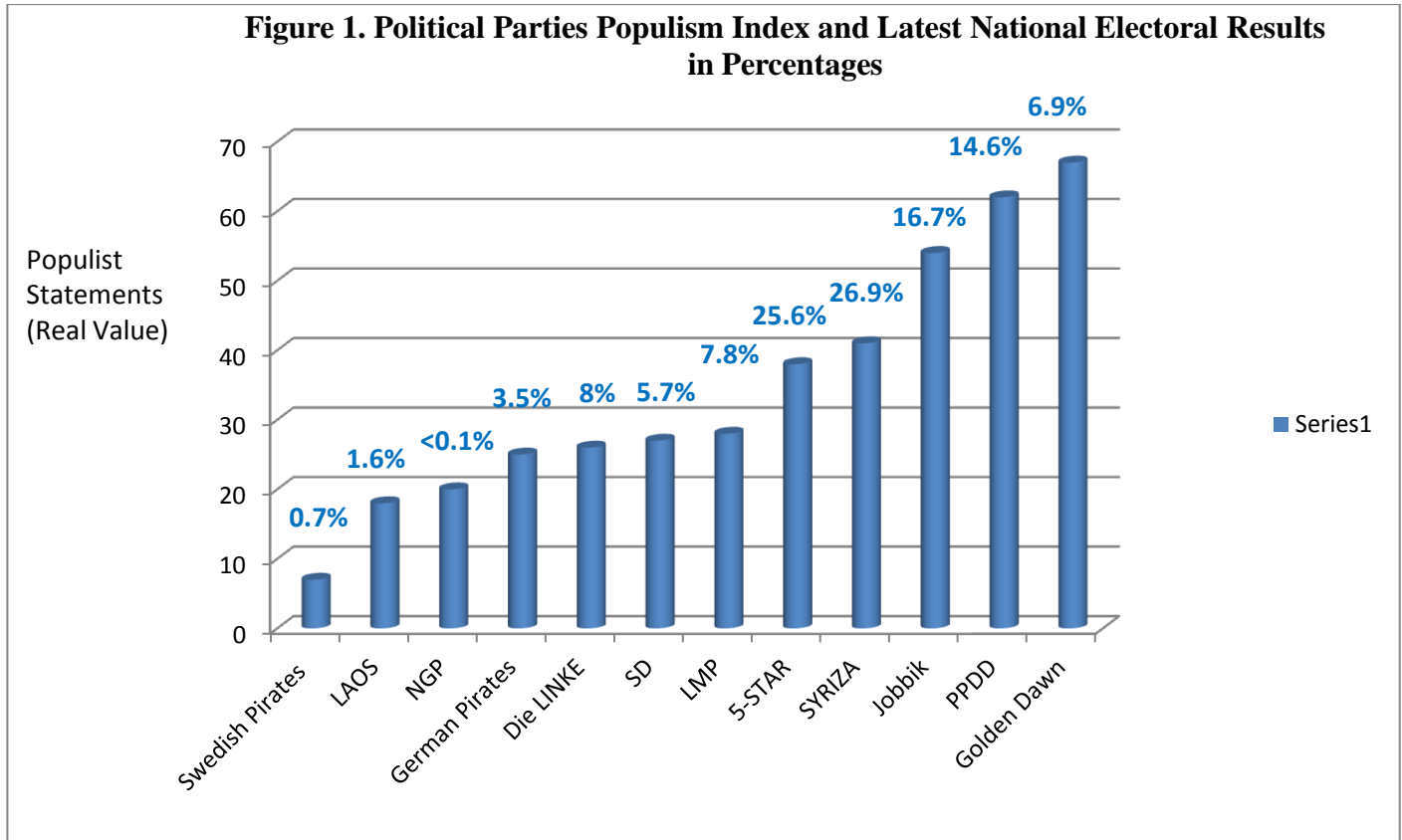
Ultimately, for each manifesto of the twelve parties studied, scores were obtained by the sum of the statements which received a value of 1. The positions were then mapped by party. Figure 4 below illustrates the scores that all twelve parties received. In addition, it illustrates their electoral results in percentages in the most recent national electoral elections.

### **Populism Index Results**

When comparing the statements made by political parties of the new right and the new left party families, it is evident that the former make more use of this type of discourse as opposed to their ideological competitors (see Fig. 1). The differences, however, are not as striking as argued by Jagers and Walgrave (2007) who conclude that populism was found to be a critical feature of the radical right but almost nonexistent among the Greens. Radical right parties seem to score on average, 60% more than the new left libertarian camp, however some radical right parties do score lower than some new left libertarian ones.



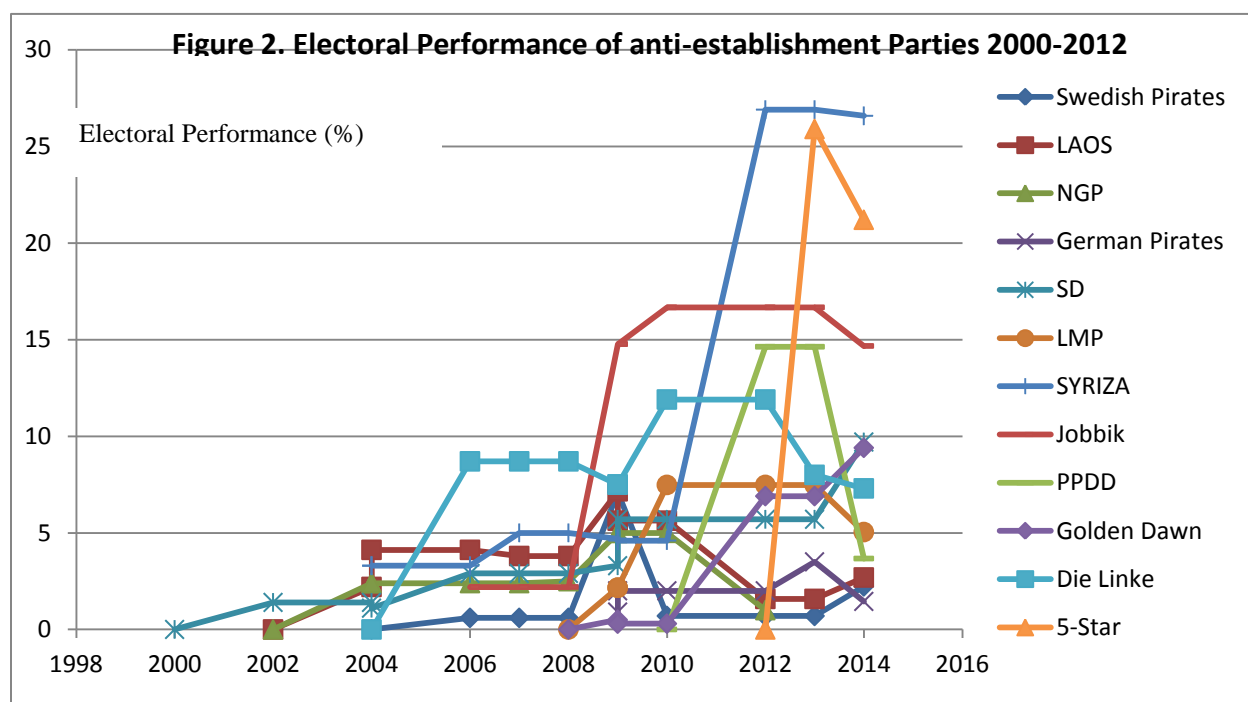
Therefore, within party families, significant differences exist. While Golden Dawn, Jobbik and PPDD make over 50 statements that can be classified under the anti-establishment discourse, the manifestos of NGP and LAOS contain only a third of that number. Similarly, in the new left camp, while SYRIZA, LMP and the German Pirates have over 25 such statements, the manifesto of the Swedish Pirates includes less than 10. Interestingly enough, it is the three parties that score significantly less on the populism scale (than their ideological counterparts) that also obtain poorer results in elections.



The difference between the strong and weak anti-establishment discourses of the twelve parties above seems to correlate with the electoral performance of these parties in the latest national elections within the respective states. Parties which score higher in the index seem to

receive a higher percentage of votes. The correlation is most vivid for the new left-libertarian parties and the populist right. For the extreme-right Golden Dawn in Greece, its high score in the populist index does not seem at first glimpse to have made a significant difference in the result obtained. However, given that the party was an absolute outlier just a year prior and that in the previous elections is barely managed to secure 0.3% of the vote, the 2600 % spike is quite astonishing.

When looking at the electoral trend over time during the last decade, the link between the populist discourse and electoral performance is even more evident. Figure 2 below illustrates the success of these parties obtained in national and European parliamentary elections between 2000 and 2014 (the second 2004 and 2009 data on the graph is from the EP election results).



The graph above illustrates two significant trends. One is that these parties are continuing to proliferate well into the current decade and over time their electoral fortunes are improving

significantly. This is occurring irrespective of party family. Both the new left and the new radical-right are generally on the rise. Additionally, the graph above illustrates that the success of these parties is correlated to the intensity of their anti-establishment discourse. Where the anti-establishment discourse scores highest, political parties experience increasingly better electoral results over time. This is particularly the case of SYRIZA, Jobbik, Golden Dawn and PPDD. In polls just prior to the German 2013 federal elections, this was the case for the German Pirate Party as well. Infighting and organizational breakdown, however, pushed the party from scores in the mid tens to just two percent. Alternatively, where the anti-establishment discourse is diluted or almost absent, parties experience decline over time. This is particularly the case of the Swedish Pirates but also of the NGP and LAOS.

### **Identifying the Political Space of Anti-establishment Parties**

Measuring references to the people and instances of condemnations of the elites represents a one-dimensional map. Yet such measurements have rarely been compared to the position these parties occupy on the ideological spectrum.

Academic literature during the last few decades has been constantly preoccupied with understanding the arenas of competition for new anti-establishment political parties and in particular those of the new left and new right. While the new-left is associated with libertarian-universalism and the new right with communitarian-authoritarianism (Kitschelt 1995; Marks et al. 2006; Bornschier 2010), literature has still not come to a consensus on how to map these parties on the left-right economic spectrum. Herbert Kitschelt (1995) claims that transformations

of the working class and re-socialization in working environments have allowed a certain authoritarian, anti-immigrant and economically right-wing new right party family to gain significant salience among blue-collar voters. The Danish People's Party, the Front National in France, Liga Nord in Italy and Freedom Party in Austria are usually the main suspects associated with this kind of party (Kitschelt 1995: 6-7; Nonna Mayer 1998: 12 Hans-Georg Betz 1998: 46). These parties combine right-wing positions on the authoritarian-libertarian divide with right-wing positions on the economy and are thus situated at the exact opposite pole of the new left and green parties.

Several works dispute, however, the free-marketizing nature of the radical right, claiming that many such parties actually fall left on the economy (Rydgren 2006: 11). Other studies argue that the economy does not matter at all and during elections a party's right-wing or left-wing economic stance makes no difference as far as electoral results are concerned (Cas Mudde 2007: 137; Bornschier 2010: 25). Mudde (2007) claims that this is because parties focus on three main critical issues: a) nativism (the congruence between a state's population and a 'native' group), b) authoritarian politics and c) populism (297). Discontent voters are thus captured, according to this account, based on an appeal to the three ideological pillars above.

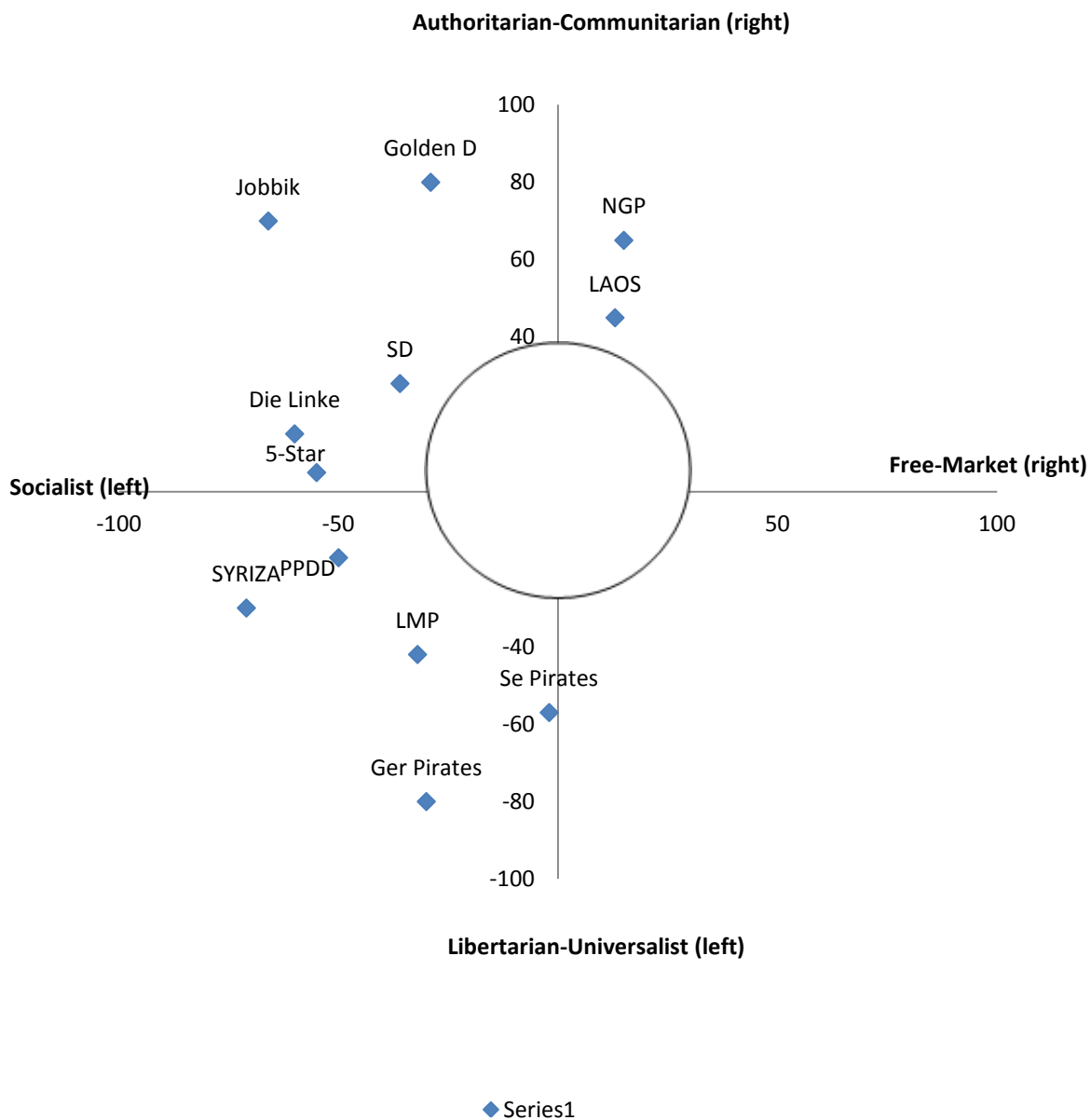
The twelve parties under study in this paper are mapped according to their position taken on these two dimensions in their latest manifestos<sup>2</sup>. The mapping was made based on textual content analysis of the latest manifestos and party-programs of the twelve parties under focus. The method used was a version of the standard method with just 2 dimensions (socialist/redistributive vs. free-market and authoritarian-communitarian vs. libertarian-universalism) and two marker items 'left' and 'right' for each dimension. Keeping with

traditional conceptualizations surrounding positions on the economy, for the socialist vs. free-market dimension, socialism is considered 'left' and free-market is 'right'. For the authoritarian-communitarian vs. libertarian-universalism dimension, authoritarian-communitarian is considered 'right' and libertarian-universalism is 'left'.

Consequently, party manifestos for all twelve parties studied were broken down into statements and each statement received one marker on either dimension. Thus, a sentence for example such as "Yes to a Europe of Nations, no to a Europe of capital and loan sharks" is broken down into two statements. One is "yes to a Europe of Nations" calling for greater emphasis on the traditional native community and thus situated right on the authoritarian-communitarian vs. libertarian-universalism divide. The second is "no to a Europe of capital and loan sharks" implying an anti-capitalist message and thus situated left on the economic left-right spectrum.

Ultimately, for each manifesto of the twelve parties studied, scores were obtained by the sum of the 'right' minus 'left' statements on the socialist vs. free-market dimension as well as the sum of the 'right' minus 'left' statements on the authoritarian-communitarian vs. libertarian-universalism dimension. The positions were then mapped on a two-dimensional graph. Authoritarian-communitarian vs. libertarian-universalism is depicted on the vertical y axis while socialist versus free-market on the horizontal x axis. Figure 3 below illustrates the position on the two dimensions of each of the twelve parties under study.

**Figure 3. Positions of Political Parties on Socialist-Capitalist and Libertarian-Authoritarian Dimensions**



*New-right is on the left*

The map above illustrates a lack of a perfect left-left vs. right-right alignment. Parties generally associated with the radical right family are on the right but mostly they are present on the left on economic issues. Among the cases studied here, those on the left are in fact the majority. Except LAOS and NGP which are only slightly more right, all other four parties associated with the new radical right family place left on the economic spectrum. Even the position of these two outlier parties is not that radical on the economic right. This is because, although the main thrust of their ideology is right-wing, the manifestos of these parties also include a large number of statements which fall on the left of the economic spectrum.

The reasons as to why radical-right and extreme-right parties are beginning to continuously take up left-wing positions on the economy may vary. Nonetheless, it is conceivable that conditions exist for a left-wing economic turn among most new political contenders today. Firstly, as new anti-establishment parties are innately and aggressively anti-mainstream, they tend to adopt policies and positions that run counter to the centrist established political parties. When it comes to the economy, mainstream centrist parties suffer – among other things - from a lack of ideological distance between each other. While both left and right have moved significantly towards the centre, it is arguably the social-democratic parties that have done most of the compromising by abandoning their criticism of the current capitalist order. Because of this, the entire mainstream has essentially become right-wing. The centre-left parties' decisive turn away from traditional left-wing practices is not novel but it has certainly been consistent over the past three decades. While the clear turn can be traced to Mitterrand's fiscal restraint in the mid 1980s, it has continued unhampered since then in most if not all European

states and it persists today in the form of near-consensus among centrist parties on economic orthodoxy as *the* only remedy and response to the most recent financial crisis.

As the mainstream is generally adopting similar positions on the economic left-right dimension, it is only natural that contenders would attempt to capture a space that is left vacant. The new left does so because the economic left pole is consistent with its revolutionary message about altering the status quo. The new radical right may do so for very similar reasons as it too claims to work towards changing the current order.

The second reason is very much related to the ‘us versus them’ dichotomy that the nativist-ethnocentric communitarian discourse entails. The anti-establishment party of the new radical right does not necessarily need to tackle pressing economic issues with economic solutions such as ‘lower taxes and lesser bureaucracy’ as in the redistributive-libertarian vs. authoritarian free-marketizing models (Kitschelt 1995: 13). In speeches, campaigns and debates, economic issues can be tackled just as effectively with authoritarian ethnocentric solutions such as advocating lowering the number of immigrants and as a result, keeping *the welfare state*. In essence, the immigrant is depicted not just as a threat to the native cultural majority but also as a parasite and threat to the social-system in place. The solution proposed is thus to maintain the welfare-state but remove the stress placed on it by ‘non-members’ such as immigrants and asylum seekers. This type of welfare chauvinism is thus not hostile to the welfare state and in fact defends it – as long as only the native group would be the one to benefit. Ideologically, this is much more in line with the nativist communitarian discourse than the economically right-wing free marketizing argument.



*Devious new Face of the Radical-Right*

Four of the parties under focus in this paper also score quite high on the right of the authoritarian-communitarian vs. libertarian-universalist divide. However, a few mask their nativist message with libertarian positions. Although generally authoritarian and in favor of a strong state, the discourses of these parties are not absolutely void of any libertarianism. Programs of many radical right parties are sometimes surprisingly not authoritarian despite their broad ideological thrust. The Swedish Democrats, for example, argue for ‘anti-bullying laws’, improving marine environments in the Baltic Sea, combating violence against women, increasing funding for the UN refugee agency and a return of the army from Afghanistan (Swedish Democrats 2012). These positions imply freedom *from* traditional sources of oppression while in the case of improving marine environments the measure is quite blatantly green. The Romanian People’s Party argues for banning the ACTA treaty (criticized for its secrecy and alleged impediment to digital rights and freedom of expression), lesser criminal punishment in cases where crimes are committed without violence and a major reforestation program (PPDD 2012). Even Jobbik includes a governmental scheme rewarding environmentally friendly homes, while promising to promote recycling technologies and establish an animal-welfare and rights institution within the ministry of the environment (Jobbik 2010).

How serious these parties are about these issues and how much salience they have over them is of course debatable but often times these seemingly libertarian positions are just simply outbursts of populism. Other times, they are in fact linked to issues related to communitarian-nativist positions. ACTA, for example, was especially unpopular in Romania right before the 2012 elections and this may be the reason why the PPDD promised to never implement it. In the

case of the Swedish Democrats, increasing funding for the UN refugee agency is a measure aimed at keeping potential immigrants in their home countries and away from Sweden (Swedish Democrats 2013). Doing more to combat violence against women on its own is a progressive promise, however the issue may be presented as a package together with other proposals (which the SD effectively owns) such as “preventing the Islamization of Sweden”, ‘supporting women living under religious oppression’ and ‘banning the veil’ (Swedish Democrats 2012).

The religion of the immigrant (Islam) is thus equated with non-libertarian practices such as the religious oppression of women. The latter libertarian value, on the other hand – gender equality and women’s liberation from traditional gender roles - is not contested and is accepted as intrinsically good and - Western. Consequently, a zero-sum game is presented to the voter between two seemingly libertarian values: tolerance for minorities (and those belonging to minority cultures) and women’s rights. According to this conceptualization, one cannot have both. Voters are thus forced to choose between one or the other. As the protection of minorities (in this case Islam) is depicted to inherently threaten not just the native majority culture but also other libertarian values, the voter is thus cornered into choosing to accept that in order to defend the rights of one group, one must curtail the rights of another. This is a significant departure from previous perceptions about the radical right’s one-dimensional authoritarian thrust aimed equally against minorities, the (traditional) role of women in society and immigrants (Rydgren 2006: 11). Radical political parties have thus increasingly adopted messages that are slightly more complex. Xenophobia and authoritarianism are no longer presented to the voter in their raw, undigested form. Parties advocating them now include some libertarian and even progressive values in order

to help them package their main ethnocentric, nativist and anti-immigrant message in a more acceptable form to the greater public.

Consequently, parties associated with the new radical right are not that far-right on the non-economic axis. Thus, as exemplified with the Swedish Democrats and PPDD, these two parties combine authoritarian-communitarian messages with libertarian ones which on the map places them closer to the centre of this axis (PPDD actually falls slightly on the left). This, of course, has to be treated with caution. It does not mean that these parties are neutral or centrist on authoritarian-libertarian issues but rather that they are parties which have managed to perfect the packaging method of otherwise raw communitarian-nativist and authoritarian messages.

Even parties of the new left occasionally adopt seemingly contradicting authoritarian positions as well, albeit they do this to a much lesser degree than their ideological opponents. In general, the new-left or left-libertarian party family, emergent during the early 1980s, opposes the priority of economic growth on the political agenda and the patterns of policy making that restrict democratic participation to political elites and centralized interest groups. Left-libertarian parties advocate instead for personal freedom, individual autonomy, popular participation in decision-making and a traditional leftist concern for equality (Kitschelt 1988: 195). The commitment to these principles, however, is not absolute – at least not for the more recent members of the party family. The German Pirates (2013), for example, promise to toughen laws dealing with bribing members of parliament while the Hungarian LMP (2012) vows to ‘seriously hold Fidesz responsible’ if they will lose power after the upcoming 2014 elections. Italy’s Five Star Movement likewise advocates for direct democracy, green jobs and no corruption but at the same time has fostered close ties in the European Parliament with UKIP and the Swedish

Democrats. The representation in figure 2 certainly confirms that these statements are not mere anomalies. However, these outbursts seem to be part of the broader anti-mainstream message and the image these parties try to project as advocates of the disenfranchised, alienated citizenry. In general, therefore, the new-left discourse is still largely confined to its original spectrum; personal-freedom, internationalism and direct forms of democracy continue to be the main tenets of the left-libertarian party family. Nonetheless, such parties do occasionally make use of seemingly conflicting authoritarian and populist messages. In this regard Five-Star Movement, LMP, SYRIZA, the Swedish Pirate Party as well as the Pirate Party of Germany are no exception.

*Not all New-left and Libertarians are left*

The parties generally associated with the libertarian new left are indeed left on the non-economic axis. However, here too there are differences as far as economic positions are concerned. While all fall left on the economic spectrum, some are evidently closer to the centre while others have a more nuanced left-wing position. The party closest to the economic centre is the Swedish Pirate party. Conversely, their German counterparts have developed a very elaborate economic left-wing position which among others includes quite an ambitious promise (in the context of German politics) to institute the minimum wage. As a consequence, they score significantly to the left of their Swedish counterparts.

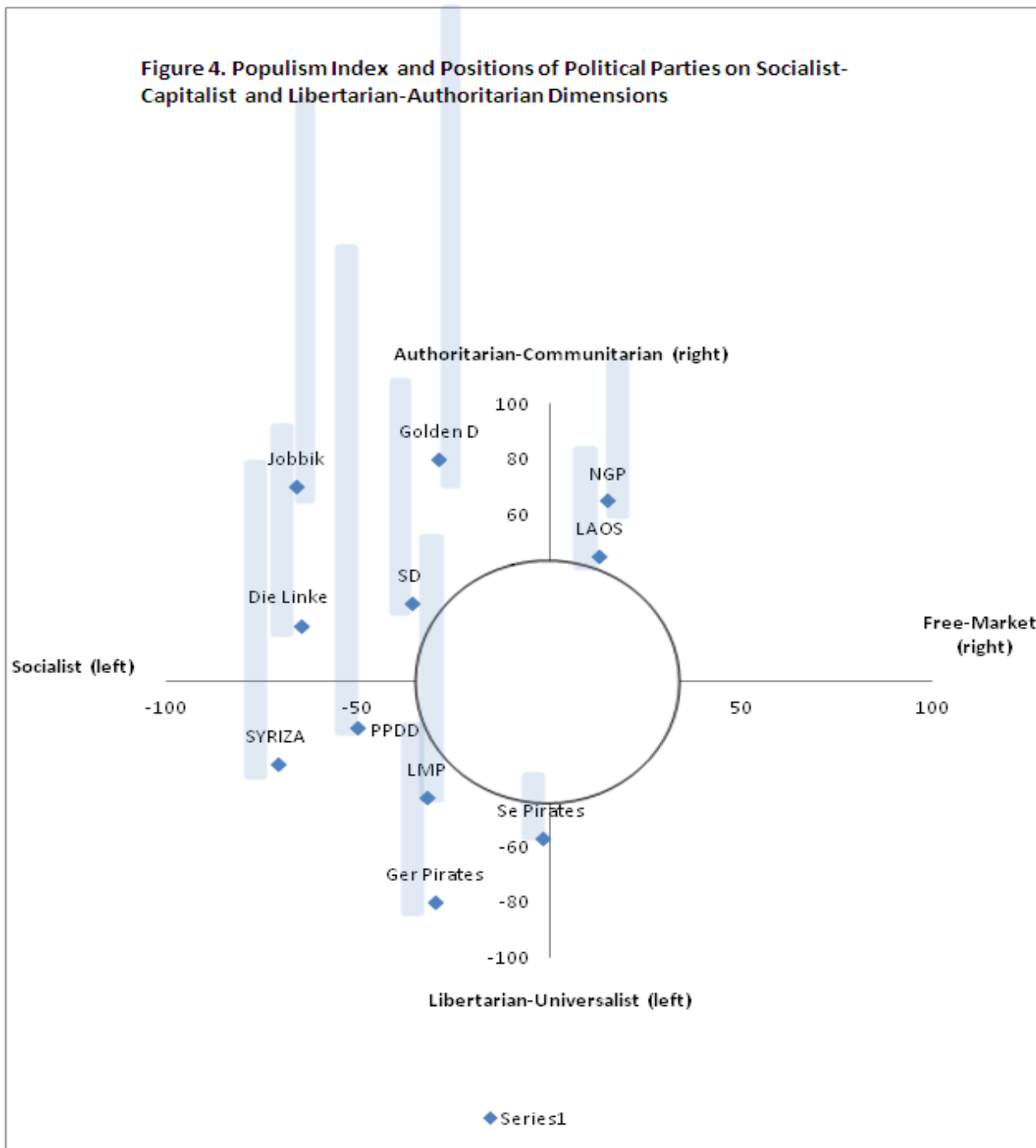
### *Avoiding the Centre*

Two areas on the map are left empty by the twelve political parties under study. First, no party situates itself left on the authoritarian-libertarian axis and right on the socialist vs. free-market axis. Although it is impossible to make inferences about every single European political party system (based on these twelve parties), these cases nonetheless reveal a trend that is in strong contrast to the American political space where libertarian politics are associated with the free-market and where stronger state involvement is associated with social-liberalism.

Secondly, none of the twelve parties represented in the map above situate themselves near the centre of political space and this is to be expected from parties that claim to be non-mainstream; in other words, the opposite of the centrist established left and right. These parties are ultimately seeking to be a reaction to the cartel-party system identified by Katz and Mair (1996) and it confirms their conclusions that outsiders are among the important challengers of the cartel (531). Of course what score counts as centre left-right is a matter of debate. CMP data, which is one-dimensional, gives a range of -30 to 30 out of 100 for most centrist parties in western democracies. Because of the different method used here, the single-CMP score does not apply. However, it is reasonable to argue that a -30-to-30 range on either axis would be the rough boundary on which mainstream parties could potentially be situating themselves on. Assuming this to be the case, all twelve parties studied fall outside this range as they all score more than 30 (-30) on at least one axis.

When it comes to the economy, nonetheless, three parties do not make it outside the -30 – 30 range. The Swedish Pirates, NGP and LAOS all fall very close to or outright within economic

centrism. Interestingly enough, these are also the parties which scored lowest on the populism index. Figure 4 below illustrates a combined map of both their populism index as well as their ideological position.



What is particularly interesting in figure 4 above is that the parties which scored highest on the populism index also find themselves left on the socialist-free market ideological divide. The three parties which score especially low in the populism index are likewise right on economic issues or centrist. The party which scored lowest – the Swedish Pirates - is also the one closest to the centre (due to its unclear position on the economy).

Worth noting is that LAOS, NGP and the Swedish Pirates are also the parties which have made the least inroads in electoral competitions. The only party among them which is an exception and which has entered national parliament at one point during the last decade is LAOS. However, since early 2012 it has lost almost its entire voter base to the more radical Golden Dawn. New Generation Party almost made it to the national parliament in 2008, but since then its voter share has fallen to less than 0.1%. The Swedish Pirate party has succeeded in sending two MEPs to the European Parliament in 2009 but subsequent to this, it has not been able to reach 1% in that country's national elections. A possible explanation could be that centrist economic positions or (even worst) no position on the economy is quite detrimental for an anti-establishment party's success. Therefore, while the German Pirates have elaborated an extensive leftist economic stance and have achieved modest but steadily increasing results, the Swedish Pirates have often stated that they do not take positions on the economy. It is quite plausible that such a strategy is not well received by the electorate and Swedish Pirate leaders do admit this (Troberg 2011). As a result, it may be that when asked on issues related to the economy, the laconic 'we don't know' is simply not acceptable. In contrast, parties with strong (and particularly leftist) economic programs (regardless of their party family) have all managed to enter national parliaments of their respective states.

What seems to be the case (at least for radical-parties emergent at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century) is that moderate right-wing positions do not seem to be a recipe for success. Therefore, LAOS' participation, for instance, in the right-wing coalition in 2011 and its defense of Greece's unpopular memorandum with the IMF is very likely to have had an impact on that party's loss of its radical and anti-establishment credentials with its constituents (LAOS 2012). NGP's promise to stick to its right-wing program and to never ally itself with left-wing parties while the unpopular governing party was also centre-right may also have been critical in that party's slow decline. Thus, the success formula for an anti-establishment radical party of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century seems to be a political position on the semi-circular belt combining a leftist position on the economy mixed with a radical authoritarian or libertarian position (y axis in figure 3 and figure 4).

## **Conclusion**

Populism in the European and western context is often assumed to be the universe of the right-wing and new radical right party family. The measurement of populism has however rarely been evaluated against the ideological map of political parties. Similarly, the link between measurements of populism and electoral success is also understudied. This paper consequently asks two questions. Firstly, how is populism related to the ideological identity of political parties? Secondly, how is populism related to electoral success?

Focusing on twelve new anti-establishment political parties in the most recent national elections, this paper suggests that there is a strong correlation between a party's populist



discourse and its electoral success. Similarly, there is a correlation between populism and party ideology. However, populism is not largely the domain of the radical right. It is quite present among contemporary libertarian and radical left-wing political parties in Europe as well. Therefore, parties, regardless of their political color, which score high on the populist index, also seem to be located left on the socialist-free market political dimension. Parties that are centrist or even right-wing on the economy likewise seem to have a low score on the populist index. This paper also suggests that, increasingly, right-wing and even successful extreme right parties in Europe are not positioned right on the economy. They rather seem to cluster within the leftist camp together with new left and libertarian parties.

This paper suggests that there is a strong positive relationship between populism on one hand and economic-left wing positions on the other as well as between populism and electoral success. The correlation implied here does not necessarily mean causation however. It has been briefly suggested in this article that a possible explanation could be that such parties seek to embody an anti-establishment and anti-mainstream cartel political wave in European politics. As a result, due to the economic-centrism and even right-wing turn among mainstream parties, new contenders adopt an anti-elitist and economic left-wing political discourse. Nonetheless, the mechanism through which this occurs is not very clear and a possible question for future research on the topic could be to determine the underlying factors responsible for this relationship.

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<sup>1</sup> Libertarianism, in the European context, is defined for the purpose of this paper as a commitment to individual liberty and political freedom. This includes freedom *from* authoritarian institutions associated with the state but also freedom from institutions controlling the means of production and subordinating the majority to a class of proprietors.

<sup>2</sup>While the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) is the most comprehensive, systematic and objective source on party positions, data from the CMP is not used here. This is done for two reasons. Firstly, the CMP – although codes ‘favorable’ or ‘unfavorable’ for 58 issue categories - ultimately reduces all issues to just one left-right dimension. The left-right here includes all issues from those traditionally associated with the left-right (the economy) to issues often associated with alternative dimensions. Consequently, one can have a situation when a party that may be radically left on one dimension but extreme right on the other may turn out centrist when calculating its final left-right score. As a result extremist parties like Jobbik in Hungary or PRM in Romania seem much closer to the centre than mainstream centrist parties in these two respective states. The second reason is simply practical – the CMP has no data yet for some of the newest parties studied here such as Golden Dawn or PPDD.