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## **The Impact of Party System Responsiveness on Successful Populist Mobilization Strategies in Western Europe and Latin America**

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The Impact of Party System Responsiveness on Successful  
Populist Mobilization Strategies in  
Western Europe and Latin America

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## Introduction

Scholars have made considerable effort in recent years to flesh out a “thin ideology” that unites populists in Europe and Latin America. What right-wing populists in Europe and their left-wing counterparts in Latin America have in common is that they construct and nourish an antagonism between the people and the elite (e.g., Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012). But why have recent manifestations of populism in Latin America been associated with the left, while right-wing populism has flourished much more than left-wing populism in Western Europe, at least until recently? In this contribution, I argue that populist mobilization strategies fall on fruitful ground where party systems do not adequately represent citizen preferences. This is a perhaps not a sufficient, yet a necessary condition for populist success. I argue that while populism is likely to have a common cause across regions and time – namely, an unresponsive party system that erodes the legitimacy of the established parties – the choice of the thick ideology populists use in their mobilization is not a coincidence. Rather, it matters very much *which citizen preferences* lack representation. Thus, we need to take into account all the relevant dimensions of party competition in a country and assess how each of these dimensions resonates with the populace.

One of the central contributions I seek to make in this paper is to integrate the short-term factors populism scholars typically use in their explanations with long-term factors of party system change. Although I do not study short-term factors in much detail for reasons of space, the long-term evolution of the party system clearly either constrains or facilitates the strategic game between populists and mainstream parties. Populists will not be successful in a context with strong ideological divides between parties and where parties are linked to like-minded electoral constituencies. As we will see, the degree of segmentation and party-voter congruence traditional divisions in the party system engender takes us a long way to

explaining the breakthrough of populists in some West European and Latin American countries, and their lack of success in others.

I explore the electoral potential for populist anti-establishment actors as well as the latter's choice of either using economic policy or culturalist appeals by adopting a cross-regional perspective. In Western Europe, where the populist right achieved its breakthrough from the 1980s onwards, I look at two cases of populist success and one case of failure. While party systems in Switzerland, France, and Germany were fairly responsive to voter preferences in terms of the traditional state-marked dimension of conflict in the 1970s, they differed in terms of their responsiveness along the libertarian-authoritarian divide, the second dimension of conflict prevalent in the 1970s. German parties were far more responsive along this "cultural" dimension than their counterparts in France and Switzerland. Jointly with their strategies in dealing with issues related to cultural liberalism and immigration in the 1980s and 1990s, German parties averted the entry of the extreme populist right in the party system. In the other two countries, the Swiss People's Party and the French Front National successfully redefined cultural conflicts and entrenched themselves at one pole of a new cultural divide that encompasses all the elements we commonly use to define a cleavage (c.f. Bartolini and Mair 1990).

I compare these European cases to the breakthrough of new populist left parties in Latin America in the late 1990s and 2000s. Building on recent distinctions between the moderate and the populist left (Roberts and Levitsky 2011), I argue that the latter type was successful in countries where party systems lacked responsiveness along the classical economic dimension, pitting state intervention against market liberalism. The best example here is that of the Venezuelan party system, which had failed to offer voters contrasting economic policy propositions for several decades. The economic crisis of the 1980s and 1990s then provided a window of opportunity for populist actors. Chile and Uruguay, on the other hand, featured

firmly entrenched center-left parties that contributed to high levels of congruence between party positions and voter preferences, strongly constricting the mobilization space for populist newcomers.

This paper is structured as follows. I begin by presenting a theory of how established conflicts and alignments limit the space for populist actors. The pacification of these conflicts or the ideological convergence of mainstream parties provide space for challengers relying on populist anti-system messages. While all of these trajectories result in a gradual process of dealignment, the anti-establishment potential is especially large where the established parties form a cartel and employ strategies to prevent the entry of competitors (Katz and Mair 1995). As we know from the literature on dealignment and realignment, the adaptation of party systems to changing voter preferences then tends to manifest itself in a relatively short period of time in a number of “critical elections”. We should thus avoid putting too much emphasis on short-term factors when explaining populist success. In the third section, I justify the choice of cases to be included in the analysis along with a discussion of the political context in which populist actors were successful in Latin America and Western Europe, respectively. While I identify the relevant dimensions in these contexts drawing on prior research and secondary literature, the ensuing section explains in detail the data and methods I use to measure representational congruence in my six cases. The fifth section presents the results of the analysis, while the final section concludes.

## Established conflicts and the potential for populist challengers

Much of the literature has focused on proximate causes of the breakdown of parties or party systems, or of dealignment. Embedding these accounts in a more encompassing framework that includes proximate and more remote factors shows that short-term factors are often strongly shaped by long-term party system evolutions, and cannot be understood in isolation from them. Adopting such a perspective allows us to take advantage of a vast literature that has studied the conditions shaping the fortunes of challenger parties that are not populist (see also Roberts 2015). My contention is that party systems under some certain conditions provide space for challengers – whether of a populist type or not – while the mobilization space for any kind of new actor is restricted under other conditions.

From a historical cleavage perspective, the capacity of new political actors to rally votes is limited by voters' existing partisan attachments. Thus, the articulation and strength of the class cleavage in Western Europe was conditioned heavily by older cleavages, most notably religion (Lipset and Rokkan 1967, Rokkan 1999, Bartolini 2000). More generally, echoing Schattschneider (1975 [1960]), Kriesi and Duyvendak (1995) have postulated a zero-sum relationship between old and new divisions. To the degree that existing divisions remain salient and that new divides do not reinforce, but cut across them, the party system tends to “organize” new issues “out of politics”, in Schattschneider's (1975 [1960]: chap. 4) famous words. It is irrelevant in this respect whether existing alignments are strongly structured by social group membership – such as in the case of the traditional class and religious cleavages – or whether they are more strongly politically defined, as in the case of contemporary Western Europe's over-arching economic and cultural ideological alignments (Bornschieer 2010: 57-60). As long as an individuals' group attachments and political identities related to the existing structure of conflict are stronger than his or her identification with a cause that

draws a new group boundary – such as belonging to “the pure people” that is betrayed by the corrupt elite – the individuals’ political alignment will remain stable. A change in political preference requires a prior transformation in an individuals’ salience hierarchy of identities (Stryker 1980, 2000).

The degree to which the new conflicts effectively remain latent depends on the strength of the collective identities entailed by the older divides, and on how strongly parties reinforce these collective identities by offering distinctive positions along the older divides (Bornschieer 2010: chap. 3). If patterns of competition are segmented, social groups have strong loyalties and party preferences (Mair 1997: 162-171). As a consequence, the electoral market is tightly restrained and leaves little room for the emergence of new lines of opposition or new political parties.<sup>1</sup> The origin of every enduring structure of political alignments is thus a political conflict that has formed political group attachments.<sup>2</sup> Two factors shape whether the existing structure of conflict persists or is prone to being transformed. First, the degree to which the original conflict persists, or, put differently, the degree to which parties continue to present diverging policy propositions. Conflict reinforces the group attachments that underlie political divides, and thus perpetuates alignments (Sartori 1968, Bornschieer 2010). It nurtures the ideological schemas, in Conover and Feldman’s (1984) terms, that voters have in their minds and that help them understand politics and form preferences concerning the political issues of the day. There is now an impressive literature on party systems in the advanced democracies that underscores that conflict constitutes the reproductive mechanism underlying cleavages (e.g., van der Brug 2010, Evans and Tilley 2011, Adams et al. 2011, Evans and de Graaf

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1 At the extreme, such a structure of opposition rules out any real competition between parties. Political systems characterized by pillarization, where the Netherlands used to be a prominent example, each party has its own constituency, and they do not really compete at all. The same is true of the pacts that were agreed upon in Colombia in 1958 (after the civil war known as La Violencia), and in the Punto Fijo pact in Venezuela in 1958. Whether loyalties persist in such a context depends on the continuing salience of the issues associated with the division in everyday politics, as I explain below.

2 Coser (1956) emphasizes the group-binding functions of political conflict. I use the terms party identification and political group identification interchangeably as partisanship can be viewed as a social identity (see Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002).

2013, Rennwald and Evans 2014). But there is also evidence from Latin America that polarization creates, while de-polarization dilutes the links between social groups and parties that stabilize party systems (e.g., Torcal and Mainwaring 2003).

Party convergence may thus result in processes of so-called *behavioral dealignment*, where the links between segments of the electorate and a specific party are diluted and where voters become open for the appeals of new parties, movements, or charismatic leaders.<sup>3</sup> In this scenario, voters continue to have diverging policy preferences, but these preferences are no longer represented by political parties. In the short term, catch-all strategies may be electorally rewarding, but in the medium term, parties that abandon their traditional program often lose significant vote shares (Karreth, Polk, and Allen 2012). In the longer run, if voters have nowhere else to go, party convergence will lead to a loss of confidence in the party system, and it may even result in a crisis of legitimacy of the entire political system. The established parties in such a situation are of course tempted to in some way or another inhibit the entry of competitors. Because they have abandoned the option of stipulating alternative policy proposals, which would help them to be responsive to voters' policy preferences, they are left with two principal options: The first is to form an outright cartel by outlawing fringe parties or by introducing hurdles to the registration of new parties that are difficult to overcome. The other option is to substitute programmatic partisan linkages with clientelistic loyalties to maintain the cartel.<sup>4</sup> Clientelism, in turn, requires financial resources that foster corrupt practices, which further erodes legitimacy. For this reason, this situation is prone to populist discourses, because populists thrive on crises of legitimacy (Hawkins 2010).

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3 For the distinction between behavioral and structural dealignment, see Martin (2000) and Lachat (2007). The transformation of existing dimensions can occur either by new political actors, or by an established party that seeks to redraw a party system's dividing lines. As we will see in the Swiss case, established parties may even turn into populists in the process.

4 This is actually the ideal-typical case of Katz and Mair's (1995) cartel party thesis, a phenomenon that in this pure form is a more adequate description of Latin American countries such as Venezuela and Colombia, rather than in the Western European context, for which the theory was originally developed.



On the other hand, change can also come from below as a result of the evolving preferences of voters. The potential for new political actors to redraw the dimensions of competition is thus the degree to which established party system divisions resonate with the preferences and the concerns of the electorate. If parties represent a conflict between the working class and employers, then partisan attachments will fade as post-industrialization or the growth of the informal sector make the core constituencies along the divide shrink. Likewise, secularization has led to a declining share of churchgoers in the Western Europe, and to a declining importance of the religious cleavage. This process can be referred to as one of *structural dealignment*, because social structural change weakens the roots that parties have in society. If a conflict is pacified at the voter level, then political alignments will gradually fade even if parties continue to differ in their positions. Consequently, structural dealignment, like behavioral dealignment, creates space for the manifestation of new conflicts. This situation differs from the one above in that no cartel of any kind is formed by the established parties. Thus, not only new political actors can take advantage of the process of dealignment by drawing up new conflicts, but established parties can also seek to exploit new issues. This occurred with respect to the issues promoted by the populist right both in Germany and in Switzerland. The two cases differ, however, in that the Swiss People's Party subsequently underwent a transformation into a full-fledged right-wing populist party, while the German Christian Democrats occupied the anti-universalistic terrain only temporarily and remained a center-right party (Kriesi et al. 2006, Lachat 2008, Dolezal 2008a, Bornschieer 2010).

To summarize, populists will not be successful in a context where strong ideological divides are present and parties have strong links to like-minded constituencies. I argue that an erosion of a party system's roots in society – and the concomitant large number of floating voters that results from the process of dealignment – represents a necessary condition for populist success. Of course, dealignment must not be sufficient to trigger the electoral

breakthrough of populists. For one thing, non-populist parties may mobilize the electoral potentials that the established parties have neglected. For instance, the success of European left-wing parties off the mainstream does not seem related to a populist discourse. The latter lends itself only to actors whose criticism of the way democracy works is an integral part of their electoral message – which does not seem to be the case for the radical left in Europe.

Even when a populist challenger arises, its ability to rally a substantial proportion of the electorate depends on two further factors, which I deal with in this paper only briefly. The first is constituted by the strategies of the established parties, which stand to lose from the populists' entry into the party system. This is the more situational, short-term strategic side of the structuralist perspective outlined in the preceding section. I touch upon this factor when discussing the German case. The second factor is the persuasive power of the populist challenger's message, as well as other organizational features of populists are crucial in shaping the challenge they pose.<sup>5</sup> These factors are not easy to study since we generally lack a full sample of populist challenges that includes a sufficient number of failed attempts to challenge mainstream parties (c.f., Rovira Kaltwasser 2015). We do know from the West European literature, however, that only right-wing populists adopting a “modern”, differentialist nativist discourse (Antonio 2000, Betz 2004, Betz and Johnson 2004), meshed with anti-establishment stances are electorally successful, while parties that fail to distance themselves clearly from traditional racism receive only marginal vote shares (Carter 2005; see also Ignazi 2002).

With respect to Latin America, the parties that form part of the “left turn” on the continent also differ with respect to their ideology and their reliance on populist rhetoric. Drawing on Hawkins' (2010) findings in the Venezuelan case, I argue that whether left-wing parties rely on economic policy appeals alone or whether they mesh these with an anti-establishment rhetoric depends on the level of citizen support in the polity. Where parties have lacked

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5 In his work on the populist right, Mudde (2007), refers to these as “internal supply” factors.

responsiveness for a longer period of time, political support erodes, and populist messages will be successful. In those Latin American cases in which policy differentiation was absent, programmatic linkages between political elites and voters had become diluted, and left-wing populists successfully spearheaded a broad movement of discontent against the political system. The moderate left, on the other hand, emerged in a much more incremental process typical of classical mass parties. The ability of these parties to successfully compete and build a following tempered discontent and voters remained committed to a strategy of political change within existing institutions.

#### Regional context and case selection

The theoretical predictions explaining the populist potential based on the intensity of existing party system divisions are tested drawing on three Latin American and three Western European cases. As shown in Table 1, these cases differ in terms of populist success. Within each regional context, at least one case displays a successful populist party, while populists were not successful in at least one other country. These diverging outcomes can be traced to my two key independent variables, as the empirical section of this paper will seek to substantiate. The two regions differ, however, in that populism is associated with right-wing cultural ideologies in Western Europe, while left-wing populists drawing heavily on economic mobilization frames have triumphed in Latin America. As I have argued, this difference is due to the nature of the political space in the respective regions and the responsiveness of parties to voter preferences along these divides. In the following, I justify the case selection by discussing the context in which the populist right and the populist left emerged in Western Europe and Latin America, respectively.

Table 1: Cases, party system divides, and types of populist challengers

Country/case	Crucial period prior to populist challenge	Dimensions of political space	Content of first dimension	Content of second dimension	Type of successful populist challenge
<i>Western Europe</i>					
Germany	1970s-1980s	2	Economic	Cultural	Not successful
France	1970s	2	Economic	Cultural	Right-wing
Switzerland	1970s/1980s	2	Economic	Cultural	Right-wing
<i>Latin America</i>					
Chile	1990s	2	Regime-economic	Cultural	None/not successful
Uruguay	1990s	1	Regime-economic		None/not successful
Venezuela	1980s/1990s	1	Socio-economic		Left-wing

Note: Evidence supporting the number of dimensions defining the political space and the substantive content of these dimensions is provided in the following section.

Party systems in Western Europe have been marked by the conflicts triggered by the national and industrial revolutions (Rokkan 1999). As a result, political space has always been at least two-dimensional. The dimensions underlying party interactions have changed over time, however. While the state-market cleavage remains one of the two dimensions structuring party interactions (e.g., Kriesi 2006, 2008), the traditional religious cleavage has been transformed into a new cultural dimension of conflict. A first restructuring of the political space occurred as a consequence of the mobilization of the New Social Movements of the left in the 1970s and 1980s (Kitschelt 1994). Spurred by the educational revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, the diffusion of universalistic values has led actors to call for individual autonomy and the free choice of lifestyles (see Stubager 2008, 2009). A diffuse anti-universalistic counter-potential against the libertarian left had emerged already in the 1970s at the attitudinal level, as Sacchi (1998) has shown. But a broad conservative counter-movement to the libertarian left gained momentum only in the 1980s and 1990s, when right-wing populist parties found inspiration in the European New Right to develop a counter-ideology that meshes anti-universalism and strands of communitarian political thought (Bornschiefer 2010a, 2010b; see also Ignazi 1992, Rydgren 2005, Minkenberg 2000). Because this background to

right-wing populist mobilization is specific to Western Europe, this paper does not include any East-Central European cases, where the driving forces of right-wing populism are presumably different, and where they have not adopted the differentialist-nativist discourse typical of their counterparts in the West. In Western Europe, empirical analyses of parties' issue positions in several countries in the 1990s reveal a two-dimensional political space constituted by the state-market divide and the opposition between universalistic values and a traditionalist-communitarian defence of the traditional national community (Kriesi et al. 2006, 2008, Bornschier 2010a, 2010b). Although these studies show the economic and cultural dimensions to be present in strikingly similar form all three countries I study in this paper, the anti-universalistic potential gave rise to the emergence of powerful parties of the extreme populist right in France and in Switzerland, while the corresponding potential was absorbed by the established right in Germany. Despite the challenge posed by the Republikaner (Republicans) in the 1980s, the populist right was thus unable to institutionalize in this latter country. I thus select the cases of France, Switzerland, and Germany in the European context.

In Latin America, the most recent wave of populism is associated with the “left turn” of the late 1990s and 2000s, following an era of structural economic adjustment policies and austerity. While some of the left-wing parties that came to govern in the post-neoliberal era resemble classical mass parties that have taken decades to institutionalize, others are represent new political movements with that appeal to voters by mobilizing against the political establishment. Weyland, Madrid, and Hunter (2010) use the term “contestatory” left to distinguish the latter group – encompassing Chávez’ Bolivarian movement and Bolivia’s Movement for Socialism –from the more moderate leftist parties that governed Uruguay, Chile, and Brazil. While the latter respect economic constraints and political opposition, the contestatory left in terms of rhetoric and action presents a more profound challenge to the status quo. I will label the contestatory variant of the left as “populist”, following the recent

comparative literature (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012, Roberts 2015, Rovira Kaltwasser 2015).<sup>6</sup>

Thus far, there are rather few attempts to explain why moderate mass parties of the left have emerged in some countries and populist left parties in others (e.g., Weyland 2009). Remmer's (2012) analysis suggests that demand-side factors are not particularly relevant in explaining the choice of moderate or contestatory left-wing ideologies by parties in various countries. My hypothesis is that the lack of responsiveness of the party systems in the populist left countries explains why an anti-political establishment mobilization was successful in some cases. As outlined earlier, a persistent lack of responsiveness erodes partisan loyalties and makes voters open for appeals by new political actors, and results in the loss of legitimacy that Hawkins (2010) has identified as the crucial factor driving support for Hugo Chávez in Venezuela. Venezuela is thus an obvious case to include in Latin America. Furthermore, Bolivia and Ecuador are not covered by the World Values Survey data I use, and thus cannot be included in the analysis at this stage. Peru, on the other hand, represents a prototypical case of populist mobilization, but the mid-1990s time point covered by the data is not ideal, as Alberto Fujimori came to power in 1991 already. A lack of data from the 1980s precludes an analysis of the Peruvian case. From the group of countries featuring moderate leftist parties, the combination of data from the PELA elite surveys and the mass-level survey data allows for the inclusion of Chile and Uruguay. Including Brazil, on the other hand, is again ruled out by a lack of appropriate data, this time on elite policy positions.

The analysis proceeds as follows: The next section now discusses the data used and the research design, while the following section presents aggregate evidence on the responsiveness of party systems in my six cases.

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6 The distinction between the moderate and the populist left can be further refined by taking into account organizational features of these parties or movements, namely, how concentrated or dispersed authority is (c.f., Levitsky and Roberts 2011; see also Weyland 2010). For present purposes, it is not necessary to make these more fine-grained distinctions, as Roberts (2015: 142-144) points out that the concept of populism is compatible both with grass-roots/bottom-up and top-down/elite-directed modes of political mobilization.

## Measuring representational congruence prior to the populist phase in the six cases

One of the central junctures in the “chain of responsiveness” (Powell 2004) that runs from public preferences to political policies, is the congruence between voter preferences and party positions. According to the “responsible party model”, first theorized by the APSA Committee on Political Parties (1950), and synthesized by Thomassen (1994: 251-2), congruence is achieved if, first, parties offer diverging programmatic offerings, and second, voters chose parties according to these offerings. Consequently, the quality of representation has frequently been assessed by looking at the correspondence between the political preferences of voters and their representatives (e.g., Dalton, 1985; Powell, 2000; Luna and Zechmeister, 2005, 2010; see also Diamond and Morlino, 2005).<sup>7</sup> This is the strategy I use here. To measure how responsive parties were to voter preferences prior to the phase in which populist parties established themselves as major political actors in France, Switzerland, and Venezuela, I draw on data on party positions and voter preferences. Because there are no unique data sets that cover both regions, the data used differs in the two contexts. Employing the same analytical strategy, however, the results are roughly comparable between contexts. Thus far, I have analyzed the phase preceding the “left turn” in Latin America, namely, the 1990s, while in the European cases, I also have information on representational congruence for the 1990s and early 2000s. Extending the analysis to the 1990s allows me to demonstrate the persistent lack of political space for the populist right in Germany, and to assess the impact the populist right on representation in Switzerland and France.

To determine party positions in Western Europe, I rely on data based on the media coverage of election campaigns that is derived from a coding of party positions as reported in newspapers during election campaigns (Kriesi et al. 2008; see Dolezal 2008b for a detailed

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<sup>7</sup> A more sophisticated variant of this approach, the “thermostatic model” (Soroka and Wlezién 2010) takes a dynamic perspective and investigates how changes in public policy and voter preferences interact.

description of the data). The data predominantly captures statements that party exponents make at press conferences and on other occasions, and the campaign data therefore closely reflects what voters actually learn of the parties' positions. The data covers three electoral contests that took place between the late 1980s and the early 2000s and one election in the 1970s. Although it does not cover the 1980s in Switzerland and Germany, this data is rather unique in allowing for an analysis of the phase preceding the populist challenge. The supply-side data is complemented with survey data from national election studies. The combination of the information we have for party positions and voter preferences allows for an analysis of congruence for the 1978, 1988, 1995, and 2002 elections in France, the 1975, 1995, 1999, and 2003 elections in Switzerland, as well as the 1976, 1994, 1998, and 2002 elections in Germany.

For the Latin American cases, I draw on data from the first wave of the University of Salamanca Surveys of Latin American Legislators (PELA), for which face-to-face interviews with legislators were conducted between 1995 and 1996 (see Alcántara 2008). This point in time is very close to the fieldwork of the World Values Survey's (WVS) 1994-99 wave, for which most interviews were also conducted in 1995 and 1996. Combining these data sources, it is possible to assess the congruence of representation in Chile, Uruguay, and Venezuela for the mid-1990s, prior to the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998.

Both for Western European and the Latin American cases, I start out by grouping the issue-specific items contained in the elite and mass surveys into broader, theoretically defined issue-categories. The categories are derived from an analysis of political space in Western Europe (Kriesi et al. 2008), and adapted to the Latin American context by adding the regime dimension. I operationalize each category separately for the political supply side and for voters using all available items the surveys or the media data.<sup>8</sup> From the thirteen categories

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<sup>8</sup> In Western Europe, I use the mean of all party statements with respect to a given category, while for Latin America I aggregate the items in the elite surveys using principal components factor analysis.



defined in total, I list only those that in the later analyses of dimensionality turned out to be relevant either in Latin America or in Western Europe:

#### Economic issues

- *Welfare*: Expansion of or defense of a generous welfare state, support for public education, redistribution, and equality.
- *Budget*: Budgetary rigor and tax reductions that have no redistributive effects.
- *Economic liberalism*: Opposition to market regulation, and protectionism, support for deregulation, for more competition, and privatization.

#### Non-economic issues

- *Regime (only relevant for Latin America)*: Assessment of past military regime (if there was a military dictatorship). The other items in the PELA elite surveys cannot be used due to a lack of variance. Additional issues used on the demand side: support for democracy, opposition against authoritarianism.
- *Army*: Support for a strong national defense, against reducing the military's budget (to some Latin American countries, this can be interpreted as a regime dimension as well).
- *Cultural liberalism (cultlib)*: Opposition to traditional moral values, support for gender equality, the right to abortion and divorce (Latin America). Support for the goals of the New Social Movements: Peace, solidarity with the third world, gender equality, human rights, opposition to racism (Western Europe). The category includes the opposite concept of *cultural protectionism* for Western Europe, coded inversely: Patriotism, calls for national solidarity, defense of tradition and national sovereignty, traditional moral values.
- *Law and order*: Support for more law and order, and the fight against criminality.
- *Immigration (only relevant for Western Europe)*: Support for a tough immigration and integration policy, and for the restriction of the number of foreigners.

Because the relevant dimensions of political conflict are country-specific, we should avoid measuring representational congruence along a priori, theoretically defined dimensions. For reasons of space, I do not present the analyses of the dimensionality of political space here, but draw on prior results.<sup>9</sup> For Western Europe, a stable antagonism between support for the

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<sup>9</sup> Although we label the resulting dimensions somewhat differently in our respective publications, all analyses carried out using the Kriesi et al. (2006, 2008) data converge in identifying the same issues that make up these divides (Dolezal 2008b, Lachat 2008, Bornschieer 2008, 2010a, 2010b). Given the properties of the

welfare state and economic liberalism forms the first dimension of political space throughout the period of study. The second, cultural dimension is subject to change over time. In the 1970s, the universalistic values embodied in cultural liberalism form one pole of the cultural dimension in all three countries. Some of the issues associated with cultural liberalism are still reminiscent of the traditional religious cleavage, while others were put on the political agenda by the New Social Movements that arose after 1968 (gender equality, human rights, multiculturalism). Mainstream left parties in Switzerland, France, and Germany adopted many of these issues and thereby underwent a transformation into so-called New Left parties. In both France and Germany, the ideology of the New Left is countered by a neoconservative position that opposes the state (i.e., the category “budgetary rigor” lies at the opposite pole to opposing cultural liberalism along the cultural divide). In Germany, support for the army is situated similarly and is also used to measure positions along the cultural divide. In Switzerland, on the other hand, the anti-universalistic ideology is tied to law-and-order stances by political parties, and consequently, this category is used alongside cultural liberalism to measure positions along the cultural dimension of the 1970s. From the late 1980s onwards, the cultural dimension is defined by the antagonism between cultural liberalism and anti-immigration stances. It is at the immigration pole, most remote from cultural liberalism, that right-wing populist parties are situated. While the populist right has propelled the saliency of the immigration issue, this pole is present also in those countries in which the populist right did not succeed in breaking into the party system, at least in the 1990s (Kriesi et al. 2006, 2008, Bornschieer 2010b).

For Latin America, I draw on an assessment of the relevant dimensions of political space based on discriminant analysis to identify those issue categories that set legislators from

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data used in the European context, Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) is the appropriate method to assess the dimensionality of political space in these cases. The substantive interpretation of the resulting divides that is presented in the text is my own.

different parties apart in the PELA elite surveys (Rosas 2010, Bornschieer 2013).<sup>10</sup> In the mid-1990s, welfare proved to be a divisive issue for parties in all three countries studied. In Chile and Uruguay, however, this traditional economic divide was supplemented with the regime question. In Uruguay, support for the army is strongly associated with market-liberal economic positions, while in Chile, democratic-autocratic regime preferences are strongly correlated with the economic divide. In Chile, a second dimension centering on the right to divorce and abortion is present.<sup>11</sup> This dimension is reminiscent of the religious cleavage. In Venezuela, the dominant party system divide mixes economic and moral issues (again centering on divorce and abortion), and also encompasses different degrees of support for the army.

In both contexts, I assess congruence along these country-specific dimensions by first measuring the mean positions of party electorates along the same dimensions. To aggregate issues into dimensions, I use principal components factor analysis (all methodological issues are explained in detail in Bornschieer 2013: 55-61). The final step in the analysis is to assess the correspondence between the positions of parties and those of their voters. Because the positions of parties and voters are not measured on the same scales, this correspondence can be judged only in *relative* terms. I thus measure congruence regressing the position of the party the respondent voted for on his/her individual preference along a given dimension.<sup>12</sup> The most important information provided by this analysis is not the coefficient (which again is not independent of the differing scales on which parties and voters are placed), but whether individual preferences are a significant predictor of party choice. Consequently, I use the z-

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10 In other words, discriminant analysis identifies those issue categories from the list presented above that help to explain legislators' party affiliation (see Klecka 1980).

11 The Uruguayan political space also features a second dimension, but this dimension overlaps almost completely with the first and is therefore difficult to interpret (see Bornschieer 2013: 639). Because its substantive content is difficult to make sense of, and because the first dimension explains 92% of the total variance of the model, I only report the results for the first dimension.

12 Technically, I attribute to each individual the policy position of his/her party, and then assess how well individual preferences explain the position of the party they voted for. Since the variance of the dependent variable is limited by the low number of parties competing, I use ordered logit instead of OLS regression.

statistic of the ordered logit regression as a measure for the congruence of representation that can be compared across countries.<sup>13</sup>

## Results: Potentials for right-wing and left-wing mobilization in Europe and Latin America

We are now in a position to summarize the results of the analysis of representational congruence. Apart from the degree to which party positions and electoral preferences match, I am also interested in the extent to which partisan camps are segmented or overlapping. *Segmented divides* are characterized by strong alignments between social groups and parties based on solid ideological differences. Divisions of this kind are typical of long term divisions rooted in social structure, which we commonly refer to as cleavages (Bartolini and Mair, 1990; Mair 1997: 162-171). In such a situation, voter mobility is limited. Parties hardly compete for the same voters, and campaigns serve the purpose of nourishing the subcultural political identities of their party constituencies. *Competitive divides* represent the opposite state of affairs: Party electorates are not strongly distinguished in terms of ideology, and different parties therefore target the same groups of voters. Parties then behave in ways that approximate Schumpeter (1993 [1942]) and Downs' (1957) characterization of party competition.<sup>14</sup> I use *ideological polarization* as a measure of the dimension running from segmentation to competition.<sup>15</sup> Since segmentation implies not only that parties present distinctive programmatic platforms, but also that this distinction is rooted in contrasting voter positions, I use the polarization of party electorates, rather than that of parties themselves, to

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13 Because the statistical significance of the regressions also varies as a function of sample size, I weight the z-value by the size of the sample in the respective voter surveys.

14 On the concept of competition, see also Bartolini (1999) and (2000).

15 See also Dalton (2008), who argues that polarization is a key concept to characterize the nature of competition between parties.

measure segmentation vs. competition.<sup>16</sup> In practical terms, I calculate the standard deviation of party electorates' mean positions, weighted by party size.<sup>17</sup> As discussed earlier on, I use the ability of voter preferences to explain the ideological position of their preferred party as a measure of congruence.<sup>18</sup>

### *Latin America in the 1990s*

Figure 1 shows the position of the three Latin American cases along the dimensions of polarization and congruence (in Chile, where political space proved two-dimensional, each dimension is located separately). Values of congruence below 2 do not reach statistical significance, thus this is a useful cut-off point to distinguish between responsive and unresponsive party systems. In terms of polarization, it is difficult to define in absolute terms when polarization is high and when it is low, and I have rather arbitrarily drawn a line that runs halfway between the theoretical minimum (zero differentiation between party electorates) and the most polarized case in my sample (Switzerland's new cultural divide in 1999 with a polarization figure of roughly 0.6, see Figure 5). It is best, however, to think of the vertical dimension as representing a continuum.

The results reveal that the mobilization space for populist left actors was tightly restrained in Chile and Uruguay, while the established parties in Venezuela provided Hugo Chávez' ample space. Figure 1 shows that the regime-cum-economy divides in Uruguay and Chile stand out both in the degree to which parties mirror voter preferences, as well as in terms of

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16 Some Latin American party systems offer clear ideological alternatives, while electorates are rather centrist – a situation that does not meet the characteristics associated with segmentation. Kitschelt et al. (1999) refer to this type of representation as “polarized trusteeship”.

17 Party strength is derived from the PELA elite surveys for the Latin American cases and from Kriesi et al. (2008) as well as a number of online-sources for the European cases.

18 Technically, I use the z-value of the ordered logit regression of parties' programmatic positions on voters' ideological preferences. The z-value is a measure for the significance of the predictions of these regressions, and thus depends also on sample size. Because the size of the sample varies in the European cases, where I rely on national election studies, I weight the z-value by sample size to arrive at a measure that is comparable across contexts. For Latin America, the same World Values Survey data was used for the three cases, and the result of the regressions are thus comparable between countries. Comparisons across the Latin American and European contexts are not yet possible at this stage.

polarization. The parties of the moderate left are an integral part of this pattern of segmented representation in both countries, as they occupy the state-interventionist and pro-democratic pole of the dominant party system divide (see Bornschier 2013; these results are not shown here). The latter exhibit some of the core characteristics of long-term divisions we commonly call cleavages. Chile’s cultural dimension, on the other hand, is substantially less segmented, and also structures party preferences less powerfully (though still significantly). The traditional religious cleavage thus clearly appears inferior in salience to the new divide that centers on the regime question and on economic liberalism.

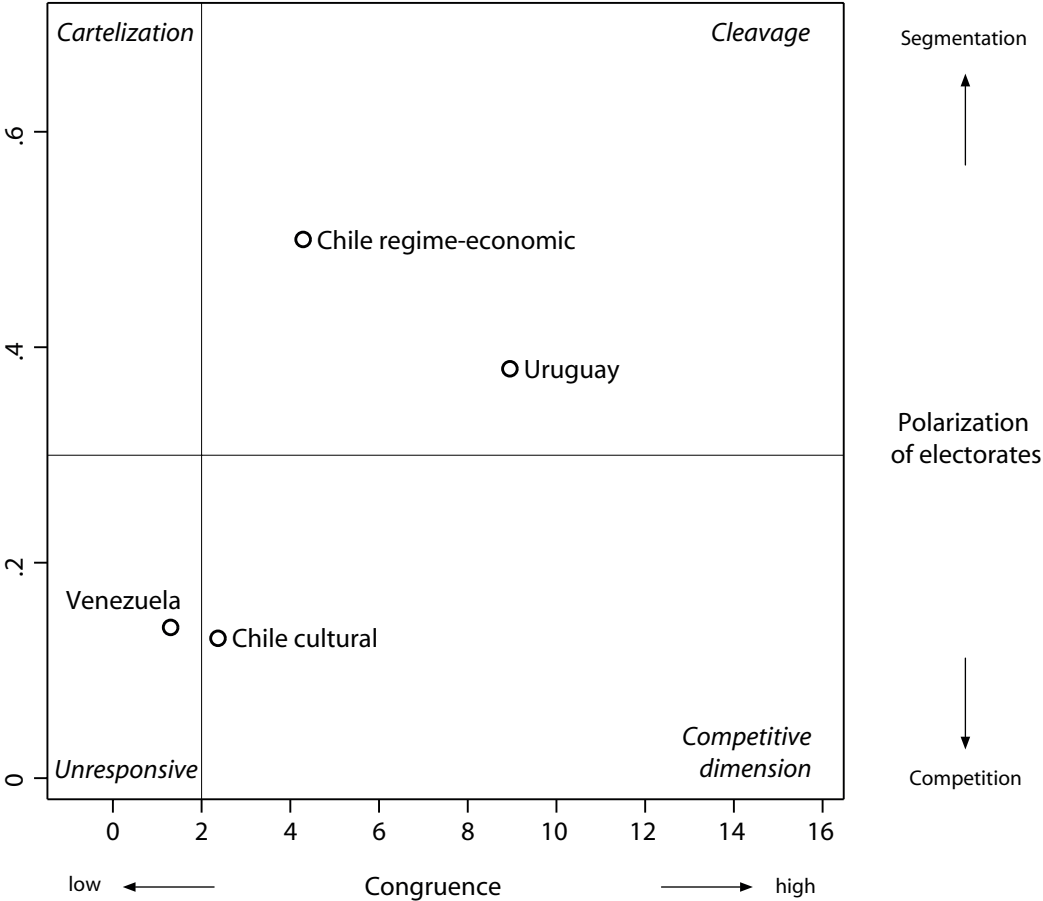
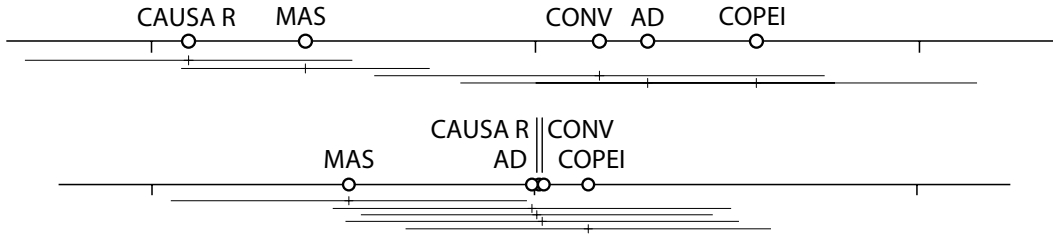


Figure 1: Congruence and Polarization along the dominant party system divides in Latin America, mid-1990s

The Venezuelan party system, on the other hand, clearly failed to mirror voter preferences along the socio-economic divide that meshes economic issues and cultural liberalism before Chávez’ successful bid for power. I have tentatively defined situations of high polarization and low congruence as instances of party system cartelization, while low polarization and low congruence is simply indicative of unresponsiveness. In Venezuela, party electorates have not converged in their socio-economic preferences, but parties fail to represent these differences. Figure 2 shows the positions of parties and voters on which this assessment is based. We see that on the socio-economic dimension (meshing support for the welfare state and liberal cultural values), the two traditional parties, Acción Democrática (AD) and Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente (COPEI), hardly differ in their locations, and neither do their voters. Convergencia National (CONV), a spin-off from the long-established COPEI, is situated close to the traditional parties. The space to the left divide is occupied by Causa R and Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS). On the voter side, the differences between electorates are very small, especially given their extensive ideological overlap (the bars below the mean positions show the standard deviation and thus the heterogeneity of party electorates). Only the electorate of MAS escapes the centrist dynamic and appears in touch with its party’s ideological credentials.



Congruence (z-value, 5 parties): 1.3 (p=.19)

Figure 2: Venezuela 1995-6 – Parties and Voters on the Socio-Economic Divide

Legend: CAUSA R, La Causa Radical; MAS, Movimiento al Socialismo; CONV, Convergencia National; AD, Acción Democrática; COPEI, Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente.

Overall, voters' preferences along the socio-economic divide are unrelated to the positions of the parties they vote for. From this perspective, the implosion of the party system upon Hugo Chávez' appearance on the political scene is not that surprising. The party system progressively lost its roots in society due to the failure of the two major parties to offer differing policy packages to voters. Although new left-wing parties gained support in the 1980s, they seem to have been unable to present a viable alternative to AD and COPEI. MAS actually betrayed its electorate by joining a coalition to elect Rafael Caldera, a former COPEI politician, into the presidency under the banner of Convergencia Nacional in 1993. In the 1996 World Values Survey used to determine voter preferences, a striking 59% of Venezuelan respondents declare that they would vote for none of the existing parties, or answer "don't know" when asked about their party preference. Thus, the institutionalized left was unable to re-establish confidence in party politics.

### *Western Europe in the 1970s*

In Western Europe, the French Front National spearheaded the rise of the populist right with its early breakthrough in the 1984 European parliament elections. The essential period defining the mobilization space for the populist right is therefore the 1970s, when the New Left had redefined the secular pole of the religious divide into the libertarian-universalistic pole of the new cultural divide. The degree to which parties remained responsive to voter preferences amidst this shift strongly determined the appeal of the populist right, whose ideology meshed a traditionalist-communitarian counter-conception of community to that of the New Left with populist anti-establishment appeals. Figure 3 shows the degree of responsiveness of parties to voter preferences along the economic and cultural divides along with the degree of segmentation these divisions entailed. As before, I have drawn lines at a medium-level of polarization. In Europe, the relationship between partisan preferences and a



party's policy position is always significant, but the results show that there are important differences in degree. For this reason, I have – again arbitrarily – drawn a vertical line which runs halfway between the theoretical minimum in terms of congruence (no relationship between voter preferences and party positions) and the most congruent case in my sample, namely, the cultural dimension in Switzerland in 1999 (shown in Figure 5).<sup>19</sup>

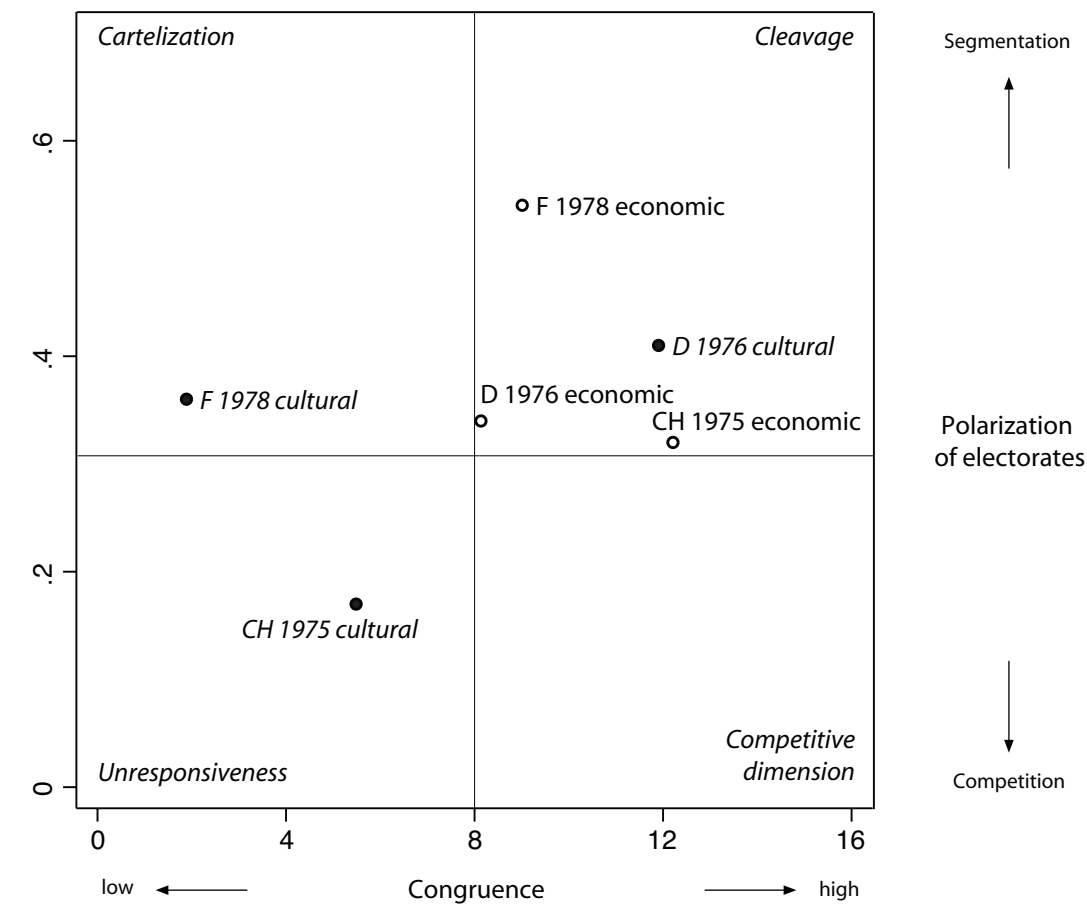


Figure 3: Congruence and Polarization in the 1970s in Western Europe

We see two contrasts in Figure 3. The first is between the economic and the cultural divides. The economic cleavage was characterized by strong and fairly polarized alignments between

<sup>19</sup> Given that we are looking at differences in degree among the European cases, rather than the much more fundamental contrast between Venezuela and the other two Latin American cases, the labels attached to the four quadrants in Figure 3 are tentative and to be taken with a grain of salt.

voters and political parties in all three countries in the 1970s. The potential for political newcomers along the economic divide, in other words, was limited. Along the cultural divide, on the other hand, we see a clear difference between Germany and the two cases of right-wing populist breakthrough. In Germany, congruence along the cultural divide was even stronger than in the economic domain, while the degree of polarization is similar. Germany witnessed a “renaissance of conservatism” in the 1970s as a reaction to the 1968 student movement and to the formation of a social-liberal government after the 1972 election, which performed a policy shift regarding the communist countries in the east. Confronted with the decline of religiosity and a programmatic vacuum, the Christian Democrats endorsed the *Zeitgeist* by stressing the importance of the family for moral guidance, and by propagating a new historical and national consciousness (Grande 1988).

The grip of the French and Swiss party systems along the cultural divide is far lower, by contrast. The relationship between voter preferences and party positions is significant even in these two cases, but in relative terms, it is clearly inferior both to that of Germany and to the strong effect that individual preferences have on partisan alignments along the economic dimension. In Switzerland, the antagonism that characterized the party system in the 1970s, and that ran between universalistic values and calls for law and order, did not resonate with voter preferences. Furthermore, all electorates are fairly centrist along this divide, resulting in a low level of segmentation. In France, on the other hand, party electorates are more distinct, possibly due to the strong role that religion still exerted on preferences with respect to cultural liberalism (see Bornschier 2008, p. 94, as compared to Switzerland in Lachat 2008, p. 145). These distinctive positions, however, are not reflected in corresponding positions of the political parties, as reflected in the low figure for congruence.

Although the established right in Germany succeeded in rallying the anti-universalistic potential in the 1970s, the challenge by far right parties was revived in the 1980s with the

founding of the Republikaner party, which continued to challenge the political establishment into the 1990s. But not only the loyalties formed by the segmented cleavage of the 1970s reduced the mobilization space for the far right, sporadically reappearing polarization did as well. Figure 4 shows the evolution of the German party system in terms of congruence and polarization over time. Although congruence along the cultural divide receded in 1994, it rose concomitantly to an increase in polarization in the 1998 campaign, and remained at that level in 2002. Figure 4 suggests that the potential for realignment was actually higher along the economic than the cultural dimension at least until 2002, where electorates have become less segmented, and where the relationship between voter preferences and party positions is weaker than in the cultural domain. These findings go a long way in explaining the lack of success of right-wing populist challengers in Germany.

#### *Party systems subsequent to the right-wing populist challenge in Europe*

For the Western European cases, the data allows for an analysis of the further evolution of the patterns of party competition, after the entry of the populist right into the party system. Though not necessary to explain the breakthrough of the populist right, the results of this analysis speak to the question why the populist right continues to be successful in France and Switzerland. As Figure 5 shows, party systems in France and Switzerland have become highly responsive to voter preferences along the cultural divide after the institutionalization of the populist right at one pole of the new cultural dimension.

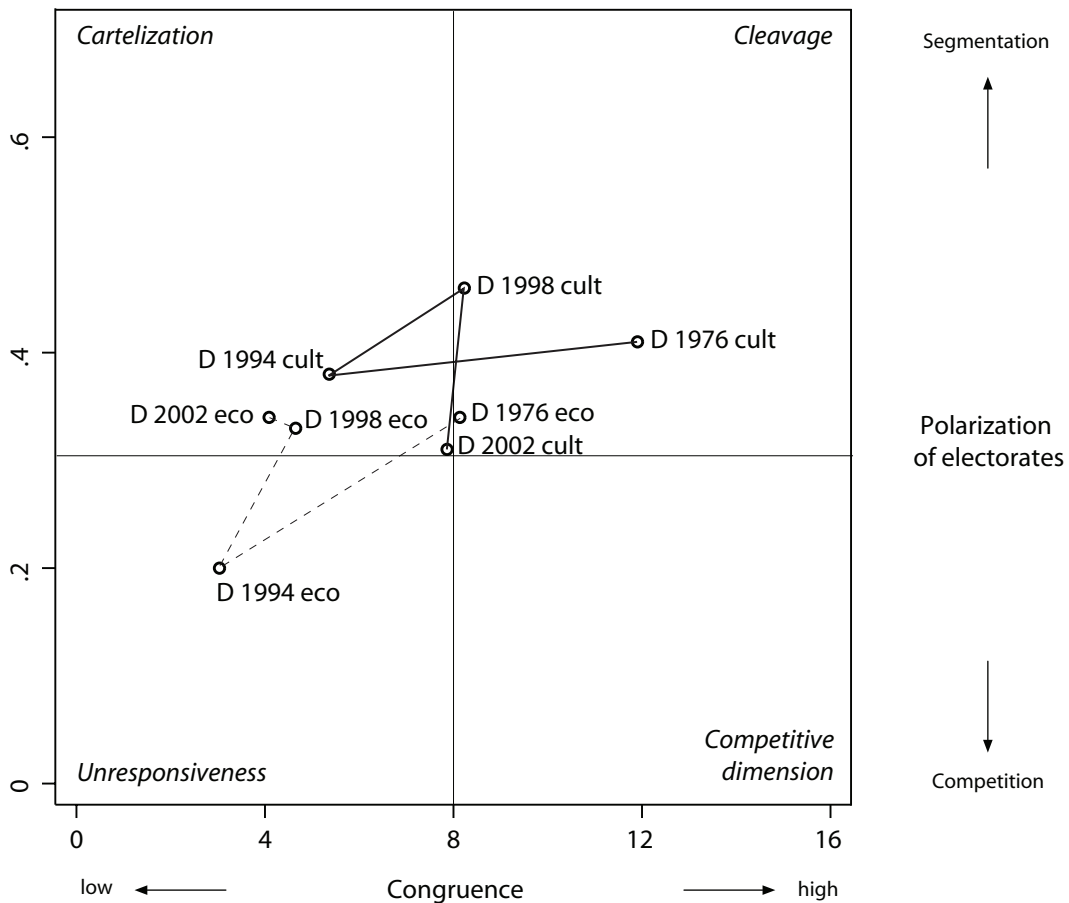


Figure 4: Congruence and Polarization in Germany along the economic (“eco”) and the cultural (“cult”) dimensions, 1976-2002

Both congruence and polarization have increased substantially in Switzerland and France, and cultural conflicts have become strongly segmented in both countries. These results are in line with research that shows that the new cultural divide exhibits all three elements of Bartolini and Mair’s (1990) classical definition of a cleavage (Oesch 2008a, 2008b, Stubager 2009, Oesch and Rennwald 2010, Minkenberg and Perrineau 2007). The populist right forms an integral part of this segmented cleavage: Not only the parties themselves, but also their voters are situated at the traditionalist-communitarian extreme of the new cultural dimension. The populist right thus harbors an ideologically homogeneous group of voters along one of the two prime dimensions of competition in Western Europe (Bornschieer 2010: 106, 142). Thus,

it is difficult to study the extreme populist right in isolation of the thick ideology it thrives upon. The traditionalist-communitarian ideology of the populist right is rooted in cultural transformations that have occurred since 1968, and that have profoundly reconfigured West European party systems.

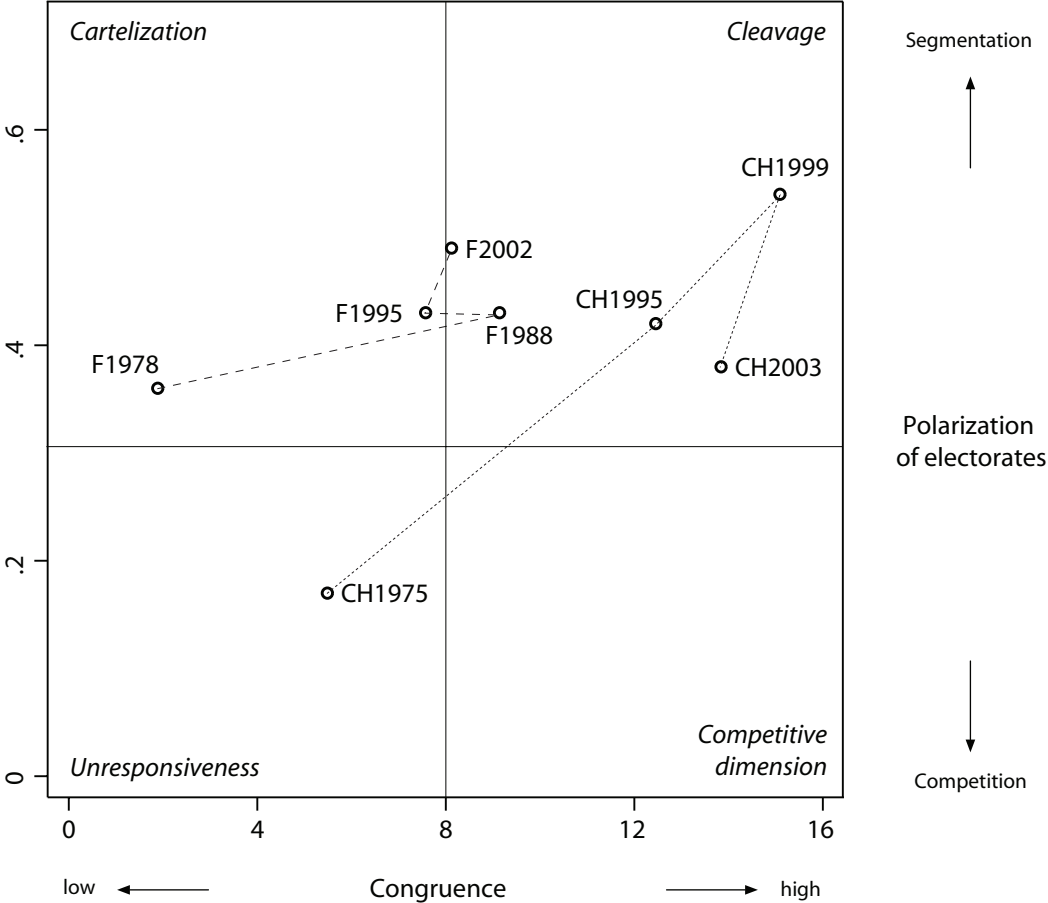


Figure 5: Congruence and Polarization along the new cultural divide in France and Switzerland, 1970s-early 2000s

## Conclusion

This paper shows that the study of the causes of populism should not be divorced from the thick ideologies that populists use to challenge the political establishment. Rather, the search for short-term factors explaining of the success and failure of populist actors should be embedded in a broader analysis of the ideological dimensions structuring party competition in a given system. There is a lot to gain from looking at the degree to which parties adequately represent voter preferences. Populist entrepreneurs will be able to capitalize on anti-elite sentiments where the established parties have lost touch with voter preferences, and where the programmatic alignments between parties and voters have weakened. This is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for populist success, which depends on a number of further factors. As I have argued in this paper, an important condition is the existence of a populist figure or movement advocating an ideology that resonates with the attitudes of those segments of the electorate that no longer feel represented by the established parties. The timing of the populist challenge, on the other hand, may be shaped by conjunctural factors. Thus, Venezuela's traditional parties had presumably been out of touch with their voters' programmatic preferences for long. It was only the economic context of the 1980s and the ebbing of clientelistic resources that had fuelled the traditional parties' machines that eroded system support and thereby provided the electoral potential for an actor like Hugo Chávez to mobilize against the political establishment.

Anti-establishment mobilization took a right-wing culturalist form in Western Europe due to the continuing responsiveness of party systems along the traditional economic divide, and the opportunities offered by the waning of the religious cleavage and the new issues put on the political agenda by the New Left. Among the three countries studied in this paper, only in Germany did the established right succeed in mounting a credible alternative against the New

Left, containing the potential for the populist right. In France, the Front National prepared to seize the anti-universalistic potential already in the 1970s and achieved its breakthrough in the early 1980s. The Front National was a forerunner within the right-wing populist party family in that it offered a new culturalist ideology that subsequently diffused among other right-wing populists across Western Europe (Rydgren 2005). In Switzerland, the manifestation of the traditionalist-communitarian counter-potential to the New Left was delayed into the 1990s by the right-wing populists' "long march" through the institutions of the national party organization (see Skenderovic 2009). But despite this difference in timing, the voters of the Swiss People's Party share with those of the Front National not only their suspicion of the political establishment, but also their specific preferences along the cultural dimension. The case of the Swiss People's Party is interesting in that an established party underwent a transformation into a populist party, eclipsing the smaller far right parties that had existed in the country since the 1970s. The institutions of direct democracy allow the populist right in Switzerland to retain their populist anti-establishment profile despite being a governing party by continuously mounting popular initiatives and referendums against the coalition government in which they are represented.

In Latin America, differences in the degree to which parties represented voter preferences in the 1990s shaped whether moderate left or populist left parties triumphed in the "left turn" that swept the continent after the late 1990s. In Uruguay and Chile, moderate left parties were already firmly entrenched at this point. The left in Chile has been part of a rather segmented pattern of party competition for decades. The Frente Amplio in Uruguay and the Workers' Party in Brazil, on the other hand, underwent a gradual process of growth since the 1970s, and finally took power in 2002 and 2004, respectively. The analysis of the Chilean and Uruguayan cases shows that the mobilization space for new political actors was tightly constrained before the "left turn" in these countries. In many contexts where the major parties failed to offer contrasting positions in economic policy-making, on the other hand, populist or

“contestatory” left-wing challengers appeared and were successful in their bid for power. Contrary to the European cases, I have not yet analyzed the further evolution of representation in Venezuela, and it thus remains an open question whether the party system has regained responsiveness in a fashion similar to what has occurred in France and Switzerland after the populist right had become entrenched in the system. Hawkins’ (2010) analysis of the Venezuelan case suggests that the supporters of Hugo Chávez lack consensus with respect to the populist left’s state interventionist economic policy agenda, and we would thus expect policy representation to have remained low in Venezuela.



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