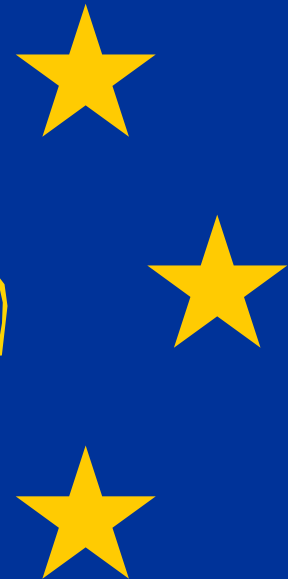


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*research by UNC
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contemporary
European Studies
topics*



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301 Pittsboro St, CB#3449
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Please contact us at europe@unc.edu

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Director's Note

Welcome to the second edition of the North Carolina Journal of European Studies (NCJES)! The outstanding work of our students and this year's Executive Editor, Professor Claude Clegg, has made the publication of this volume possible. I extend my thanks to Rebekah Kati of the Davis Library for all her help as we geared up for the publication of this year's volume. Without financial support from the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, it would have been very difficult to publish the research generated by students. As such, many thanks to the Dean's Office for supporting the publication of their generative work in this volume of our undergraduate research journal. Thanks to Stephanie R. Fore, who designed the cover while working in the Department of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies. Finally, special thanks to faculty colleagues who mentored students as they worked on their articles for this volume.

John D. Stephens, PhD
Director, Center for European Studies
Professor, Department of Political Science

Editorial Team: North Carolina Journal of European Studies, Volume 2, Spring 2021

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Managing Editor Biography

Andreas Jozwiak is a recent Ph.D. graduate of UNC Chapel Hill's Political Science Department and is an incoming Max Weber Fellow at the European University Institute. His research focuses on the intersection of gender and welfare state in advanced democracies, and his work has recently appeared in academic journals like *Social Politics*. Apart from managing the second edition of the NCJES, Andreas has worked with the Center for European Studies to produce teaching materials on the European Union and has led several outreach events at rural North Carolina high schools.

Author Biographies

Michael Cunningham is a 2021 graduate with distinction of UNC's Contemporary European Studies program where he focused his research around Brexit, globalism, and populism. He is currently in the first semester of UNC's Transatlantic Masters Program and hopes to continue his research overseas at the University of Bath in 2022. Michael currently resides in Chapel Hill with his wife and two young daughters.

Ava Erfani graduated from UNC Chapel Hill in 2021 with majors in Political Science and Interdisciplinary Studies (IDST) as well as a minor in Asian Studies. During her time at UNC, Ava created her own field of study through the IDST program entitled Colonialism and Neocolonial Relations to explore the historical period of colonialism and its modern continuities in global power dynamics. This study culminated in her thesis, "Project Kosovo: Disaster Colonialism in Kosovo Since 1999," from which a section is included in this journal. Ava now works as a legal assistant for a law firm in Manhattan and plans to explore a career in law.

Lucas Fernandez is a member of the UNC Class of 2022. He is from Miami, Florida, and is working towards majors in Political Science and History. This year, he will complete a senior honors thesis that analyzes the campaign strategies of the UK Conservative Party in the 2017 and 2019 General Elections. Lucas is a member of the UNC Men's Fencing Team and was one of two European Summer Research Award recipients in 2019.

Luke Habegger is a senior at UNC Chapel Hill double majoring in Political Science and Economics with a minor in German. His areas of focus includes comparative politics, European studies, and economic policy. More specifically, he is interested in researching patterns of liberal democracy, populism in the western world, and international economic solutions to market failures. He also has experience with literacy-based teaching and mental health advocacy. Upon graduation, Luke plans on pursuing a career with a think tank or NGO.

John Macejka is a sophomore at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill majoring in Political Science and Marketing with a minor in History. His interest and engagement with politics is the product of his amazement with the complexity of politics, and he is always trying to align these realities with various historical and political theories he is learning in the classroom.

Emma Schubart graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2021 with degrees in Political Science and Music. She has worked for Advocates for International Development in London and the Institute for Politics and Society in Prague. Her recent research publications focus on counterterrorism, rightwing extremism, and ethnic conflict.

Aleksandar Trivanovic is a senior at the University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill, studying Political Science and Contemporary European Studies. His research primarily focuses on voter decision-making strategies, national elections, and populism in the 21st century. After graduating in spring 2022, Aleksandar plans to continue his education in the UNC Trans-Atlantic Master's Program, where he would receive master's degrees from UNC-Chapel Hill in Political Science and Universität Bremen (Germany) in International Relations.

Jack Twaronite is presently pursuing a BA in Political Science and Peace, War, & Defense at the University of North Carolina and engaged professionally with campaign strategy for Democratic Party candidates. Much of his academic focus concerns the welfare state and organized labor in the United States.

Table of Contents

General Information.....	ii
Director’s Note	iii
Editorial Team	iv
Contributors.....	v
“An Analysis of British Media’s Framing of Immigration During Brexit Campaign’s Final Days”	1
<i>Michael Cunningham</i>	
“Disaster Colonialism: The United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)”.....	20
<i>Ava Erfani</i>	
“British Universities and Research in the Era of Brexit”.....	36
<i>Lucas Fernandez</i>	
“Combating an Ethnopolit Takeover: Can Poland Return to a Liberal Democracy?”	44
<i>Luke Habegger</i>	
“The Connection Between British Exceptionalism and Brexit”.....	54
<i>John Macejka</i>	
“Observations from the Eichmann Trial: The Democratic Necessity of Deliberation and Cognitive Diversity”	66
<i>Emma Schubart</i>	
“The State of Populism in the Post-Industrial Democracies of the Global North: Fading Out, Growing Ever Stronger, or Preparing to Unveil a New Face?”.....	73
<i>Aleksandar Trivanovic</i>	
“Comparing the Societal Impact of Parental Leave Policy in Sweden and Italy”.....	87
<i>Jack Ryan Twaronite</i>	

An Analysis of British Media’s Framing of Immigration During Brexit Campaign’s Final Days

Michael Cunningham

ABSTRACT

Did conservative media frame immigration during the run-up to the Brexit Referendum differently than liberal media? Through the coding of articles in both *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*, we will determine that these publications framed immigration in terms of national security rather than human rights or economic integration issues during the final few days of the Brexit campaign in 2016. Additionally, this framing was due to two newsworthy events that formed the narrative during these waning days: a great debate and a controversial advertisement which not only dominated the headlines but also caused the campaigns to act and react around a security narrative.

Keywords: Brexit, United Kingdom, Immigration, Media Analysis, Framing

Introduction

In June 2016, the United Kingdom shocked the world and voted to leave the European Union. In the three years since, both those who voted to remain in the European Union (Remainers) and those who voted to leave (Brexiters) have become entrenched in their own sides of the debate. Those in the Leave camp deride people who favor EU membership as “Remoaners”: sore losers who want to subvert the will of the 17.4 million people who voted to leave (Freedland 2019, Farage 2016). Likewise, Remainers often belittle those who voted to leave as xenophobic at best and racist at worst (Shaw, 2019; Stone, 2018). Thanks in part to the drawn-out negotiations between the UK and the EU and ongoing political battles, these accusations and stereotypes have calcified, resulting in an increasingly divided country not only politically but also culturally.

While the formal campaign on the EU Referendum began in February 2016, the Leave side had been campaigning on this singular topic since the UK joined the European Union in 1972. The British National Party (BNP) was the first to oppose the United Kingdom’s entry to the EU, and subsequently, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) led the charge (Edwards). The reasons these organizations gave for a withdrawal often had xenophobic or protectionist overtones, with UKIP being strongly opposed to any immigration from areas that were considered “culturally dissimilar” to the UK (Dennison and Godwin 2015). The messaging was sometimes so polarizing that even the proponents and leaders of the Leave campaign objected to the tactics used by these groups (“Gove ‘Shuddered’ At UKIP Migrants Poster” 2016). However, despite these objections, the BNP and their political successors in UKIP ultimately became part of the Brexit movement, with UKIP’s leader Nigel Farage at the helm.

Through coding of articles in both *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*, I will show how immigration was framed in terms of national security over other options during the final few days of the Brexit campaign in 2016. Additionally, I will show that this framing was due to two newsworthy events that formed the narrative during these waning days: a great debate and a controversial advertisement that dominated the headlines and caused the campaigns to act and react around a security narrative.

Hypotheses

In examining *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*, I look at how the media framed immigration in the final days leading up to the referendum, in both their news and opinion sections. While thousands of newspaper articles, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor have been published since the Brexit campaign was launched, this data will look at how immigration was framed in two newspapers immediately preceding the vote in June 2016. Specifically, I will analyze the center-right *The Daily Telegraph*, which endorsed the Leave campaign (Telegraph View 2016), and the center-left-leaning *The Guardian*, which endorsed remaining in the European Union (“*The Guardian View On The EU Debate: David Cameron Makes A Serious Case | Editorial*” 2016). By coding how each of these two publications addressed immigration during this period, we can gain insight into the talking points and policy debates that drove both sides during the Brexit campaign.

The first hypothesis is that the media depicted immigration as inextricably linked to national security. Given the manifestos of the pro-Brexit “Vote Leave” and “Leave.eu” campaigns, it is likely that newspapers supporting or voicing the beliefs of the anti-European factions made the explicit connection of immigration and national security (“Why Vote Leave” About Leave.eu). While security was not the primary focus of the lead campaign, Vote Leave, it was still a highly visible topic. According to the campaign’s website, being “in charge of our own borders” and being able to “control immigration” were items two and three on the list supporting Brexit (“Why Vote Leave”). The campaign’s message was accompanied by imagery showing migrants crossing a border secured with razor wire as well as a graphic stating that Turkey, along with its 76 million inhabitants, was one of the five new countries joining the EU (“Why Vote Leave”). While the campaign’s purpose for including this imagery was not explicit, the implication of the imagery was that the demographic shift of Turkey’s 76 million Muslim citizens suddenly becoming EU citizens was against the national interests of the UK and the European Union. The inclusion of Turkey at this point in the debate is curious given the stalled accession talks between the EU and Turkey in 2015. At best, many more years of negotiation laid ahead between the two governments, so there was no imminent “threat” of Turkey joining the EU. Just six months after the Brexit referendum, the European Parliament overwhelmingly voted to suspend accession talks with Turkey altogether due to human rights and other concerns. If there are any subsequent referenda on the matter, it will be interesting to see if a similar xenophobic dog whistle is used by a new Vote Leave campaign.

Even though the Leave campaign utilized imagery involving immigration, Vote Leave’s primary argument in support of Brexit invoked economic freedom. Therefore, another hypothesis I will examine is that the media in the UK looked at immigration through a lens of economic integration or prosperity (“Why Vote Leave”). This hypothesis speaks to the heart of one of the arguments used by the Remain campaign: that leaving the EU would wreak economic havoc on the United Kingdom due to the fact it could not participate in the EU’s common market. Additionally, free movement of goods, services, and capital are other aspects of the EU’s *acquis communautaire*. Researchers Jonathan Portes and Giuseppe Forte at London’s King College note that immigration and the economy were the two central issues of Brexit (2017). If this hypothesis is supported, then it would speak to not only the media’s ability to tie the two issues together but also the politicians who merged the two topics into one grand theme—even if none of the

projections released by the UK Government before the election analyzed Brexit-related immigration changes on the UK economy (Portes & Forte). While Freedom of Movement only applies to EU citizens, it is closely related to the migrant crisis faced by Europe over the past decade, with millions of refugees fleeing their home countries due to war, famine, or other humanitarian issues (Citizens’ Rights Directive). I will also code to see if a related humanitarian framing exists in any of the articles examined.

Finally, I will examine how *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* differed in how they framed immigration. Given *The Guardian*’s pro-Remain and *The Daily Telegraph*’s pro-Leave endorsements, their overall political leanings will differ. The first sub-hypothesis is that *The Guardian*’s content will frame immigration along the lines of a humanitarian or human rights issue, given the publication’s history of endorsing left-wing causes or Labour candidates. Furthermore, the second sub-hypothesis is that *The Daily Telegraph*’s editorial board is looking at the issue through the lens of national security, and therefore its writers and published letters to the editor will support that position. This is a hypothesis that has its genesis in and is similar to the research of Deborah Sogelola at the University of Ottawa. In 2018, Sogelola wrote about the immigration framing of the *Daily Mail*, a British newspaper that has a right-wing editorial point of view. She wrote that the *Mail* “homogenized and dehumanized” non-UK residents and aliens (Sogelola, 135). This analysis expands on Sogelola’s research and compares two generally respected newspapers that hold opposing editorial endorsements and histories of political bias to determine whether a connection can be made between the publications’ editorial positions and their news articles’ framing.

Research Design / Data

In this research, I chose to focus on two English-language newspapers published in the United Kingdom. This provides a local lens through which foreign observers can interpret how media in the United Kingdom discussed immigration as a local issue. The two newspapers in this study were selected given their history of partisan endorsement. I selected two generally and historically well-respected newspapers with a wide readership. Additionally, the two selected newspapers each endorsed a different side of the Brexit referendum. Representing the “Remain” option, *The Guardian* historically endorses Labour, Liberal, or Liberal Democratic causes and is generally seen as a left-of-center publication (Copeland and Copesey 2017). Since World War II, the paper has only endorsed Labour or Liberal/Liberal Democrats in any general election (Nelsson 2015). This speaks to the publication’s *bona fides* and a good representative of the center-left of British politics.

Endorsing “Leave,” *The Daily Telegraph* does not mince its words. In its endorsement of Theresa May’s Conservative Party in the 2017 snap election, the *Telegraph*’s editorial board left no doubts regarding their choice:

But they have to ask themselves whether they are prepared to see [Labour Party leader] Jeremy Corbyn in office for that to happen. While Labour is in no position to win an election outright it could conceivably end up in a coalition with the Lib Dems and the SNP if the Tories are not returned to power. Mr Corbyn anywhere near the levers of power would be a disaster for the country. (Telegraph View 2017)

Regardless of how the political winds are blowing, *The Daily Telegraph* endorses the Conservative Party, having awarded them their endorsement in each of the five pre-Brexit elections between

1997 and 2015. Since their late endorsement of “Leave” (just three days before the referendum was held), they made the above endorsement of the Conservative Party, and in the summer of 2019, they backed Brexit hardliner and former *Telegraph* journalist Boris Johnson to replace the outgoing Prime Minister later stating that Johnson grew “frustrated” and “exasperated” with a “bureaucracy hell bent on wrapping Britain” (Telegraph View 2019). This glowing endorsement of Brexit, as well as subsequent endorsements against the opposition, establishes *The Daily Telegraph* as a staunch advocate in favor of the UK leaving the European Union outside the single editorial proclaiming as much in 2016.

This establishes the use of both papers as good indicators as to the European supporting “remain” campaign and the Eurosceptic Leave campaign outside the realm of their official endorsements.

According to a search on Nexis Uni®, *The Guardian* alone published 1,546 articles involving immigration and migration between the start of the campaign on February 22, 2016, and the referendum date on June 23, 2016. This is more than any other newspaper in the world and over four times as many mentions as the next highest UK publication, *The Times of London*, with 374 entries. *The Daily Telegraph* mentioned these search terms a relative handful of times, with 259 results during the campaign period.

To find fifty articles for this research, the time frame was restricted to an extremely limited period: only a few days for each paper. For *The Daily Telegraph*, this window was from Monday, 21 June, 2016, the day after their official endorsement, to Thursday, 23 June, 2016, the day of the referendum. For the remain-endorsing *The Guardian*, the window was for the final two days, 22 and 23 June 2016. Restricting a search to such a small area or time frame does create a risk that the sample size is too small to draw any general conclusions about the two papers. Any bias that may be present could be missed as a publication could simply be reporting on a factual matter. However, given the consistency of the two papers’ positions during the entire Brexit debate, I believe this risk to be small. If anything, the most strongly held beliefs would be those most published in the days leading up to the election.

After I established the search dates for each paper, I eliminated duplicates and articles that contained only a fleeting mention of immigration. For example, an article in *The Daily Telegraph* covering the 19 June death of actor Anton Yelchin, who was an immigrant to the United States, was eliminated. Though the article did address immigration, it was not directly tied to the Brexit debate. Also eliminated were a handful of reports from Germany and anything regarding the presidential campaign of Donald Trump, which was occurring at the same time as these stories, as they lacked any useful framing on immigration in the United Kingdom. After these eliminations, 25 articles remained for this publication. For *The Guardian*, 31 articles were found for the two days of the campaign, 22 and 23 June 2016. Of these, a single article regarding Barack Obama, immigration in Burma (Myanmar), Spain, and an article summarizing the Trump campaign were eliminated. This resulted in the required 25 articles.

Coding

To determine how immigration was framed, I reviewed each article’s content and coded each paragraph. While the 50 articles provided hundreds of paragraphs of content, only those paragraphs that mentioned immigration, migration, or words with a similar stem were tagged for this research. Each mention was then coded as to how immigration was presented, using one of the following categories: national security, humanitarian or human rights, economic integration,

or a combination thereof. For example, if the article mentioned “taking back control,” it was coded as national security. If the paragraph mentioned “welcoming” an immigrant or migrant, or if an article generally treated immigration as a positive net effect for the United Kingdom or something the UK “should” otherwise be involved in, it was coded as a humanitarian framing. Alternatively, if the opposing view was taken, it was coded as national security. Finally, if a paragraph was indirectly critical of framing immigration as a security issue, then it was coded as humanitarian and vice versa. In all, 95 paragraphs from *The Guardian* and 84 paragraphs from *The Daily Telegraph* were coded.

Results

Figure 1: Paragraph Coding of British Newspaper Articles (total mentions)

	SECURITY	HUMAN RIGHTS	ECONOMY	SEC/HUM *	SEC/ECON †	HUM/ECON ‡	ALL	OTHER §
<i>The Guardian</i>	27	23	23	1	4	1	1	16
<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	35	11	17	3	7	1	2	7
Total	63	34	40	4	11	2	3	23

Notes: Total mentions include the combined percentages from both publications. Coding included the mention of immigration through a combination of the following:

* National Security as well as Humanitarian

† National Security as well as Economic Integration

‡ Humanitarian as well as Economic Integration

§ The mention of immigration was unique and did not include any of the framing previously mentioned.

Media framed immigration in terms of security.

This hypothesis was supported. While *The Guardian* only slightly favored framing immigration in terms of security, *The Daily Telegraph* presented immigration as a security issue more than twice as often as the next closest narrative, economics. If you include the paragraphs where security framing was coded with either humanitarian or economic ones, over 43% of the paragraphs included a security narrative of some type. Many of the paragraphs coded as security came from the “taking back control” talking point, which dominated the Leave campaign’s final days.

Figure 2: Paragraph Coding of Articles (as a percentage of paper’s mentions)

	SECURITY	HUMAN RIGHTS	ECONOMY	SEC/HUM*	SEC/ECON †	HUM/ECON ‡	ALL	OTHER §
<i>The Guardian</i>	28	24	24	1	4	1	1	17
<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	42	13	20	4	8	1	2	8
Total	35	19	22	2	6	1	2	13

Notes: Total mentions include the combined percentages from both publications. Coding included the mention of immigration through a combination of the following:
 * National Security as well as Humanitarian
 † National Security as well as Economic Integration
 ‡ Humanitarian as well as Economic Integration
 § The mention of immigration was unique and did not include any of the framing previously mentioned.

Media framed immigration in terms of human rights.

This hypothesis was not supported. *The Guardian*’s coverage was evenly split between the three primary narrative hypotheses, but *The Daily Telegraph* emphasized the security narrative more than the other characterizations. As a result, this specific coding was found in the fewest number of paragraphs.

Media framed immigration in terms of economic integration.

This hypothesis was also not supported. Twenty-three of *The Guardian*’s 95 paragraphs were coded economic integration, but just as many as were coded as humanitarian. Again, *The Daily Telegraph*’s coding shows that a vast majority of their coverage involved security. Only 17 of 84 *Telegraph* paragraphs tied immigration to economic integration, so the overall number of paragraphs regarding economic integration was lower than expected, less than half the number of the paragraphs coded for security.

Media framing varied by the editorial endorsement of the newspaper; specifically, The Guardian framed immigration in terms of human rights.

This hypothesis was not supported when looking at articles for the given period. In the final two days of the referendum’s campaign, *The Guardian* instead framed 27 of 95 paragraphs through a security lens, which was a plurality of the overall coding for the paper at the time.

Media framing varied by the editorial endorsement of the newspaper; specifically, The Daily Telegraph framed immigration in terms of security.

This hypothesis was supported. For the final few days of the Brexit campaign, 42% of *The Daily Telegraph’s* paragraphs containing the search terms were framed solely as a matter of security. While this is not a majority, it is an overwhelming plurality, as the next closest topic was covered only 20 times, less than half of security’s frequency. If I were to include the paragraphs where security was combined with either human rights, the economy, or a combination of all three, that number rises to 56%.

Discussion / Conclusion

The data show that British media characterized immigration primarily in terms of security during the final few days of the Brexit campaign, regardless of the endorsement of their editorial board in the matter. This outcome highlights a risk that I did not anticipate: that a newsworthy event would occur that steered the dialogue toward one of the framings, which in turn led that framing to dominate the news cycle.

During the last two days of the campaign that this data cover, there were two dominant stories shaping the media narrative as a whole. The first was a debate moderated by the BBC in London. Taking place two days before the polls were to open, “The Great Debate” featured then Member of Parliament and future Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Labour MP Gisela Stuart, and Conservative minister Andrea Leadsom. This pro-Brexit team debated Remain leaders Ruth Davidson, who was then leader of the Scottish Conservative Party, Labour Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, and trade union leader Francis O’Grady (UK Election 2015). While multiple issues were discussed, security and immigration were heavily featured. “Take back control” was said 24 times, while immigration or migrants were referenced 81 times (Debate).

I downloaded the transcript from this debate and analyzed the text via a web-based text utility. Over the course of the two-hour debate, 17,128 words were captured. The six-word phrase “vote leave and take back control” was said seven times, more than twice as often as any other six-word phrase. The three-word phrase “take back control” was found 24 times, with the only three-word phrase being quoted more often was the unavoidable “the European Union” (Text Analyzer).

The second event that dominated news coverage and affected the results of my study occurred the week before the election but continued to stir debate at the time of the data sampling. A controversial billboard was posted by UKIP and promoted by their leader Nigel Farage on 16 June, 2016.

Figure 3: Breaking Point billboard

(Source: @UKIP)

The focus of the billboard, and the subsequent condemnation by leaders of both sides in the Brexit debate, was the implication that the European Union had failed the United Kingdom by allowing large groups of non-European refugees into the country. The phrase “take back control” appears on the billboard, which ties the imagery to the official Leave campaign and reinforces immigration as a national security talking point. The referendum occurred at the peak of the Syrian migrant crisis, with 335,160 Syrian refugees applying for asylum within the EU during 2016 (Eurostat, Asylum applicants in the EU 2016). This represented over a quarter of all those who applied for refugee status that year. According to Eurostat, however, the Syrian refugee crisis did not have a direct effect on the United Kingdom. The UK only accepted 38,290 refugees in 2016, with the largest nationalities being Iranian (4,780 applicants or 12%), Pakistani (3,700 applicants or 10%), and Iraqi (3,645 applications or 10%). While the Syrian crisis was a heavily covered event at the time, Germany, Greece, and Austria were the EU nations where over 90% of Syrian refugees applied for asylum.

Another implied message in the poster was that similar influxes of refugees were imminent. In actuality, the photo used on the billboard was taken near Rigonce, Slovenia—over 770 miles from London.

The billboard was promoted by Nigel Farage’s UKIP Party’s social media, which tweeted, “The EU has failed us all. We must break free of the EU and take back control of our borders” (@UKIP). Within minutes, others on Twitter quickly compared the imagery to that used in Nazi propaganda, which called interwar European migrants “parasites undermining their host countries” (@brendanjharkin).

Figure 5: Screenshot from BBC’s *Auschwitz: The Nazis and the Final Solution*

(Dan Bloom, *The Daily Mirror*)

The outcry in the final week of the campaign forced Leave leaders, namely Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, to distance themselves from Farage. During the Great Debate, Johnson said the UK should “celebrate immigrants and everything they do for our country.” *Daily Telegraph* writer Michael Deacon suggested this embrace of immigration was a sign that the Leave campaign was worried about the optics of racist or xenophobic comparisons and was eager to distance themselves from the provocative imagery (Deacon). Gove was quoted as saying, “When I saw that poster, I shuddered. I thought it was the wrong thing to do” (“Gove ‘Shuddered’ At UKIP Migrants Poster” 2016).

While the reaction of the media to the provocative billboard and the pre-election BBC debate, and the resulting focus on a security-heavy framing of immigration, could be explained as a simple reporting of the events of the times, does the emphasis on security also reach into the editorial column or letters to the editor? Or did the editorial sections stay true to their “roots” of humanitarian/economic prosperity framing on one side and security/economic danger on the other? To determine if this was the case, I separated the purely journalistic or “news” pieces and the opinion pieces in both *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* to see if there was a trend.

In the Leave-endorsing *Telegraph*, ten of the 25 articles containing the search terms were classified as an opinion piece. While the five articles listed under “opinion” or “letters” were obvious to classify, there were also two items classified as “news,” two defined as “feature,” and one more included in the business section according to Lexis Nexis that seemed like more than simple news pieces. Even though these articles were not explicitly categorized as opinion, each was written with a clear bias and included terms or endorsements that chose a side of the debate. One such feature by Allison Pearson leaves no ambiguity by stating, “I detest the arrogant obliviousness of the Brussels oligarchy, am convinced that the accursed eurozone will collapse, and I’d like our country to be well away from the falling debris” (“The referendum campaign? Ah yes, I remember it well” 2016). Obviously supporting Leave, Pearson’s view of immigration is framed as a security issue, and she addresses the potential economic impact of the UK accepting 250,000 migrants per year.

Figure 6: Paragraph Coding of The Daily Telegraph opinion articles

	SECURITY	HUMAN RIGHTS	ECON	SEC/HUM	SEC/ECON	HUM/ECON	ALL	OTHER
Total	5	1	11	0	1	1	1	5

Further analysis of the 25 *Telegraph* opinion paragraphs showed less emphasis on a security framing than an economic framing. In fact, only a single letter from Juliet Samuel was coded as primarily security focused. Four of the ten articles took an economic angle, with another three framing immigration in a variety of other ways.

Figure 7: Article Coding of The Daily Telegraph opinion articles

	SECURITY	HUMAN RIGHTS	ECON	SEC/HUMAN	SEC/ECON	HUMAN/ECON	ALL	OTHER
Total	1	0	4	0	0	1	1	3

However, when you look at only the opinion articles in *The Guardian* (both by contributors as well as letters to the editor) written during this time frame, the framing of immigration through a humanitarian or human rights lens increased to a slight plurality. Of the 44 opinion-based articles, 15 (34 percent) were coded with a human rights framing. This is slightly more than the paragraphs coded as security-related, which occurred in 12 paragraphs, or 27 percent of the time.

Figure 8: Paragraph Coding of The Guardian opinion articles

	SECURITY	HUMAN RIGHTS	ECON	SEC/HUM	SEC/ECON	HUM/ECON	ALL	OTHER
Total	12	15	8	1	4	1	0	3

Of the 1,834 immigration-related articles published by *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* during the four-month campaign, the 50 articles analyzed in this research account for only 2.7% of these newspapers' output on the topic during the formal Brexit campaign. To get a better representative sample of articles, one could either expand the time frame outside these final few days, analyze a random sampling of articles from these two newspapers over a greater time frame, or analyze a greater selection of publications in the same time frame. Simply put, there is a mountain of data available, and this research only scratches the surface.

While the hypothesis that the media as a whole, and *The Daily Telegraph* in particular, primarily framed immigration through the lens of national security, more research is needed to support this conclusion further. Additionally, there is abundant data available to examine whether (and to what extent) the media shaped the Brexit debate or whether it simply reflected and reported events and opinions of the time. As noted above, the breadth and depth of data force those who have a serious interest in the topic to look at more than a fraction of articles written over just a few days by two papers. To reach a true understanding of how British media depicted, discussed, and framed immigration during the run-up to the Brexit referendum, further researchers will need the resources to comb through more data.

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Appendix

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Disaster Colonialism: The United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)

Ava Erfani

ABSTRACT

The international involvement in Kosovo since 1999 serves as a unique, contemporary case of what I refer to as “disaster colonialism.” Disaster colonialism in Kosovo, I argue, was a project, one which needed the fabrication of a “disaster,” (based on the historical event of the 1999 War of Independence) in order for a series of international organizations to establish missions that would proliferate following the end of the war. The conflict between Kosovo and Serbia over the ownership of territory was seized by the international community as a “disaster,” catalyzing a self-justifying mechanism that foreclosed the expression of popular democratic will in post-conflict Kosovo. Understood in this way, disaster colonialism is a programmatic, top-down method of building a state following a crisis that undemocratically implements techniques of governance imported by a colonizing power, bypassing the will or the consent of the populace. By manufacturing a “disaster”—which declares a populace no longer capable of deciding the future of their government or the shape of their own society—the international community was able to format a legal, economic, and political system in Kosovo that served the interests of a Western, liberal-democratic power structure. In this paper, I will trace the points in which the UN’s disaster colonialism, administered by technocratic governance experts, reveals the costs of occupation, the collateral damage that is part of the state-building mission, and the tensions between expert rule—even from a human rights-centered organization like the UN—and democracy.

Keywords: Kosovo, United Nations, post-conflict, interventions, democracy

Introduction

On March 24, 1999, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) began Operation Allied Force, the 78-day bombing campaign targeting the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). During the eleven weeks of bombing across Serbia and Kosovo, 400 Tomahawk cruise missiles were launched, 20,000 “smart” missiles were deployed, and 5,000 conventional bombs were dropped. After less than three months of NATO’s strategic aerial attacks, FRY president Slobodan Milošević agreed to withdraw troops. NATO ended the conflict in Kosovo, and for the first time in the history of warfare, military victory was achieved solely by air power.¹ The end of the NATO intervention was followed by the beginning of United Nations (UN) control over Kosovo with the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). From 1999-2008, the UN held supreme legislative, executive, and judicial authority over Kosovo, creating a protectorate that was governed through international administration.² Though the international community had initially intervened to prevent human rights abuses against the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo, it would now be responsible for “prepar[ing] the province for substantial autonomy and self-government.”³ I will argue that the UN’s control over Kosovo during this era was part of a colonial project which

¹ Nick Cook, “War of Extremes,” *Jane’s Defense Weekly* (1999).

² Ray Murphy, *UN Peacekeeping in Lebanon, Somalia and Kosovo: Operational and Legal Issues in Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 80.

³ Independent International Commission on Kosovo, “The Kosovo Report: Conflict- International Response- Lessons Learned” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 259.

utilized humanitarian intervention to undemocratically shape Kosovo towards a “European” model of society.⁴

The international involvement in Kosovo since 1999 serves as a unique, contemporary case of what I refer to as “disaster colonialism,” borrowing from Naomi Klein’s conception of “disaster capitalism.”⁵ In Klein’s vocabulary, “disaster” refers to the vulnerable condition of a populace wherein it is unable to express its popular will against undemocratic economic neoliberal reforms, usually due to its focus on survival and recovery following a widespread crisis. Disaster colonialism in Kosovo, I argue, was a *project*, one which needed the fabrication of a “disaster,” (based on the historical event of the 1999 War of Independence) for a series of international organizations to establish missions that would proliferate following the end of the war. The conflict between Kosovo and Serbia over the ownership of territory was seized by the international community as a “disaster,” catalyzing a self-justifying mechanism that foreclosed the expression of popular democratic will in post-conflict Kosovo. Without the watchword of “disaster,” I claim, the interventions in Kosovo, by NATO, the UN, and the European Union (EU) would not have been possible. Understood in this way, disaster colonialism is a programmatic, top-down method of building a state following a crisis that undemocratically implements techniques of governance imported by a colonizing power, bypassing the will or the consent of the populace. By manufacturing a “disaster”—which declares a populace no longer capable of deciding the future of their government or the shape of their own society—the international community was able to format a legal, economic, and political system in Kosovo that served the interests of a Western, liberal-democratic power structure.

Disaster colonialism, then, attempts to diagnose the ways in which a foreign governing body is established, exercised, and multiplied in post-crisis situations using universally accepted norms of international human rights discourse to justify the wide-scale modeling of a society to serve not so much the interests of the governed, but rather the interests of the global order. In the case of Kosovo, the 1999 NATO intervention began the project of disaster colonialism by claiming a stake in the future of Kosovo. The UN continued the project for eight years via direct governance over Kosovo. After Kosovo declared independence in 2008, the UN transferred the remainder of its authority to the EU which utilized indirect methods of control—financial imperatives, Kosovo’s lack of alternative sources of growth and aid—to finalize the mission of disaster colonialism.⁶

The origins of international involvement in Kosovo did not begin with NATO, but the NATO intervention allowed for the colonial mission to take place. It established that the conflict was out of the control of Milošević, Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova, the KLA, and other regional actors. As it had done in Bosnia-Herzegovina only a few years prior, the international

⁴ The work of Ralph Wilde, Antony Anghie, and Roland Paris has informed my perspective on the colonial nature of UNMIK. All three authors have drawn parallels between modern UN missions and the practices of colonialism. See: Ralph Wilde, *International Territorial Administration: How Trusteeship and the Civilizing Mission Never Went Away*, Oxford Monographs in International Law (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199274321.001.0001>; Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Roland Paris, *At War’s End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁵ Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine* (New York, New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007).

⁶ The roles of NATO and the EU in “Project Kosovo” are discussed in my forthcoming undergraduate thesis: “‘Project Kosovo’: Disaster Colonialism in Kosovo Since 1999.”

community coalesced around the new governance and peacekeeping project: Kosovo. Thousands of international staff members relocated to the new missions in Kosovo in the direct aftermath of the destruction from the 1999 war. Many Kosovar Albanians as well as Kosovar Serbs faced extreme brutalities during the war, including murder, assault, rape, and forced removal as part of the ethnic cleansing campaign. It was in this environment that the UN and other organizations stepped into Kosovo. UNMIK, the OSCE mission, the EU mission, and the permanent NATO presence combined to create the longest and most expansive trusteeship mission in history.⁷

Kosovo as a post-conflict site gave the international community a center to focus their operations. For organizations like the EC/EU, state-building was a new field in which they could test their power and efficacy. If the post-conflict missions in Kosovo could be successful in creating a European-oriented, stable state, the international organizations could gain greater reputation and power in their global endeavors. Each major international organization was placed into separate spheres of operation termed “pillars.” Pillar I, “Humanitarian Affairs,” originally fell under the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and was responsible for the return and replacement of refugees; Pillar II, “Civil Administration,” was run by the UN and consisted of daily administrative management of the territory; Pillar III, “Democratization and Institution Building,” was led by the OSCE; Pillar IV, “Economic Reconstruction,” fell under the jurisdiction of the EU.⁸ Each partition of tasks made clear the primary objectives of UNMIK in terms of the type of society it aimed to create in Kosovo: a human rights-respecting, bureaucratic, and democratic government (UNHCR, UN, OSCE) as well as an investment-friendly market economy (EU).

This level of state-building had not been undertaken before by the UN, making Kosovo the site of the largest modern experiment in government planning and control. The “disaster” of the 1999 war provided the grounds for this colonial experiment, the purpose of which was to prove the efficacy and hegemony of the liberal-democratic humanitarian style of “good governance” and development. In this paper, I will trace the points in which the UN’s disaster colonialism, administered by technocratic governance experts, reveals the costs of occupation, the collateral damage that is part of the state-building mission, and the tensions between expert rule—even from a human rights-centered organization like the UN—and democracy.

The International Commission on Kosovo’s 2000 report on the Kosovo crisis found that the intervention was “illegal but legitimate... because the intervention had the effect of liberating the majority population of Kosovo from a long period of oppression under Serbian rule.”⁹ The uncertainty surrounding the legality and morality of NATO’s actions in Kosovo was quelled by this consensus, paving the way for the international community’s colonial project to establish its

⁷ The UN had briefly assumed governing responsibility in Cambodia in the early 1990s and would go on to create a similar trusteeship to Kosovo in East Timor, though under different conditions—the East Timorese had voted for independence and Indonesia had relinquished sovereignty over their territory—and for a four-year period. William G. O’Neill, *Kosovo: An Unfinished Peace* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 31.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁹ The Independent International Commission on Kosovo, “The Kosovo Report: Conflict- International Response-Lessons Learned” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4. The United Kingdom House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee stated that the use of force by NATO was of “dubious legality,” but was justified morally. UK House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, Fourth Report, Section 1999-2000, para. 138.

roots in Kosovo.¹⁰ The UN was able to establish UNMIK without request from Kosovo, bypassing its traditional insistence on consensual missions due to the “urgency” of the post-conflict situation which made its power as a humanitarian organization necessary, at least according to the international community.¹¹

It is my argument that UNMIK’s administration was fundamentally colonial: the international community worked to control and shape the people and society of Kosovo, implementing Western governance and economic styles, while working against and around the very systems that they implemented. The difference between the colonialism of “old” and the disaster colonialism of the UN in Kosovo is that the UN’s hypocrisy between its rhetoric and action was due to its prevailing belief in its own mission rather than an ulterior motive to attain economic wealth. Those in charge of UNMIK and international organizations in Kosovo could accept the fact that many of their policies went against European and international legal conventions—some costs were necessary, according to their logic, in order to build a stable state for the people of Kosovo. It is this axiom, I argue, which guided UNMIK and other missions in Kosovo and which made colonialism possible as a humanitarian system of governance in the 21st century.

The NATO intervention in Serbia and Kosovo was officially terminated on June 9, 1999 when NATO and the FRY government signed the Kumanovo Technical Agreement in Kumanovo, Macedonia. The document created a framework for dispelling Serb troops from Kosovo and for the establishment of a NATO security presence in the province.¹² However, in terms of addressing the roots of the territorial conflict, the agreement was much weaker than the agreement at Rambouillet. Milošević rejected the Rambouillet Agreement before the war began largely because of its proposal that a referendum on the issue of independence would be carried out after three years of foreign international intervention in Kosovo. The Kumanovo Agreement focused more on the establishment of international administration rather than on questions popular will or sovereignty. Prior to international intervention, the KLA aimed to gain national sovereignty and independence for Kosovo; this was, however, irreconcilable with the goals of the North Atlantic organizations. As Ray Murphy writes, “The ultimate goal of the KLA was independence, but this was inconsistent with European Union and United States policy. The latter considered that political autonomy and guaranteed minority rights formed the only internationally acceptable solution to the status of Kosovo.”¹³

The Kumanovo Technical Agreement focused on the security apparatuses in Kosovo, stating that a UN mission would be deployed under a Security Council resolution and that all

¹⁰ The definition of colonialism differs in usage. I will utilize Immanuel Wallerstein’s conception of the term as a situation with a specific regime of power: “By the term colonial situation we simply mean that someone imposes in a given area a new institution, the colonial administration, governed by outsiders who establish new rules which they enforce with a reasonable degree of success. It means that all those who act in the colony must take some account of these rules...” Immanuel Wallerstein, *Africa*, (University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 31.

¹¹ Traditionally, peacekeeping missions would need consent from the state in question in order for the UN to establish peacekeeping forces. Christine Gray, “Host-State Consent and United Nations Peacekeeping in Yugoslavia Symposium: The United Nations, Regional Organizations, and Military Operations,” *Duke Journal of Comparative & International Law* 7, no. 1 (1996), 242.

¹² Spyros Economides, “Kosovo,” in *United Nations Interventionism 1991-2004* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 238.

¹³ Ray Murphy, *UN Peacekeeping in Lebanon, Somalia and Kosovo: Operational and Legal Issues in Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 72.

Yugoslav military forces would be removed from Kosovo’s territory and air space. The agreement established NATO’s sole authority over the use of force in Kosovo, banning any return of the Yugoslav and/or Serbian militaries. The following day, the UN would establish sole governing authority in the region. On June 10, 1999, the UN Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 1244 under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.¹⁴ Article 11 of the Resolution gave UNMIK its main objectives:

11. Decides that the main responsibilities of the international civil presence will include:
 - (a) Promoting the establishment, pending a final settlement, of substantial autonomy and self-government in Kosovo, taking full account of annex 2 and of the Rambouillet accords (S/1999/648);
 - (b) Performing basic civilian administrative functions where and as long as required;
 - (c) Organizing and overseeing the development of provisional institutions for democratic and autonomous self-government pending a political settlement, including the holding of elections;
 - (d) Transferring, as these institutions are established, its administrative responsibilities while overseeing and supporting the consolidation of Kosovo’s local provisional institutions and other peace- building activities;
 - (e) Facilitating a political process designed to determine Kosovo’s future status, taking into account the Rambouillet accords (S/1999/648);
 - (f) In a final stage, overseeing the transfer of authority from Kosovo’s provisional institutions to institutions established under a political settlement;
 - (g) Supporting the reconstruction of key infrastructure and other economic reconstruction;
 - (h) Supporting, in coordination with international humanitarian organizations, humanitarian and disaster relief aid;
 - (i) Maintaining civil law and order, including establishing local police forces and meanwhile through the deployment of international police personnel to serve in Kosovo;
 - (j) Protecting and promoting human rights;
 - (k) Assuring the safe and unimpeded return of all refugees and displaced persons to their homes in Kosovo;¹⁵

Resolution 1244 was the basis of the UN’s power in Kosovo. It ensured that the functions of Kosovo’s society as well as the design of its future would be in the hands of international staff. The scope of the mission was unprecedented; with no clear terminating clause, UNMIK would be responsible for both administration over Kosovo as well as the facilitation of the territorial dispute.¹⁶ In the span of two days, Kosovo lost local authority to self-govern as well as establish its own armed forces.

The Resolution was seen as the ex post facto endorsement of the NATO intervention—the subject of legal and ethical debates on foreign intervention and sovereignty among international

¹⁴ The resolution was adopted with broad consensus; only China abstained from the vote.

¹⁵ United Nations Security Council, “Resolution 1244,” June 10, 1999, 124.

¹⁶ Alexandros Yannis, “The UN as Government in Kosovo,” *Global Governance* 10, no. 1 (2004), 67.

law experts—by the UNSC which had not initially approved the intervention.¹⁷ However, some scholars of international law who did not accept the humanitarian premise of the NATO intervention also questioned the legal validity of post-intervention involvement in Kosovo. They argued that the Kumanovo Agreement, which Resolution 1244 refers to as part of its legal basis, was made in violation of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties which states that “a treaty is void if its conclusion has been procured by the threat or use of force in violation of the principles of international law embodied in the Charter of the United Nations.”¹⁸ The crux of the critical argument centered on the use of unsanctioned force by NATO which was in violation of the UN Charter. Legal debates notwithstanding, the UN mission was able to expand its legal and executive reach after the passage of Resolution 1244.

Per Article 11 of Resolution 1244, UNMIK was to transfer its executive capacities over time to the local government by establishing democratic institutions and elections for the territory.¹⁹ The transition to local ownership proved to be less important to the mission in the first years of operation, however. Only a month after the adoption of Resolution 1244, the mission began to unilaterally issue legislative acts and executive orders.²⁰ This campaign was led by the Secretary General Special Representative, a UN envoy position.²¹ The SRSG was an appointee of the UNSC who was to “control the implementation of the international civil presence, and ... coordinate closely with the international security presence to ensure that both presences operate towards the same goals...”²² The SRSG served as the head of the mission and the executive authority on all other international missions, making the position the single most powerful in the governing of Kosovo.

Neither the Kumanovo Agreement nor Resolution 1244 addressed the territorial dispute at the core of the conflict. The Resolution in fact recognized Kosovo as part of FRY, though it called for “substantial autonomy” for Kosovo, essentially placing the country back into the political situation which led to the 1999 War of Independence. The UN was to be responsible for many of the processes which would decide the fate of Kosovo, and one of its most important roles was to facilitate diplomatic talks between Pristina and Belgrade on the question of independence. However, the organization’s primary organ, the UNSC, was itself divided on this question: Russia

¹⁷ The use of force by NATO was required to be approved by international law; the intervention was justified by NATO and legal scholars by the contention that the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo was too grave to wait for UNSC approval (or possibly have the intervention rejected by the UNSC due to Serbia’s diplomatic ties with Russia).

¹⁸ Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties art. 52, *opened for signature* May 23, 1969, 1155 U.N.T.S. 331. See Enrico Milano, Security Council Action in the Balkans: Reweaving the Legality of Kosovo’s Territorial Status, *European Journal of International Law*, Vol. 14, 2003. See also: Barbara Delcourt and Nina Wilen, International Administration of Foreign Territories and Sovereignty, an Impossible Equation?, *Finch Yearbook of International Law*, Vol. 18, 2007, p. 68..

¹⁹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 *On the Deployment of International Civil and Security Presences in Kosovo*, S/RES/1244 (10 June 1999).

²⁰ Marcus Brand, “The Development of Kosovo Institutions and the Transition of Authority from UNMIK to Local Self-Government,” *Center for Applied Studies in International Negotiations*, January 2003, 9.

²¹ Milano, 1000. The resolution states that it “authorizes the Secretary-General, with the assistance of relevant international organizations, to establish an international civil presence in Kosovo in order to provide an interim administration for Kosovo under which the people of Kosovo can enjoy substantial autonomy within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and which will provide transitional administration while establishing and overseeing the development of provisional democratic self-governing institutions to ensure conditions for a peaceful and normal life for all inhabitants of Kosovo.” UNSCR 1244, 3.

²² UNSCR 1244, p. 2.

and China maintained that Kosovo was part of Serbia, while the UK, U.S., and France supported Kosovo’s independence. Further, many countries in the UN did not recognize Kosovo for fear of encouraging their own domestic separatist movements. One of the conflict’s central tenets—the question of territory—could not be approached by the UN itself, let alone solved by the peacekeeping mission.²³

On July 25, 1999, UNMIK established Regulation 1999/1, giving all legislative and executive authority as well as the administration of the judiciary in Kosovo to its own structures. The regulation invested these authorities in the SRSG who had ultimate exercising power.²⁴ In this way, not only did the UN prevent any local input on governance, but it also refrained from allowing power to be exercised in a diffuse way among its staff in Kosovo. The issues of popular sovereignty and democracy, though given special respect in the UN Charter and international conventions, seemed to be a foregone conclusion in the UN’s post-Cold War peacekeeping mission style. It is this disregard and simultaneous reputation for setting standards of governance which made it possible for the UN to have such a high level of control over Kosovar society:

At the time of its deployment, the transitional administration functions of UNMIK made it one of the most complex and ambitious operations that the United Nations had ever undertaken. UNMIK’s responsibilities extended well beyond peacekeeping and peacebuilding to comprise an exceptionally wide range of governance functions. So broad was the scope of UNMIK’s authority—encompassing plenary executive, legislative, and judicial authority—that UNMIK can be said to belong to a *sui generis* class of operations (soon to include the UN mission in East Timor) sometimes referred to as “neo-trusteeships,” ‘international protectorates,’ and, more accurately, ‘international territorial administrations.’²⁵

UNMIK was to be responsible for governance in Kosovo and for the transition to local authority, yet it expressly denied and inhibited many of the values, principles, and structures which it aimed to impose on the Kosovar people. The mission was centered around the power of the SRSG who was given complete authority to appoint any member of his or her office, essentially utilizing an executive cabinet-style government to rule over the territory rather than a democratic structure. The position of SRSG became increasingly powerful, moving from “basic civil administration functions” to all administrative functions including those of the law, commerce, security, currency, etc.

In order for the UN to claim sole legal, executive and judicial authority, it refrained from the outright denial of the existence of local parallel structures and preventing any locals from holding political power in Kosovo—a tactic which may have caused the political elite in Kosovo to mobilize against the mission. UN Regulation 1/2000 established the Agreement on a Kosovo-UNMIK Joint Interim Administrative Structure (JIAS) which agreed that the three major political parties in Kosovo would share administrative responsibility over Kosovo. The JIAS gave the local

²³ Koops, 623.

²⁴ UNMIK, “Regulation No. 1999/1, S/1999/987,” July 25, 1999, <https://undocs.org/en/S/1999/987>. Yannis, “The UN as Government in Kosovo.”

²⁵ Joachim Alexander Koops et al., eds., *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2015), 618.

political parties some authority, but the regulation required that all official parallel structures would have to be abolished. As the regulation articulated:

Current Kosovo structures, be they executive, legislative or judicial (such as the “Provisional Government of Kosovo,” Presidency of the Republic of Kosovo”) shall be transformed and progressively integrated, to the extent possible and in conformity with this agreement, into the Joint Interim Administrative Structure.²⁶

For UNMIK, it was necessary to end all threats to its governing legitimacy by integrating any local government into its mission. There could not be structures which claimed to “exercise public authority in Kosovo” outside of its mission, or else it would not be as effective or powerful. Additionally, the implementation plan for the legislation banned:

...issuance of “official documents,” certificates or registration plates; appointments of personnel for ‘official’ posts; collection of customs/taxes and license fees; policing/law and order activities; wearing of ‘official’ uniforms, carrying of ‘official identity cards, or otherwise impersonating officials’; ‘official’ contacts/negotiations with UNMIK and KFOR/international representatives; and occupying public buildings.²⁷

The issue of self-administration was not seriously addressed until the first municipal elections in October 2000. Later in May 2001, UNMIK also allowed the formation of a 120-seat Kosovar assembly, nonetheless requiring quotas for ethnic representation: ten seats for Serbs and ten seats for other minorities.²⁸ The assembly would elect a president, who would then choose a prime minister. The structure was modeled after the European parliament systems with the special addendum of assembly ethnic quotas to reiterate the importance of the ethnic-tension narrative as justification for foreign involvement in the region.

Though the European style of governance was used in the assembly and governmental structure in Kosovo, European legal conventions were shifted to fit the needs of UNMIK and other international organizations in Kosovo. Regulation 2000/47 provided immunity for both UNMIK and KFOR members, ensuring that they would not be subject to local laws and the judicial system for any official actions.²⁹ This was in accordance with previous international conventions which established immunity for those involved in UN or other diplomatic relations. However, this strict observance of immunity over all other considerations undermined the mission’s supposed purpose—if the primary impetus for intervention and occupation was to prevent crimes against humanity, how could the international staff be given protection from the same standards of culpability that were applied against Milošević?³⁰ The issue of diplomatic immunity was used by

²⁶ Regulation 1/2000 of 14 January 2000.

²⁷ Kosovo-UNMIK Joint Interim Administrative Structure- Implementation Plan, 7 February 2000.

²⁸ O’Neill, 32. The seat quotas for ethnicity were not based on population distribution, but the ideal of minority representation for the sake of “reconciliation,” supporting the idea that ethnic tensions were an ever-present threat which needed quelling.

²⁹ Regulation 2000/47, 1999 “On Privileges and Immunities of international presences in Kosovo.”

³⁰ The hierarchy in order between immunity and human rights violations was ultimately determined by the European Court of Human Rights in the case of the *Stichting Mothers of Srebrenica and others* involving the United Nations and the government of the Netherlands’ role in the Srebrenica acts of genocide. The international court ruled that the

the UN to prevent prosecution against the mission after a group of Roma activists filed an official complaint in 2008 on behalf of 138 Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian victims in Kosovo.³¹ In 1999, over 600 members of the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian ethnic groups in Kosovo had been placed by the UN into refugee camps set up on land which was known to be prone to health risks as it was located next to a coal mining complex. A report by the Human Rights Watch found that the area contained highly toxic levels of lead, leading to miscarriages, premature births, increased seizures and cognitive/behavioral disabilities in children.³² For many in the camps, the lead exposure caused lifelong symptoms and medical conditions. The UN did not take action to move the refugees until 2005, and no official amends have been made regarding the complaint due to the legal protection enjoyed by UN staff.³³

Though the staff of UNMIK and other international organizations could not be prosecuted in courts of law, they were still responsible for establishing the courts in Kosovo. After the first year of the UNMIK project, the UN created and staffed a judicial system, but the efficiency and transparency of the courts were questionable. UNMIK had initially utilized an “Emergency Judicial System” from June to December 1999 while it struggled to find qualified judges. The judges that were hired during this time earned less than half of the salaries of UNMIK drivers and interpreters.³⁴ In a case in Pec, Kosovo, a judge requested that a case involving a former prominent KLA member be dropped from his docket for fear of his own safety.³⁵ The UN could not remove the judicial system from its surroundings, and UNMIK did not take measures to address the root of such security concerns. The KLA had a symbiotic relationship with UNMIK. This translated to direct political power for the group during and after the UN administration.³⁶

The most powerful and repeated threat to the judicial system, however, did not come from the KLA but from the SRSG. A series of events during the 1999-2008 period exemplify the contradictions between the stated goals of UNMIK—implementation of democracy, autonomy, self-government—and the executive actions of the SRSG. In 2000, during the case of Afrim Zeqiri, then-SRSG Bernard Kouchner repeatedly denied court rulings in favor of his own dictums of guilt. In May 2000, Zeqiri voluntarily turned himself into authorities after an arrest order was made for him. He was a suspect for the murder of three Serbs and attempted murder of two others. After nearly two months in detention, the international investigating judge ordered his release as it was found that there were no grounds to proceed with the prosecution. The next day, the SRSG issued an executive order to continue Zeqiri’s detention for another 30 days, which he renewed again at the end of the order. “On the request of an international investigating prosecutor, the international judge issued a decision permitting extension of detention without specifying the exact detention

case was inadmissible, arguing that immunity rules held supremacy over the gravity of claims like genocide. Murati, 128.

³¹ Human Rights Watch, “Poisoned by Lead: A Health and Human Rights Crisis in Mitrovica’s Roma Camps,” Kosovo, June 23, 2009, <http://www.hrw.org/node/83942>.

³² Ibid.

³³ Milica Stojanovic, “UN Urged to Finally Compensate Lead-Poisoned Kosovo Refugees,” *Balkan Insight*, September 22, 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/09/22/un-urged-to-finally-compensate-lead-poisoned-kosovo-refugees/>.

³⁴ O’Neill, *An Unfinished Peace*, 82.

³⁵ O’Neill, 83.

³⁶ Adem Beha and Arben Hajrullahu, “Soft Competitive Authoritarianism and Negative Stability in Kosovo: Statebuilding from UNMIK to EULEX and Beyond,” *SOUTHEAST EUROPEAN AND BLACK SEA STUDIES* 20, no. 1, SI (January 2, 2020), 108.

period or providing any information about available legal remedies to challenge the detention time.”³⁷ After the judge’s clearance, Kouchner issued two more executive orders to prevent the “threat that the accused posed to public safety,” invoking the notion of preventive detention which is prohibited as grounds for detention by international human rights conventions.³⁸

This practice of preventive detention was repeated against Cele Gashi, Avdyl Behluli, and Jusuf Veliu in the case regarding the bombing of the Nis Express bus where ten people were killed by a remote-controlled bomb as the bus traveled from Gračanica, Kosovo to Nis, Serbia. The individuals were detained without legal basis and stayed in custody due to the use of multiple consecutive executive orders.³⁹ The repeated interference in the judicial system by the SRSG was criticized, leading to the issuance of a regulation establishing an international commission for the review of extrajudicial detentions.⁴⁰ This commission, however, was marked by problems of clarity, independence, and impartiality.⁴¹

In another case of executive overreach, this time involving restrictions on freedom of speech, the SRSG used executive orders against *Dita*, the daily Kosovo newspaper publication, to temporarily shut down the newspaper’s operations. *Dita* published an article on April 27, 2000 containing a photograph of an UNMIK employee of Serbian ethnicity, Petar Topoljski, along with allegations that he was engaged with criminal activities against Kosovar Albanians during the war. Topoljski was found dead two weeks after the publication of the article. In the wake of the murder, the newspaper stated that it had attempted to warn UNMIK about the employee and his background, but that UNMIK failed to take action.⁴² On June 3rd, SRSG Kouchner issued an executive order ordering the newspaper to close for eight days, claiming that the publication violated the spirit of Resolution 1244.⁴³ Kouchner bypassed all judicial process in order to reprimand the publication for its role as a possible aid to vigilantes. Within a few weeks, Kouchner went further and enacted Regulation 2000/37 on the “Conduct of Print Media in Kosovo,” a regulation which was to govern the behavior of broadcast and print media, limiting their freedoms of speech—a direct contrast to the stated values of the democratic structures the mission was to implement and the general respect of the international organizations for journalistic freedom. The regulation created the role of a Temporary Media Commissioner (TMC) who was responsible for creating and enforcing a regulatory regime for Kosovo media by imposing sanctions on owners, operators, publishers, and editors who did not “refrain from publishing personal details of any person, including name, address of place of work, if publication of such details would pose a serious threat to the life, safety or security of any such person through vigilance or otherwise.”⁴⁴ The TMC was given free rein to determine such violations and impose sanctions.

³⁷ Gjylbehare Bella Murati, *UN Territorial Administration and Human Rights: The Mission in Kosovo* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 77.

³⁸ See para. 1 of Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights

³⁹ Murati, *UN Territorial Administration and Human Rights: The Mission in Kosovo*, 78.

⁴⁰ See UNMIK Regulation 2001/18 on the Establishment of Detention Review Commission for Extra-Judicial Detentions based on Executive Orders, promulgated on 25 August 2001.

⁴¹ Murati, 79.

⁴² Nicolas Wood, Kosovo, Newspapers Exposes of War Criminals Led to Murder, *The Guardian*, 21 June 2000.

⁴³ Regulation ED/2000/2

⁴⁴ Section 4 Regulation 2000/37.

UNMIK’s manipulation of executive power was not limited to SRSG Bernard Kouchner. In October 2004, SRSG Søren Jessen-Petersen issued an executive decision to cancel the tender process of the Slovenian mobile phone provider Mobikos. Mobikos and the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) had signed a contract together awarding Mobikos tender for mobile telephone service in Kosovo after a competitive bid for the deal.⁴⁵ The SRSG claimed that the process was flawed and would negatively impact Kosovo’s “ability to attract investment,” rejecting the contract.⁴⁶ The TRA continued with the scheduled contract, noting that the process had followed standard European practices. The Municipal Court in Pristina had ruled that the contract was legally valid, supporting the TRA. UNMIK responded with a statement soon after which declared the agreement null and void, referencing the earlier executive decision.⁴⁷ The Mobikos ordeal was significant in that it exemplified the willingness of UNMIK to directly override the judicial system that it had helped put into place. For UNMIK, this was necessary according to the economic logic which they used to justify the decision; canceling the contract “was necessary in the best interests of Kosovo and its economic development, in particular its ability to attract investment.”⁴⁸ The concern for Kosovo was at the core of what invalidated the local judicial decision—in essence, the international government had to intervene to protect the people from themselves.

As mentioned previously, the disaster colonialism of UNMIK relied on the vulnerability of the local population to acquiesce to the takeover of control. In 2004, this aspect of the mission was challenged when the Kosova Action Network (KAN), an activist group in Pristina, protested against Resolution 1244 and protested for Kosovo’s independence from both Serbia and the UN.⁴⁹ Later in June of 2005, activists from the KAN organized a protest against the presence of UNMIK again, writing the slogan “No negotiations, Self-Determination” on the walls of UNMIK buildings in Kosovo. Kosovo and UN police arrested, jailed, and convicted hundreds of people linked to the protest, including Albin Kurti, the founder of KAN who would later become the head of “Vetëvendosja,” the self-determination party in Kosovo and the prime minister of Kosovo for a period in 2020.⁵⁰ After the 2005 protest, the Contact Group (France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) created “Guiding Principles” to find a resolution to the issue of Kosovo’s sovereign status, detailed below:

1. The settlement of the Kosovo issue should be fully compatible with international standards of human rights, democracy and international law and contribute to regional security.
2. The settlement of Kosovo’s Status should conform with democratic values and European standards and contribute to realizing the European perspective of Kosovo, in

⁴⁵ Murati, *UN Territorial Administration and Human Rights: The Mission in Kosovo*, 80.

⁴⁶ ED/ 2004/25 of 20 October 2004.

⁴⁷ UNMIK Press Briefing Notes, 23 March 2005, found in Murati, *UN Territorial Administration and Human Rights: The Mission in Kosovo*, 80.

⁴⁸ United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, E/C.12/UNK/1, 15 January 2008.

⁴⁹ Anita McKinna, “The Vetëvendosje Movement in Kosovo: An Increasing Focus on Nationalism,” *Balkan Analysis*, 2012, <http://www.balkananalysis.com/kosovo/2012/02/22/the-vetevendosje-movement-in-kosovo-an-increasing-focus-on-nationalism/>.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

particular, Kosovo’s progress in the stabilization and association process, as well as the integration of the entire region in Euro-Atlantic institutions.

3. The settlement should ensure multiethnicity that is sustainable in Kosovo. It should provide effective constitutional guarantees and appropriate mechanisms to ensure the implementation of human rights for all citizens in Kosovo and of the rights of members of all Kosovo communities, including the right of refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes in safety.

4. The settlement should provide mechanisms to ensure the participation of all Kosovo communities in government, both on the central and on the local level. Effective structures of local self-government established through the decentralization process should facilitate the coexistence of different communities and ensure equitable and improved access to public services.

5. The settlement of Kosovo’s status should include specific safeguards for the protection of the cultural and religious heritage in Kosovo. This should include provisions specifying the status of the Serbian Orthodox Church’s institutions and sites and other patrimony in Kosovo.

6. The settlement of Kosovo’s status should strengthen regional security and stability. Thus, it will ensure that Kosovo does not return to the pre-March 1999 situation. Any solution that is unilateral or results from the use of force would be unacceptable. There will be no changes in the current territory of Kosovo, i.e. no partition of Kosovo and no union of Kosovo with any country or part of any country. The territorial integrity and internal stability of regional neighbours will be fully respected.

7. The Status settlement will ensure Kosovo’s security. It will also ensure that Kosovo does not pose a military or security threat to its neighbours. Specific provisions on security arrangements will be included.

8. The settlement of Kosovo’s status should promote effective mechanisms to strengthen Kosovo’s ability to enforce the rule of law, to fight organized crime and terrorism and safeguard the multiethnic character of the police and the judiciary.

9. The settlement should ensure that Kosovo can develop in a sustainable way both economically and politically and that it can cooperate effectively with international organizations and international financial institutions.

10. For some time Kosovo will continue to need an international civilian and military presence to exercise appropriate supervision of compliance of the provisions of the Status settlement, to ensure security and, in particular, protection for minorities as well as to monitor and support the authorities in the continued implementation of standards.⁵¹

The Contact Group made special notice in their statement of the people of Kosovo’s role in deciding the future of Kosovo. However, the principles centered on the European perspective and the maintenance of the European accession process, effectively deciding the larger orientation for the future of Kosovo before any vote could occur. The Contact Group’s statement exemplified the

⁵¹ Contact Group, “Guiding Principles of the Contact Group for a Settlement of the Status of Kosovo,” November 2005, https://www.esiweb.org/pdf/kosovo_Contact%20Group%20-%20Ten%20Guiding%20principles%20for%20Ahtisaari.pdf.

realization in the international community of the importance of a final decision on sovereign status after the KAN protests and other outbreaks of violence in Kosovo.⁵²

The UN envoy to Kosovo, Marti Ahtisaari, began final status talks between Serbia and Kosovo in 2006. After 17 rounds of futile talks, Ahtisaari abandoned the diplomatic process.⁵³ In February 2007, he proposed the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement (CSP), known as the Ahtisaari Plan. The plan enforced the formation of the International Steering Group (ISG), the International Civilian Representative for Kosovo (ICR) and the EU Special Representative (EUSR) who would be appointed by the Council of the EU. The CSP was to exist as the superior legal power to the laws and constitution in Kosovo. Though the Ahtisaari plan was rejected in the UNSC by Russia due to its recommendation for eventual independence for Kosovo, the plan was explicitly mentioned in the February 2008 declaration of independence and effectively incorporated into the Kosovo constitution.⁵⁴ The “unofficial” CSP was terminated in 2012, four years after Kosovo’s official declaration of independence. KAN had organized a protest against the Ahtisaari Plan in 2007 which ended with two dead and dozens of injured protesters after UNMIK police fired out-of-date bullets at the crowd.⁵⁵ The leader of KAN, Albin Kurti, was arrested by the UNMIK police and spent nearly two years in jail for organizing the protest. Regardless of the popular protests, Kosovo’s political elite fully accepted the obligations of the CSP. The international missions would continue, though Kosovo would have more autonomy in its own governance.

The disaster colonial project in Kosovo is inextricably linked to the global system in which it took place. The end of the Cold War and the triumph of liberal democratic world-order led to an international consensus on state-building and peacekeeping at the time. “Good governance,”⁵⁶ one of the leading paradigms guiding the actions of international institutions, was used as the basis for the colonial governance structure in Kosovo, notably distilled into UNMIK’s motto of “standards before status.”⁵⁷ Kosovo was a laboratory for the international community to prove the efficacy of the new democratic world-order, through the design and implementation of an undemocratic humanitarian intervention. The intervention spanned legal, political, economic, and moral dimensions. In the case of Kosovo, UNMIK administered the adoption of a market economy, European currency, open capital controls, and parliamentary government ensuring that the territory would follow the North Atlantic model of a state.⁵⁸ The enforcement of this model was *part* of the

⁵² This includes the March 2004 riots in which 19 people were killed and Serb cultural heritage sites were destroyed. Denisa Kostovicova, “Legitimacy and International Administration: The Ahtisaari Settlement for Kosovo from a Human Security Perspective,” *International Peacekeeping* 15, no. 5 (November 1, 2008), 635.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 636.

⁵⁵ McKinna, “The Vetëvendosje Movement in Kosovo: An Increasing Focus on Nationalism,” 2012.

⁵⁶ See: Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 253.

⁵⁷ Bernhard Knoll, “The Kosovo Status Process and the Prospect of Sovereignty,” in *OSCE Yearbook 2008*, Yearbook on the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) (Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, 2008), 121.

⁵⁸ The belief that liberal democracy was the only way to achieve development and progress in human rights was common after the fall of the Soviet Union, made especially popular in 1992 by political scientist Francis Fukuyama and his declaration of “The End of History” and the victory of liberal, capitalist democracy. See: Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992). A major line of challenges to this belief came from those who argued that the East and South Asian countries had achieved substantial economic development and

humanitarian project. Kosovo’s “disaster” provided the rationale for the state-building project, justifying its continued existence, and prepared the ground for the long-term occupation and design of Kosovo’s society.

later human rights protections through long-term economic protectionism and strict authoritarian rule. See: Robert Hunter Wade, “Japan, the World Bank, and the Art of Paradigm Maintenance: The East Asian Miracle in Political Perspective”, (May 1996) 217 *New Left Review*, 3-36.

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British Universities and Research in the Era of Brexit

Lucas Fernandez

Keywords: Brexit, higher education, European Union, research funding

Introduction

On June 23, 2016, the people of the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union, forever changing the course of both Britain and Europe's futures. This unprecedented move, known as Brexit, has become one of the most consequential political events in modern European history. For the past few years, it has dominated European politics and thrown Britain into complete disarray. After two general elections, three prime ministers, tense negotiations, countless extensions, and 47 years of membership, the U.K. finally left the E.U. on January 31, 2020.

Two years ago, I was fortunate enough to obtain a research grant which I used to study a question that was often overlooked: How Brexit would impact British universities and research? Over the course of three weeks, I interviewed students, faculty, and administrators from universities across the U.K., as well as the head of the European Commission's directorate-general for education, youth, sport and culture in Brussels, Belgium. I learned that Brexit will likely have adverse effects on Britain's researchers and universities. In this paper, I outline ways in which Brexit can, and has, effected British research. Britain is known for its first-class universities and research. But now, it is not clear if British academics will be able to collaborate with their European colleagues in the same way, which could slow the progress of British research across all subjects and disciplines.

In terms of evidence, I will rely on news articles, as well as scholarly publications on Brexit. I will also incorporate some of the research I conducted during my time in Britain.

The rest of this paper is divided into six parts. In the first part, I sketch the history of Brexit. Specifically, I consider why it came about, how it happened, and where things stand today. In the second part, I discuss Britain's academic prowess and its reliance on research done by universities. In the third and fourth part, I write about Brexit's effects on British research funding. In the fifth, sixth, and seventh sections, I write about how Brexit will affect the flow of researchers, faculty, and students to British universities.

History of Brexit

Brexit itself was a result of a failed political gamble. In the midst of turmoil in Europe (i.e. euro crisis and migration crisis), U.K.-E.U. relations were a key issue leading up to the 2015 general election for the House of Commons. To deal with this issue, and to calm the right-wing of his party, then Prime Minister David Cameron promised to hold a national referendum on Britain's E.U. membership. But this promise was not made in good faith. Prior to the 2015 elections, the Conservatives were in a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats. Cameron expected to retain the coalition and he knew the Liberal Democrats would stop a referendum. The

Conservatives, however, unexpectedly won an outright majority in Parliament, forcing Cameron to hold the referendum. He fell victim to his own success.

Leading up to the referendum, most people expected the “Remain” campaign (which was backed by 10 Downing Street) to win. But in a shocking turn of events, the “Leave” campaign won, having capitalized on growing anxiety in Britain regarding issues directly related to the E.U. such as trade, national sovereignty, unmanaged globalism, and immigration. In short, Brexit was a result of grave political miscalculations and reflective of the rise of right-wing populism in Europe, and indeed throughout the world.

Cameron soon resigned and was succeeded by Theresa May, his Home Secretary. After roughly three years of negotiations with the E.U., and a failed snap-election that left her politically-handicapped, May was unable to pass a withdrawal agreement through Parliament. She, therefore, had to resign and was succeeded by Boris Johnson, an already polarizing figure in British Politics. A few months into his premiership, he called a snap-election and, unlike May, led the Conservatives to a land-slide victory. With an 80-seat majority, Johnson was able to pass a withdrawal agreement and the U.K. officially left the E.U. on January 31st, 2020.

British Universities

Among the UK’s greatest assets are its universities. The UK is home to some of the oldest and most prestigious universities in the world, and its system of higher education is constantly ranked the best Europe and among the best in the world. To put Britain's academic prowess into perspective, the World University Ranker ranks three British Universities within its top ten best universities in the world (Oxford, Cambridge, and Imperial College London came in 1st, 2nd, and 9th place respectively)¹. No other EU universities broke the top 10. In fact, excluding the UK, no university in any EU member state broke the top 30. So, naturally, the next question to ask is: Will Brexit negatively or positively effect British academia?

The consensus among the people I interviewed, and the view among academics in general, is that Brexit will likely hurt British academia. In their opinions, the EU’s academic infrastructure has allowed the UK to obtain more research funding, promoted collaboration between European researchers, and has generally made British universities more prestigious. And, because the EU membership strengthens British universities, it has allowed them to attract stronger students and faculty.

Research Funding

The EU program most relevant to research is Horizon 2020, which refers to the 80 billion euros the EU has made available for research funding from 2014 to 2020. The body responsible for awarding these funds is the European Research Council (ERC). Researchers from all 28 EU member states can apply for 1 of 5 types of grants based on their experience as researchers and the progress they have already made in their particular area of study. In terms of how the grants are awarded, the ERC follows one basic rule: fund the best. In other words, there is no minimum or maximum amount of funding any country or university may receive, nor is there a rule requiring

¹ *World University Rankings 2021*

equal funding for different fields of research. Whichever proposals the ERC determines are of the highest academic caliber are awarded the grants.

Because of the lack of laws limiting the amount of research funding any one country or university can receive, the UK has been able to attract a disproportionately high amount of research funding from the ERC, having received 14% of total funds allocated to Horizon 2020 (Jones). In fact, between 2014 and 2020, UK universities won over 7 billion euros of ERC research funding, second only to Germany (Schiermeier). These facts are not only a testament to the quality of research done in the UK, but they also prove that Britain has benefited financially from its EU membership. Britain’s success, however, comes as a double-edged sword. Since Britain has been so successful in obtaining ERC grants, it has become increasingly dependent on them. As a result, the UK now spends a lower percentage of its GDP on research funding than other European countries do.

Due to the lack of aforementioned regulations, the degree to which universities benefit from and depend on EU funding varies. For instance, Oxford and Cambridge, the crown jewels of Britain’s academic crown, have attract high amounts of ERC grants. Yet these two universities are certainly not dependent on EU funds. If they were to lose access to EU funding because of Brexit, they would certainly take a hit financially. But, the Oxbridge colleges would most likely adapt and replace their lost research money, as their endowments are among the largest in the world.

Other universities are much more dependent on EU funding. The best example is Southampton Solent University, whose EU funding makes up about 91.35% of its total research grant money (Matthews). For universities like Solent, whose research is highly dependent on European funding, a loss of access to Horizon 2020 (and its successor schemes) could be catastrophic. Their futures depend on the circumstances with which Britain will leave the EU, which are currently uncertain.

Another aspect to consider is how Brexit can affect different areas of research. Since the ERC does not discriminate among subjects, it is one of the only competitive grant programs that puts “blue-sky” areas of research, such as philosophy or archaeology, on a level playing field with areas of research that are considered more pertinent, like medicine or neurobiology. Thus, many “blue-sky” subjects have become dependent on Horizon 2020. While in England I interviewed a scientist that studied the brains of insects. Since he had an ERC starter grant, he was able to run a fully-operating lab with four assistants. And he made it clear that it would have been practically impossible to get the amount of funding he did, given his area of research, if it were not for the ERC.

Considering how important EU money is to British research, the next question to ask is “What kind of access will the UK have to Horizon 2020 and its successor programs?” Regretfully, I, nor anyone, can answer this question. Currently, there are three categories countries are placed into with regards to Horizon 2020. First, there are the EU member states, which have full access Horizon 2020. Second, there are sixteen countries that are considered “Associated Countries,” and they are either EU-candidate countries or part of the European Free Trade Association. These countries have full access to Horizon 2020 money and can host ERC grants. They also benefit from “Observer Status” at program committees-- the committees that help govern the EU’s

research infrastructure. In terms of the buy-in for Associated Countries, the deals these countries make with the EU are all different. But generally, the fees they pay are based off their GDP. Lastly, there are Non-associated third countries that, for the most part, do not have individual access to EU funding schemes.

UK access to EU money, at least in the context of research infrastructure, is completely dependent on the deal with which Britain will leave the EU, should it leave with one. Right now, the UK, by virtue of its EU membership, has full access to all Horizon 2020 funding. Under the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement, which was negotiated by Theresa May’s government, the UK would retain access to Horizon 2020 until the program ends. Additionally, in the event of a no-deal, May’s government agreed to underwrite all Horizon 2020 grants awarded before the exit date and all successful applications to schemes that are open to third countries submitted after the exit date. However, May’s deal did not pass Parliament and she is no longer Prime Minister. As of the writing of this report, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has yet to negotiate another deal with the EU, nor has he made the no-deal assurances May’s government did. Should the UK leave the EU without a deal and fail to make necessary arrangements, the UK will lose access to Horizon 2020.

Post-Brexit Solutions to Research Funding

If the UK leaves with the terms laid out in the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement, it would have access to Horizon 2020 till the scheme ends. If the UK wants access to Horizon Europe, it would still have to negotiate a deal with the EU Commission to obtain Associated Country status. Should Britain choose to do this, its universities would have access to all European funding schemes. In this case, the only difference with regards to ERC grants would be that as an Associated Country, the UK would only have “Observer Status” at program committees. As previously mentioned, these committees help govern the EU’s research infrastructure, and only member states get to vote on policies. However, the UK could still influence the direction of future funding schemes. Most decisions in these committees are made by consensus rather than votes. Therefore, the UK might be able to use its academic prowess to gain influence. The use of this tactic is not unprecedented. The Swiss, despite not having the voting powers member states do, had a significant level of say in the creation of Horizon 2020.

Alternatively, the UK could set up a funding scheme of its own. The UK could, in theory, allocate a portion of the money it would save in EU membership fees to start their own version of Horizon 2020. This would suffice in giving British researchers a place to apply for funds and it would help calm uncertainties among universities.

This alternative, however, is not without its flaws. First, there would not be as much potential money available to British researchers. The UK alone cannot allocate more funds to research than 27 other countries can combined. Additionally, the UK would be the sole payer of administrative costs, which would likely be high considering the program would be new. Second, a national funding scheme would inherently not promote as much international collaboration as a European-wide framework would. Third, the prestige would be missing. As previously stated, Horizon 2020 is considered to be the global gold-standard of competitive funding programs because of its history of excellence and competitive selection process. It would take years for a British framework program to earn the reputation European ones already have. The grant selection

for a national scheme would not be as competitive as a scheme that encompasses an entire continent, which could potentially harm the quality of research produced in Britain. Also, ERC grants are given to the “best” applicants, regardless of political party, nationality, or area of study. A scheme run by a single country, however, is more vulnerable to political influence. In fact, the UK government has already made clear that should they have to pick up EU research funding, they would put more money into fields they prioritize.

Lastly, British universities have already begun creating individual partnerships with other universities in Europe. An example is the Oxford-Berlin partnership. In late 2017, Oxford signed an agreement with four universities in Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin, and the Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin. Since then, academics from these institutions have begun participating in workshops with the goal of creating strategic research partnerships. This method of creating links between individual institutions could help British universities retain access to European research and innovation, though it certainly bores more labor and cost than simply being part of established EU framework.

Collaboration Among Researchers

Collaboration is a critical aspect of research, as innovative ideas and ground-breaking discoveries are often made when researchers work together and share ideas. Part of the reason Horizon 2020 has produced such excellent work is that it has helped foster collaboration between researchers on both the European and international levels. Researchers can submit proposals to the ERC in tandem with colleagues from European and, in some cases, non-European countries. In fact, sometimes the ERC will favor projects that create international collaboration.

The significance and importance of research collaboration cannot be understated, as innovation in Europe is driven by universities. In the US, innovation is largely spearheaded by corporations. That is not to say that American universities do not conduct world-class research, because they do. But in fields such as technology, companies like Apple are the main innovators, or in medicine, it is large pharmaceutical companies that are constantly creating new drugs. Europe, however, relies on its systems of higher education to bring together researchers and scientists to create cutting-edge research in all areas, especially technology and medicine. Therefore, the UK fundamentally losing access to the networks of European research and academia, could negative societal impacts.

Flow of Researchers and University Faculty

Brexit can only hurt the flow of academics to British universities for three main reasons. First, exiting the EU will make it harder for potential faculty hires to both move and work in the UK. Second, many European academics want to work at an institution that can host ERC grants, especially those who already have one. And third, due to the rise of nationalist sentiments that resulted in Brexit, many academics may feel unwelcome in Britain. Almost every single person interviewed for this project either knew of colleagues who left the UK partly because of Brexit.

One of the pillars of the EU is the free movement of people. Currently, UK nationals have the right to work in any of the other 30 countries in the European Economic Area (EEA), and vice

versa. This makes it relatively easy for European researchers to work together and for British universities to hire European faculty. Once the UK leaves the EU, the “freedom of movement of workers” will no longer apply. In the best-case scenario, the UK could choose to streamline European researchers through their immigration process, possibly by granting them Tier 1 Visas. In turn, UK researchers wishing to work elsewhere in Europe would have to deal with the government of the country they wish to work in. This complication of movement of people will ultimately disadvantage Britain because European academics will likely be less willing to research and work at universities across the channel.

As previously stated, Horizon 2020 is the pinnacle of competitive funding schemes, and many European researchers, experienced and inexperienced alike, apply for grants. Young researchers want to be at institutions where they can apply for starter grants to begin their careers. More seasoned academics might want to be at institutions where they can apply for “Proof of Concept” grants to bring their work into the market. Considering the importance of ERC grants to many academics, British universities will most likely become less competitive in terms of attracting and retaining faculty and research staff should they lose access to these funds. Based on the insight I received from those I interviewed, younger researchers are more likely to leave UK institutions in favor of European ones. This is because for a new researcher, an ERC grant can significantly boost their reputations and it may give them access to resources they otherwise would not have had. Experienced academics, particularly those at the tail-end of their careers, are less willing to move and will likely depend on other sources to continue funding their research. Therefore, many British universities, especially those with large endowments, may be able to retain a relatively high number of their faculty members who have been at said institutions for over a decade. However, British universities across the board are more likely to lose younger academics, which could jeopardize their futures.

Brexit itself was fueled by nationalism, as evident by the Leave Campaign’s anti-immigration stance. The pejorative way with which many Britons have spoken about immigrants over the last three years has made many EU-nationals living in the UK uncomfortable, and this problem is well beyond the control of any one university. British universities can find practical solutions to help EU researchers with funding and immigration. British universities cannot, however, fix the anti-immigrant attitudes Brexit has brought to light. In short, people are far less likely to move and work someplace they feel they do not belong.

Flow of Students to British Universities

Overall, the UK’s EU membership helps its universities attract European students. As with faculty and researchers, EU students can move to the UK relatively easily. They also pay the same tuition fee as British nationals, which is currently 9,000 pounds a year. Non-European students pay higher fees. Additionally, the UK participates in ERASMUS+, a student exchange program available to all EU students. ERASMUS+, throughout the three decades of its existence, has played a significant role in building intellectual bridges between students across Europe.

Once the UK leaves the EU, the process for EU students to be able to live and study in the UK will naturally become harder, and they will likely be charged the same fees as other international students. Obviously, these two factors can only hurt the UK’s ability to attract

European talent. With regard to ERASMUS+, the UK negotiate “Associated Country” status in the same way it can for Horizon 2020. It is consensus among UK universities that ERASMUS+ enhances the academic experience for both British and European students alike.

The inevitable fall in European students wanting to study in the UK can, however, be seen as a positive for some British universities. UK universities could start taking in more non-EU students. Specifically, they could focus on attracting students from Asian countries like China, India, and Japan, which have growing middle classes and have seen an increase in English speakers. Should the UK start taking in students from more areas of the world, they would, at least in theory, become more diverse. Also, since the entire international student population in British universities would be paying international fees, universities would generate more tuition revenue.

Brexit’s impact on the student bodies of individual universities will vary. Universities like Oxford and Cambridge will likely not struggle in recruiting top-notch students. There are also UK universities that do not have many European students to begin with, so they are unlikely to be affected with respect to attracting students. Other British institutions, however, are far more dependent on Europe for students.

Finally, as mentioned in the previous section of this report, Brexit has megaphoned nationalist sentiments that can dissuade students from all corners of the world from choosing to study in the UK.

Conclusion

In closing, the degree to which British academia will be hurt long-term is completely uncertain. But one thing remains certain: Brexit will almost certainly damage British higher education. Universities across the UK are likely to lose research funding, European talent, and (in the worst-case scenario) access to the realm of European innovation.

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Combating an Ethnopolitist Takeover: Can Poland Return to a Liberal Democracy?

Luke Habegger

ABSTRACT

I argue that liberal democracy is still achievable in Poland for three reasons. First, the success of President Duda and PiS was a product of specific conditions existing in 2015. By utilizing their nationalist, populist platform and the lack of EU action to prevent the PiS government's replacement of independent judges with party loyalists, PiS took advantage of the existing political environment in a way that will not be as easily replicated in the future. With increased pressure from the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and lost majority in the Polish Senate in 2019, the PiS government will have a weaker capacity to systematically undermine democratic norms and principles. Second, PiS's influence over other democratic institutions is not as deeply-rooted as it is in the judiciary. The senate, media, electoral framework, and mass protests in Poland are largely independent and provide opposition groups with useful platforms to express discontent and even stop authoritarian legislation from passing, despite disadvantageous shifts in the playing field. Third, I argue that public opinion polls reveal that PiS is losing popular support and effective methods of appealing to Poles, suggesting cooperative opposition parties will become more competitive in future elections despite a somewhat polarized political environment.

Keywords: Poland, PiS, democracy, populism, democratic backsliding

Introduction

Poland's democracy once represented a bright, optimistic example of democratization in a post-communist state. Liberal democratic values have dominated the beliefs of Polish citizens and the government ever since the Solidarity movement under communism. Poland's undying commitment to the EU throughout countless delays in defining their membership requirements further solidified their status as a successfully consolidated, post-communist, Central Eastern European (CEE) liberal democracy. Unlike Romania and Bulgaria, Poland's rapid yet peaceful transition from communism to democracy gave them an upper hand at economically and institutionally recovering from the drastic shift to Western capitalism and democratic values. Yet, the right-wing ethnopolitist Law and Justice party (PiS) quickly abandoned this modern Polish tradition of liberal democracy after they took control of the government in the fateful 2015 Polish elections. The damages inflicted by PiS and its leadership to the democratic institutions of Poland in the immediate years following their 2015 victory were both vast and deeply-scarring; still, they merely signified the beginning of Poland's democratic backsliding. After the subsequent elections in 2020, President Duda's re-election further deteriorated the party influence and cooperative power of Polish opposition against PiS and now threatens the future survival of liberal democracy in Poland.

How, then, did the PiS government undermine Poland's democratic institutions and manage to win reelection after their initial victory via a relatively free and fair process? Once President Duda and PiS took office in 2015, they quickly moved to weaken the Constitutional Tribunal (CT), Poland's highest court, and many other parts of the judicial branch with illiberal

tactics that put party-loyal appointees in control. Despite the presence of federal checks and balances and the influence of the EU, President Duda and PiS also managed to avoid immediate legal consequences for their obvious display of illiberal, authoritarian motives in dismantling Poland’s court system. Furthermore, it is important to consider what other democratic institutions have been undermined by PiS, and if any are still independent and strong enough to oppose these anti-democratic pressures. Given how much PiS has already eroded Poland’s liberal democratic institutions, what are the pathways for reversing this damage? Why does Poland have a better chance at recovering its liberal democracy than Hungary?

I argue that liberal democracy is still achievable in Poland for three reasons. First, the success of President Duda and PiS was a product of specific conditions existing in 2015. By utilizing their nationalist, populist platform and the lack of EU action to prevent the PiS government’s replacement of independent judges with party loyalists, PiS took advantage of the existing political environment in a way that will not be as easily replicated in the future. With increased pressure from the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and lost majority in the Polish Senate in 2019, the PiS government will have a weaker capacity to systematically undermine democratic norms and principles. Second, PiS’s influence over other democratic institutions is not as deeply-rooted as it is in the judiciary. The senate, media, electoral framework, and mass protests in Poland are largely independent and provide opposition groups with useful platforms to express discontent and even stop authoritarian legislation from passing, despite disadvantageous shifts in the playing field. Third, I argue that public opinion polls reveal that PiS is losing popular support and effective methods of appealing to Poles, suggesting cooperative opposition parties will become more competitive in future elections despite a somewhat polarized political environment.

I draw on news articles from 2015 to the present. I also use Freedom House’s analytical brief on the capture of Polish courts alongside other scholarly journal articles that address the PiS government’s effect on individual rights, society, and party landscape of Poland. To measure public opinion, I include data from EUobserver’s surveys recorded by Listen to Europe, the 2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey, and Pew Research Center’s survey results in 2019.

The rest of this paper is divided into 3 parts. First, I sketch the emergence and eventual victory of PiS in 2015. I explain how the Constitutional Tribunal was strategically paralyzed and dismantled by PiS while avoiding ramifications from federal regulators and the EU. Second, I consider which democratic institutions are still strong and independent after PiS’s occupation of the judiciary and which institutions have been the most restricted or threatened. Third, I contrast Poland’s democratic trajectory after the 2019 elections with the situation in Hungary, a country often rendered as the prime example of CEE democratic backsliding. I then conclude whether or not we will see a return to liberal democracy in Poland.

Dismantling the Constitutional Tribunal

Before PiS leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski launched his extraconstitutional attack on the CT, PiS first won a surprising victory in the 2015 Polish parliamentary election. This was the first time a single-party government was formed with a 51% parliamentary majority, rather than a coalition formed through negotiation and compromise between parties (Markowski, 2018). These results can be attributed to large shifts in the voter bases of various parties and in PiS’s tactics that created a ‘supply-side revolt’ against democracy. The deciding factor in the electoral outcome was not from a change in Polish voters’ ideologies and party loyalties, which would be indicative of a political “demand side revolt” (Markowski, 2018). The significant loss in voter shares of the

center-liberal Civic Platform party and the left-wing Polish Peasant party made a coalition formation to contest PiS more difficult. This election was not “a landslide victory for PiS, and [not] indicative of a fundamental change in the political preferences of Poles” (Markowski, 2018), as PiS only increased their votes by 2% compared to a 1% change in the results for the Civic Platform party and other liberal competitors. Furthermore, prevailing public opinion on individual economic wellbeing at the time was relatively positive, so the economy itself was not the leading cause of the incumbent’s loss (Markowski, 2018). Rather, it was the ethnopolitist rhetoric against Poland’s “corrupt elites” and the abstract evaluations of Poland’s economy as a “country in ruins” that gave PiS a foundation to further illiberal solutions through manipulative tactics (Markowski, 2018). The framing of the PiS campaign to radically oppose existing party platforms and reshape Polish voters’ perspectives on political realities through ethnopolitist rhetoric reveals a “classical ‘supply side’ nationalistic/authoritarian/conservative revolution” (Markowski, 2018). By winning the 2015 election through supply-side, illiberal tactics, PiS solidified their status as an ethnopolitist government that would defend the “will of the Polish people” and discredit any opposition to their sole interpretation of this will.

Kaczynski and PiS quickly targeted the CT after the election, wasting no time in setting the authoritarian precedence that “... no state authority, including the Constitutional Tribunal, can disregard [their] legislation” (Davies, 2018). After a long history of the CT striking down previous PiS policies on media regulation, the newly-elected government was resolute to begin their rapid dismantling process by denying and replacing opposition-appointed judges with party puppets. As Christian Davies of Freedom House reports, “President Duda refused to swear in five Tribunal judges appointed during the last sitting of the outgoing parliament – despite the fact that he had no legal authority to do so” (Davies, 2018). Although the CT ordered the PiS-controlled parliament not to make any new appointments until they assessed President Duda’s situation, the parliament did so anyways right before the rulings returned that only 3 of the 5 appointed judges were constitutional (Davies, 2018). After the parliament refused to recognize the CT’s legitimacy in their rulings on the appointments, pressure between the two branches continued to build until Judge Rzepliński’s term ended. After stalling the Court’s nomination of a successor to Judge Rzepliński by having his loyal party appointees all call in “sick” on the day of the vote, President Duda established an interim president for the court and presided over the new vote. Instead of including all the judges for this new vote, President Duda swore in a new PiS judge with only six of the judges and his interim court president present, thus giving PiS a majority in the CT (Davies, 2018). Once the CT had been successfully overrun by PiS-appointed judges, the government began massively restructuring the Supreme Court, the National Council of the Judiciary (KRS), and other lower courts. After initial proposals, President Duda and PiS dismantled and paralyzed these courts by terminating the terms of existing judges, giving the Parliament the right to nominate replacements, forcing all Supreme Court justices over 65 to retire, and introducing the ability to reopen and hear any final judgments since 1997 (Davies, 2018).

After this authoritarian takeover and paralysis of the Polish judiciary system, the European Commission made demands for President Duda and the PiS-led parliament to reverse and reform their actions through sanction procedures under Article 7. In defiance of the European Commission’s report and broader EU membership conditions, the Polish incumbents instead published a 94-page “White Paper” defending themselves and floating superficial concessions that did not remedy PiS’s systematic influence over the judicial branch (Davies, 2018). The EU currently plans to impose further sanctions through the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and to cut

some of the funds from the Cohesion Policy and CAP to Poland, but suffers from delayed negotiations and complications from Brexit (Harper, 2019). For now, President Duda and PiS incumbents have successfully gotten away with undermining the CT and the Polish judiciary system more broadly.

The potential for future dismantling of Poland’s judiciary is not as likely now as compared to President Duda and PiS’s initial success in the CT in 2015. Unlike in Hungary, the Polish parliament did not introduce any constitutional restrictions on the CT. While Fidesz restricted the power of the Hungarian constitutional court on fiscal matters and scrutiny of amendments, PiS only took control of the CT through a majority of seats occupied by party loyalists. This means any constitutional restrictions imposed on the CT would be counter-productive to the role of PiS loyalists in further legitimizing their illiberal authority in the Parliament and the Presidency (Sadurski, 2018). European authorities will also be watching Poland much more closely, particularly the ECJ. In 2019 alone, the ECJ ruled some PiS reforms illegal, such as allowing the president to personally grant 5-year extensions to Supreme Court judges’ retirements, and lowering the retirement age of judges in general courts to 60 for women and 65 for men (Walsh, 2019). While PiS’s initial success in dismantling the Polish judiciary system was both rapid and destructive, President Duda and PiS are not in a position to restrict the constitutional authority of the courts and can only maintain a party-empowering judiciary through a majority of seats held by loyal PiS judges in the CT, Supreme Court, and KRS.

The Survival of Polish Liberal Democratic Institutions

After 2015, President Duda and PiS leaders successfully maintained a dominant party majority in the Parliament, CT, Supreme Court, and KRS. This dominance in the Polish government gave PiS significant leverage over various additional institutions, allowing them to further dissolve liberal democratic values in Poland. Despite systemic disadvantages, many important institutions and political outlets such as protests and the media remain independent of PiS influence today. The independence of key institutions serves as a valuable asset to opposition groups and safeguards against further erosion of liberal democratic structures in Poland. The senate, electoral framework, media, and ‘Black Protests’ prove that Polish citizens can and will defend liberal democracy from further erosion by resisting PiS takeover and directly stopping restrictive, authoritarian laws from passing.

The collective opposition parties’ control over the Senate after 2019 is a great example of recent resistance to PiS takeover. President Duda’s reelection in 2020 largely signified a failure “of Poland’s leading opposition parties to hold Law and Justice effectively to account” (Davies, 2020). Similar to the 2015 election, Polish opposition parties were unable to cooperate together and beat President Duda in the 2020 Polish presidential election, once again failing to secure a traditional party victory against the ethnopolitist PiS. The most damning piece of evidence was general public opinion towards the Civic Platform’s nominee Rafał Trzaskowski, as over 30% of Poles answered “don’t know” in regard to their thoughts on Trzaskowski’s favorability (European Movement International, 2019). While party influence and opposition cooperation has grown weaker in the face of PiS, the 2019 election also showed the first signs of weakness in PiS incumbents’ abilities to maintain seats and control the entire Polish government. An opposition coalition successfully captured 51 of the 100 total seats in the Polish senate, the less powerful upper-house of Polish parliament (Cienski and Wanat, 2019). The PiS-controlled Sejm, the lower-house of parliament, can still override any delays or amendments by the senate with an absolute

majority. Nonetheless, the senate is still responsible for nominating key officials, which will “undermine PiS’s attempts to put all government institutions under its control” (Cienski and Wanat, 2019). Since PiS derives the majority of its power and institutional influence through sheer majorities in number of seats rather than overtly-illiberal restrictions in the constitution, the opposition’s control over the senate marks a valuable victory in the survival of existing democratic institutions in Poland. The fact that opposition parties can still win seat majorities in a branch of parliament suggests that PiS has not been able to fully dismantle the safeguards of Poland’s liberal democracy.

Alongside the results of the 2019 election, reports also indicated a relatively strong electoral framework was still present in Poland. Freedom House found that Poland’s electoral framework “generally ensured free and fair elections” despite President Duda’s changes to the electoral code that allowed the parliament to nominate some members of the National Electoral Commission (Freedom House, 2019). The OSCE also determined that “... the elections were generally conducted in a ‘professional and transparent’ manner” (Freedom House, 2019). Some concerns persist over regulations on campaigning with state resources and a lack of impartiality in the public media, but Polish elections largely remained free and fair during PiS’s first term. A new PiS threat to the electoral framework could be in the vulnerability of the easily politicized Chamber of Extraordinary Control and Public Affairs, which has the authority “to validate or reject election and referendum results” (Freedom House, 2019). Yet, after PiS requested votes to be recounted in their lost Senate races, the Polish Supreme Court did not overturn any of the results. Despite existing vulnerabilities to PiS politics, the Polish electoral framework has not yet been fully undermined through delegitimized election results and party-loyal Commission nominations from the PiS Parliament.

Unlike the senate and elections, Polish independent media was and still is the liberal democratic institution most threatened by PiS. While most privately-owned media outlets continue to operate independently thanks to support from foreign ownerships, public media was entirely purged of independent voices after PiS took power in 2015 (Freedom House, 2019). The Polish public television broadcaster, TVP, quickly became an active propaganda tool and even openly supported the PiS campaign in 2019. Most notably, PiS and the TVP tried to sue Professor Wojciech Sadurski for civil and criminal defamation over tweets he made regarding the public media’s corruption (Ticher, 2020). In Sadurski’s words, the TVP “has become an active instrument of PiS propaganda, engaging in grotesque glorification of the party and vilification of its opponents” (Sadurski, 2019). Despite public media’s complete takeover by PiS, private media outlets have stayed independent from party influence. The PiS leadership has made claims to “repolonise” private media, or reduce foreign ownership in Polish media and assure a purely “Polish point of view” is portrayed, instead of foreign-owned outlets having a “conflict of interest” in their perspectives (Shotter, 2019). The true intent of PiS in calling for reductions in foreign ownership of private media is more focused on eliminating opposing political views across Polish media, as foreign-owned private media outlets are usually the loudest voices against the PiS government (Freedom House, 2019). In what is a positive sign for the survival of liberal democracy in Poland, PiS has not yet passed any of these “repolonising” laws, so private media currently survives as an independent, democratic institution that allows dissenting voices against the PiS government to be heard.

One of the most powerful instances of successful resistance to PiS influence can be seen in the waves of Polish ‘Black Protests’. Starting in June 2016, the ‘Stop Abortion’ project launched

with the goal of reforming abortion laws in Poland. Gaining support from both PiS and the Roman Catholic Church, a petition backing ‘Stop Abortion’ gained over 450,000 signatures and had to be put to a vote in parliament as a ‘citizens’ project’ (Szelegieniec, 2018). Alternatively, the ‘Save Women’ organization launched an “opposing campaign in favor of liberalizing abortion laws” that garnered over 250,000 signatures (Szelegieniec, 2018). Although both campaigns were voted on in Parliament at the same time, the PiS majority rejected the ‘Save Women’ project but advanced the ‘Stop Abortion’ campaign into the commission stage (Szelegieniec, 2018). During all of this, massive demonstrations, known as ‘Black Protests’ for the all-black attire of demonstrators, came in waves against both the initial ‘Stop Abortion’ proposal and its subsequent victory in passing a Parliamentary vote. On October 3rd alone, over 250,000 men and women joined the Women’s Strike, a part of the broader second wave of Black Protests, and inspired solidarity actions for women’s rights across Poland and in other countries like Argentina and South Korea (Szelegieniec, 2018). More importantly, the protests pressured PiS to step back and not vote further on the ‘Stop Abortion’ project for the remainder of their first term. The success of the Black Protests at halting PiS from passing anti-abortion legislations shows how vulnerable PiS is “in the face of mass resistance” (Szelegieniec, 2018). Throughout multiple waves of demonstrations, the Polish Black Protests successfully stopped the PiS government from passing illiberal abortion bans despite their control over Parliament with a majority of seats. Moreover, mass mobilization as an independent institution is strong enough to resist PiS influence and actively defend from PiS’s attempts to undermine liberal democracy.

Hungary’s Desperate Situation and Poland’s Future Potential

Hungary and Poland are a valuable pair of Central Eastern European states to use for comparisons, as their democracies share almost identical roots in communist opposition and post-communist development. Both states are also experiencing serious democratic backsliding in modern times, but to somewhat different degrees. Most notably, these states varied in how ethnopolitist parties in Hungary and Poland, Fidesz and PiS respectively, successfully polarized their political systems. Ethnopolitist parties benefit from polarization within the prevailing party system of their state, as “a polarized society can help ethnopolitists come to power – and, as incumbents, ethnopolitists pursue strategies to deepen polarization” (Vachudova, 2020). Since ethnopolitists wish to consolidate power solely for the sake of “the people”, polarizing themselves through increasingly radical appeals, such as anti-establishment and anti-Muslim trends (Blackington and Vachudova, 2020), helps put opposition parties in a challenging position to reject ethnopolitist claims and simultaneously appeal to distrusting voters.

As previously discussed, Polish opposition parties have been greatly undermined by the illiberal PiS government and have struggled to effectively cooperate and prevent President Duda’s re-election in 2020. However, the success of opposition parties in capturing a collective majority in the Senate proved that cooperation against PiS is still possible. The cooperation of opposition parties in Poland reveals an important distinction from Hungary in their response to an ethnopolitist party in control of their government. As Dr. Milada Anna Vachudova and Courtney Blackington determined, opposition parties faced with ethnopolitist competition must decide “whether to cooperate or compete with each other” (Blackington and Vachudova, 2020). Unlike Polish opposition’s attempts at party cooperation, opposition parties in Hungary instead “compete with one another rather than merging or building electoral coalitions” (Blackington and Vachudova, 2020). Hungarian political parties also suffer from much deeper polarization along “regime divides”, as seen in the 2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey data on anti-establishment and

anti-Muslim rhetoric in various European states with significant ethnopolitist presences (Blackington and Vachudova, 2020). Opposition parties in both Hungary and Poland face serious polarization and competition against dominant ethnopolitist incumbents, but the continued efforts of Polish opposition parties to cooperate and reclaim majorities in government put them in a better position to resist illiberal tactics than Hungarian opposition parties.

Opinion polls are another indicator that public support of PiS is weakening and that opposition parties have the capacity to retake control of the Polish government. Listen to Europe’s opinion polls on civil society and feelings towards key actors indicated a weakening outlook on PiS incumbent’s overall approval. President Duda’s rating by surveyed Poles showed signs of polarization, either being “somewhat favorable” or “very unfavorable” (European Movement International, 2019). This may seem like more polarization is taking place in Poland, which could threaten opposition capabilities, but a comparison with similar Hungarian opinion polls reveal a much worse state of polarization caused by Viktor Orbán and Fidesz. In a 2017 report by the IRI, 38% of Hungarians said that, overall, Hungary is heading in the right direction, while 58% saw Hungary heading in the wrong direction (IRI, 2017). Conversely, PiS leader Kaczynski had nearly half of the surveyed Poles rate him as “very unfavorable”, which indicates significantly less polarization and a broader disillusionment with PiS’s ethnopolitist platform among Poles (European Movement International, 2019). These public opinion results may not be a clear indication of Poland’s greater potential to return to liberal democracy, but are an important factor that further widens the difference in public attitudes towards Poland and Hungary’s levels of democratic backsliding.

Another important opinion poll by Pew Research Center revealed clear differences among European countries in their attitudes towards the EU and democracy, as well as their perception of economic prosperity. On average, the majority of Europeans disagreed with the statement “Most elected officials care about what people like me think”, but only 48% of Poles disagreed versus 71% of Hungarians (Wike et al., 2019). Additionally, Poland showed more positive attitudes towards the EU than Hungary, with 84% of Poles saying they “Have a favorable view of the EU” as opposed to 67% of Hungarians (Wike et al., 2019). These results give us insight into the political capacity of Poles, since they have more positive outlooks on their current political setting than Hungarians. There is greater potential for Poles to resist further democratic backsliding from PiS than Hungarians from Fidesz, particularly if PiS were to directly attack their current status in the EU while opposition leaders inversely champion the stance of everyday citizens better than PiS. This potential is further supported through Pew Research Center’s survey results on the current and future economic prosperity of European countries. They reported 57% of Poles say “children today will be better off financially compared to their parents” and 74% say “the economic situation in their country is good”, while only 37% and 52% of Hungarians supported the same statements respectively (Wike et al., 2019). As previously mentioned, the ethnopolitist appeal by PiS towards economic reform was not based on actual economic hardship, but rather a claim to one’s “fair share” in the economy. Since economic satisfaction and expected prosperity are growing in Poland today, the ethnopolitist appeal by PiS will likely become less effective as younger generations grow up in economic prosperity. Overall, the positive outlook of Poles, as seen in most public opinion results and contrasted with that of Hungarians, reveals a far greater potential in Poland for the competitiveness of opposition parties to succeed against PiS, especially if ethnopolitists continue to undermine liberal democratic values and institutions in Poland.

Conclusion

After President Duda’s reelection in 2019, Professor Agnieszka Graff claimed that “right now it really feels like it’s game over” (Davies, 2020). However, in this paper, I argue that Poland is far from reaching the final stages of dismantling democracy despite such efforts by PiS since 2015. The quick and unique attack on democratic institutions by paralyzing the CT and dismantling the Polish judiciary in 2015 will not be so easily replicated by PiS in the future. Poland’s various other institutions have held on to their independence and have a significant potential to both survive and maintain liberal democratic traditions. Lastly, the differences in Hungarian and Polish ethnopolulists’ successes in polarizing their people show just how much potential the Polish citizens have to mobilize around and capitalize on the competitive potential of cooperative opposition groups. Democracy in Poland suffered a heavy blow in 2015, but did not fall into complete authoritarian control and can still revitalize its liberal democratic values before PiS incumbents can dismantle any more institutions.

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The Connection Between British Exceptionalism and Brexit

John Macejka

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to ascertain the direct role of historical British exceptionalism in enabling and galvanizing Brexit. In aiming to answer the question - why did Brexit occur? - it becomes vital to undertake a historical perspective to grasp insight into the mentality underlying the distinctly British claim that Britain is better off without the EU. The answer is unique to the accustomed historical excellence of Great Britain throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries. Britain's isolated geography reveals the roots of its early exceptionalism and its inherent connection with isolation. Meanwhile, a pair of World War victories and the antagonistic actions of modern contemporaries during each once more affirmed British exceptionalism. Finally, this paper considers the formation of Britain's placement in Europe's new world order in the post-war period, reflecting upon each in coalition with modern British perspectives to offer a unique historical explanation for the occurrence of Brexit.

Keywords: Brexit, exceptionalism, Great Britain, EU

Introduction

Great Britain is the European exception. Historically, Great Britain is accustomed to habitual financial domination, colonial hegemony, and military superiority over land-locked European contemporaries. In the modern era, Britons view themselves as the *sole* European exception, quintessentially encapsulated in their refusal to adopt the EURO, non-Euro centric trade patterns, and ardently Pro-American worldview, despite membership in the European Union and proximity to European contemporaries. Thus, the emergence of British divergence from the European Union, in fact, the nation's participation to begin with, should exist as no surprise considering the nation's uniquely distinctive past. Of course, the equation is hardly so simple; EU membership entails stability, democracy, security, and economic prosperity for member states, including access to virtually 450 million consumers without trade-constraint.¹ The question thus becomes, why did Brexit occur?

The answer is an intricate web of historical realities culminating in the existence of the broad term "British Exceptionalism." This paper discusses the development of such an intricate nation-view, first delving into the complex geographic implications of the British island-state, a positioning that importantly allowed an expansion of economy and military not observable anywhere else in Europe. Following is a discussion of the far-reaching ramifications of two World War victories, conflicts that resulted in a blossoming of economy, absence of perpetual political upheaval and discord, and renewed sense of pride particular to the United Kingdom. Next, and of foremost relevance due to recency, is an analysis of Great Britain's placement in Europe's new world order in the aftermath of World War II, particularly the ostracizing of the nation in the formation of the European Economic Community, and the relative discontentment that resulted.

¹ "Benefits of EU Membership," Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, accessed 28 September 2020, <https://mkik.hu/en/benefits-of-eu-membership>.

Thus, the call for Brexit five years ago (and its astonishing majority public backing) will be connected to the exceptional economic and military successes of Great Britain exhibited throughout a long, cultured history of isolationist success, in coalition with a disenchantment from continental Europe steeped in relatively modern historical precedent.²

Splendid Isolation

The phrase "splendid isolation" was coined in 1885 in reference to a flourishing Great Britain, a nation isolated in both politics and border from continental Europe.³ The lack of tangible land boundaries with mainland Europe implicated a development of economy, military, and culture divisively different from Britain's European counterparts.

Great Britain benefited from an abundance of coal and iron in terms of natural resources, both imperative in producing refined goods and responsible for the exceptionally early industrial revolution lacking previous precedent. Furthermore, island-centric geography importantly allowed expansive volumes of massively beneficial trade while simultaneously alleviating the "serious constraints on the overall socio-economic development of landlocked developing countries."⁴ Resultantly, British trade burgeoned in the early 1900s and prosperity consequently boomed, drastically improving welfare at a rate not observable to any substantial degree in European contemporaries and culminating in a culture accustomed to economic affluence and global prominence.⁵

Great Britain blossomed into the British Empire in the early 20th century. Allowing extensive economic manipulation and the development of a culture of innate superiority, imperialist Britain exercised dominion over nearly 350 million people.⁶ The parasitic relationship's economic benefits allowed the expansion of financial reach and specialization of labor that increased wealth exponentially, exemplified by the Cape-Cairo project. Furthermore, the emergence of global, monopolized trade sources provided effective basis for a prosperous international economy. Thus, Britain is distinctive in economic history, habituated to having financial affairs detached from adjoining neighbors and used to sustained economic prosperity built on a culture of modern superiority.

The geography of Great Britain enabled economically beneficial growth in trade and imperialist interests in the late 1800s. Superior economically to continental European competitors, barring the slight exception of the burgeoning industrial giant Germany (with whom economic resentment was beginning to manifest), Great Britain succeeded in achieving relative hegemony and prosperity in the pre-war World War I period. Presently colony-less and eternally isolated

² "EU REFERENDUM, UK votes to LEAVE the EU," BBC News, BBC, accessed 16 June 2021, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/eu_referendum/results.

³ "splendid isolation," Oxford Reference, accessed 17 Jun. 2021, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100524374>.

⁴ "About the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)," UN-OHRLLS, accessed 28 September 2020, <http://un-ohrlls.org/about-lldc/>.

⁵ Gregory Clark, Kevin Hjortshøj O'Rourke, and Alan M. Taylor, "The growing dependence of Britain on trade during the Industrial Revolution," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* vol. 62/2 (2014): 109.

⁶ Patrick K. O'Brien, "The Costs and Benefits of British Imperialism 1846-1914," *Past & Present* vol. 120 (1988): 163.

from mainland Europe, Great Britain is still a leader in world trade, critically exporting more than *half* of its goods outside the European Union.⁷

Disconnected from Europe geographically, the British enjoyed and continue to enjoy a modest level of security principally divorced from the discord perpetually occurring in continental Europe. On the continent, proximity to various distinct nation-states implicated a degree of reasonable prudence, namely ready-to-use economic, political, and military capacities observable in European contemporaries. Similarly, contentions yielding inopportune outcomes set the stage for future violence, a predisposition elevated in risk by the lack of substantial barriers between states with arbitrary boundaries. Thus, the British Channel's existence did more than just separate; it also cultivated an idea circulating in fullness even today - continental detachment and security go hand in hand.

In the early 1900s, due to geographic location, Great Britain was not merely different - Great Britain was exceptionally different. The effects of seclusion yielded incredible benefits for Great Britain; not until the globalization of the mid-1900s would Great Britain falter, but the effects of "splendid" geographical "isolation" are observable in advocates for Brexit - the call for a return to the prosperous, superior British independence - and the country itself today.

The Impact of War

A comprehensive observation of broad British military and economic realities yields a similar conclusion in the 20th century: Britain is historically exceptional. Comparably, the economic and military developments commencing in the periods immediately before and in the wake of World War II contributed more observably and directly to Brexit, due primarily to the recency of the events. Evidence of such a claim is tangible in societal apprehension and economic skepticism towards former adversaries. To be discussed presently, in brief, is Great Britain's involvement in World War I, the economic after effects, and in much greater depth, World War II and its implications.

Great Britain's entry into World War I was, at least in the British government's eyes, astonishingly, not a direct result of the nation's involvement in the Triple Entente, nor a consequence of imperialist interests, nor even out of fear of further German expansion. Instead, much to the German Kaiser's bewilderment, British participation was predicated on a "scrap of paper" signed nearly a century earlier, committing British assistance to Belgium in case of an invasion.⁸ Outside perspective might doubt the veracity of such a narrow-scoped recounting of British involvement, but at least in Great Britain, the reason for military embroilment was diplomatic duty. Over a

⁷ Sean Fleming, "These Are the UK's Top Five Trading Partners," World Economic Forum, 22 November 2019, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/11/brexit-trade-uk-eu/>.

⁸ Ben Walsh, "Why Did Britain Go to War? Background," The National Archives, BBC History, 27 January 2004, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/greatwar/g2/backgroundcs1.htm>.

century later, the majority of the British populace still believes that the country should be proud of the conflict and the victory that resulted.⁹

In the aftermath of the calamitous World War I, Great Britain developed increasingly disparate from Germany and much of continental Europe: moderate in political matters, isolated from impetuous conflicts, and financially adjoined from the dire need for charitable external intervention (the Dawes Plan). Furthermore, in contrast to the land-locked and colony-less Germany, in 1924, Great Britain controlled an absurd 1/5 of the entire globe.¹⁰ And, despite a disastrous depression ravaging the nation in the aftermath of the war, Great Britain emerged relatively unscathed comparative to continental European powers, due chiefly to massive amounts of public spending and a strict adherence to the gold standard. Once again, Great Britain was exceptionally well-off relative to continental Europe financially and territorially.

World War II is of imperative importance to understanding theorized British exceptionalism in the modern era and its connection to Brexit. Stringently isolationist and increasingly democratic (extension of voting rights to *all* men over 21 and women over 30 in 1918), Britons were vehemently opposed to the idea of another ruinous war.¹¹ Sympathetic of Germany due to the admittedly unrealistic constraints and reparations constituted by the Treaty of Versailles, Great Britain, like much of Europe, anxiously looked on as Hitler egregiously violated the agreement. Eventually, Great Britain entered the war by virtue of necessity, a key fact to recall considering the conflict's triumphant conclusion. The collapse of France, and continental Europe as a whole, left Great Britain isolated and all but defeated. Nevertheless, the miraculous escapement of 338,226 troops at Dunkirk signified hope, and the emergence of a now immortalized Winston Churchill further improved British morale.¹²

The impact of Winston Churchill can not be understated. Universally regarded as the Greatest Briton of all time, Churchill galvanized a battered, beaten, and all but defeated nation to continue struggling against a seemingly insurmountable foe.¹³ Elected not a moment too soon, the infamous Battle of Britain commenced less than two months after the politician's selection.¹⁴ The Battle of Britain is crucial to understanding British pride in the era and in the modern day. In a disastrously miscalculated German effort to deteriorate the populace's will to fight, pilots strategi-

⁹ Matthew Smith, “We Should Be Proud of Involvement in the First World War, Believe Half of Britons,” YouGov, 9 November 2018, <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2018/11/09/we-should-be-proud-involvement-first-world-war-bel>.

¹⁰ “The British Empire: 1783-1924 - The British Empire through Time,” accessed October 19, 2020, Bitesize, BBC, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zf7fr82/revision/6>.

¹¹ “Key dates,” UK Parliament, accessed 16 June 2021, <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/chartists/keydates/>

¹² “Press Office - Dunkirk Facts & Figures,” Press Office, BBC, 21 June 2014, http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2004/02_february/03/dunkirk_facts_figures.shtml.

¹³ “Churchill voted greatest Briton,” BBC News World Edition, BBC, 24 November 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/2509465.stm#:~:text=Sir%20Winston%20Churchill%20has%20been,sig%20individuals%2C%20with%20447%2C423%20votes>.

¹⁴ “The Battle of Britain Begins,” History, 16 November 2009, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-battle-of-britain-begins>.

cally and unrestrictedly bombed civilian areas as opposed to tactical military targets. Approximated costs amount to nearly £4.5 billion today, and the discriminate raids cost approximately 70,000 civilian lives.¹⁵ And yet still, standing tall in the face of overwhelming adversity and roused perpetually by the magnificently eloquent Churchill, the nation trudged onwards undeterred, imperatively affirming a legacy of resilience and dignity observable in Great Britain today.

As the only non-neutral, entirely European nation to not capitulate, Great Britain emerged unconquered and triumphant from World War II. Left behind was a bitter resentment and persistent distrust of Germany, mounting upon suspicion of emerging German economic prevalence and aggression both before and after World War I. Still, the nation stood proud, victorious yet again in a battle of economy, military, and ideology. In an apprehended Europe, only Great Britain remained autonomous, and in a fashion more identifiably exceptional to the British public than ever before, Great Britain was once again exceptional. Despite massive American efforts, weighed more significantly by mainland Europe, astonishingly, Britons even today believe the British contribution to have been of greater importance - the *only* nation to think that the case.¹⁶ To much of Great Britain, there was only one way to explain the victorious conclusion of the war, "British superiority had saved the world".¹⁷

Diminishing Global Relevance

The post-war period featured a host of economic developments that shed light on British society's current state and its modern frustration with the European Union. Burdened by immense post-war debt (270% of GDP), Great Britain reluctantly released many colonies in the years following the conflict.¹⁸ The resulting implications were drastic, allowing a more centralized focus on the economic well-being of the home-state and enabling a progression into the more sophisticated industries of modern Europe, while also critically eliminating a nearly monopolized source of trade. Forthcoming is a discussion of the rationale behind the ceding of the colonies and the simplified processes' implications, followed by a comprehensive observation of the economic state of Great Britain in the aftermath of World War II; an ascertainment which will reveal the historical source of the discontentment with British economic viability in the modern age.

World War II's triumphant conclusion introduced a complex concern into British political circles: the enormous, expanding expense of maintaining colonies. Left virtually bankrupt in the wake of World War II, and consequently financially unable to rule over approximately 700 million extra-continental people, the post-war period saw the British Empire's dissolution, prudently by

¹⁵ David Todman, "The cruel cost of the Blitz: how did everyday Britons rebuild their lives," *BBC History Magazine*, December 2017, 49.

¹⁶ William Jordan, "People in Britain and the U.S. Disagree on Who Did More to Beat the Nazis," YouGov, 1 May 2015, <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2015/05/01/Britain-America-disagree-who-did-more-beat-nazis>.

¹⁷ Andrew J. Crozier, "British exceptionalism: pride and prejudice and Brexit," *International Economics and Economic Policy*, Springer vol. 17/3 (2020): 635.

¹⁸ "Post-World War II debt reduction," Office for Budget Responsibility, 11 September 2017, <https://obr.uk/box/post-world-war-ii-debt-reduction/>.

choice.¹⁹ Comparative to France and Portugal, this decision was abnormal, as the two prior states would wage immensely costly conflicts to maintain colonial power.²⁰ However, the loss of the colonies would prove exorbitant in other ways, leading to the diminishment of a monopolized trade source. Thus, while Great Britain judiciously avoided some excessive costs, ineffable unforeseen benefits were forgone in releasing the colonies. Still, the unprecedented decision to allow independence without struggle further enabled the British to ideologically differentiate from European contemporaries - no matter the theorized economic cost.

The decades following the war's conclusion featured a British "golden age" shared in full by mainland Europe. High-tech industry flourished, as Britain rose to prominence in the novel industries of aerospace and computer software. Similarly, as Keynesian economics's conceptual birthplace, the government gained a beneficial tool in the positive manipulation of the economy. Incredibly, the 1950s and 1960s featured an average unemployment rate of just 2%.²¹ Real wages also rose an astonishing 40% from 1950 to 1965, signaling an emerging middle class and elevation of the typical Briton.²² Each of these beneficial developments was unparalleled in the scope of Great Britain's remarkable history. However, despite Great Britain admittedly and blatantly being far beyond continental Europe in preceding economic growth and urbanization, and thus having less room to expand, mainland European powerhouses far exceeded the UK in economic development during the period. The continuation of such a trend of "catch-up" indisputably led to a resentful decline in perceived global British relevance.

Commencing in 1955, a swath of far-reaching changes inundated Europe. The historical Messina Conference cultivated inter-European relationships amongst the "core six" of France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. But, more importantly, Great Britain attended the conference, and their proposal, a Euro Free Trade Area, was ardently rejected. Thus, Great Britain remained detached from both the European Economic Community (1957) and the European Atomic Energy Community (1958), as European integration proceeded absent of British influence, breeding British discontentment with the post-war European society.

Exclusion reached a zenith when, in 1963, the French vetoed a British attempt to join the European Economic Community (the EEC Great Britain walked away from previously). Pertinently, the principal reason for British intrigue was astonishment "at the rapid economic advances made by France and Germany," highlighting a decline in perceived British economic superiority touched upon previously. An attempt to curtail Germany and France's dual emergence at the Stockholm Convention (1959) proved ineffective, as the contesting British free-trade union (the EFTA) made negligible progress in affording member states the same economic opportunities as the EEC. Thus, unsurprisingly, despite initial denial, the United Kingdom continued to seek entry into the prosperous EEC, receiving refusal once more in 1967, before finally garnering acceptance in 1973.

¹⁹ Judith Brown, *The Twentieth Century, The Oxford History of the British Empire* (London: Oxford University Press 2001), 87.

²⁰ David Abernethy, *The Dynamics of Global Dominance, European Overseas Empires 1415–1980* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press), 401.

²¹ Peter Gurney, "The Battle of the Consumer in Postwar Britain," *Journal of Modern History* vol. 77/4 (2005): 956.

²² Paul Addison and Harriet Jones, *A companion to contemporary Britain, 1939–2000* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2005), 207.

To a nation accustomed to perpetual success and leadership, reluctance and resentment blossomed, as evidenced by the British referendum to leave the EEC a mere two years later. The referendum failed, however, due to the immensely beneficial economic dynamism of the EEC at the time, establishing the claim that Britain's original membership was predicated upon the EEC's economic viability.²³

The gradual diminishment of British influence in the decades following World War II is an atypical embodiment of the deterioration of a world power. The nation's declining economic advantages became blatant in the frantic, futile effort to maintain continental European authority in forming the EFTA, confirming the decline's irreversibility. Ultimately, Germany and France possessed the means of overcoming established British economic exceptionalism, presumably frustrating citizens as the lack of British military recognition for World War II successes occurred contemporaneously. Habitually accustomed to being exceptional, Great Britain's inability to curtail the reciprocal influences of Germany and France, encapsulated in the acquiescing of the EEC over the previously cultivated and supported EFTA, were indicative of a transition to Britain's becoming part of a broader whole, while the eventually dubious and disillusioned membership, repressed by a perpetual skepticism of the interests of Germany, and now France, foreshadowed the eventual division to occur.

Connecting Historical Exceptionalism to Modern Brexit

Brexit astonished the world. Modern contemporaries argue the root causes to be multifaceted and vast, and while such assertions are valid and will be touched upon, the very fact that Great Britain can leave the European Union is cemented in tangible British exceptionalism. No other European nation is as non-Euro-centric. Ardently pro-American, total British exports to the European Union have dropped precipitously, decreasing "from 54% in 2000 to 43% in 2016," circumvented instead to the United States and China, amongst others.²⁴ Great Britain is an island, principally disconnected from the European continent. Great Britain is and was, especially during the century previous to its joining the EU, the crown jewel of Europe economically, politically, and militarily.

Critically, the British populace sees each of these realities in a "rose-tinted" light. At least through the British lens, Great Britain never required the assistance of an outside power, unlike Germany and France. Great Britain repeatedly demonstrated immense resilience and vitality in World Wars I and II, crushing Germany not once, but twice. Great Britain never faltered economically, even dignifiedly liberating economically beneficial colonies without armed insurrection. Although prosperity has not been perpetual, Great Britain has always found a way to survive and eventually thrive, existing as a "beacon of democracy and liberty" while pioneering economic success and liberation over the last century.²⁵ It is this culture of accustomed affluence and success

²³ "The EEC and Britain's Late Entry," The Cabinet Papers, The National Archives, 28 November 2008, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/eec-britains-late-entry.htm>.

²⁴ "Who Does the UK Trade with," Office for National Statistics, 3 January 2018, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/business-industryandtrade/internationaltrade/articles/whodoestheuktradewith/2017-02-21>.

²⁵ Simon Tilford, "The British and Their Exceptionalism," Centre For European Reform, 3 May 2017, <https://www.cer.eu/insights/british-and-their-exceptionalism>.

that is responsible for the idea that Britain can achieve a practical, beneficial Brexit - it is British Exceptionalism.

And while continental Europe does not see Great Britain in that same rose-tinted light, some 87% of British citizens presently claim that being "European" does not define their identity.²⁶ Additionally, it was disproportionately “older people in the UK” (older than 50) that support reclaiming powers from the EU; individuals who, in direct alignment with the underlying claims of this paper, necessarily experienced a pre-EU Britain and its idealized prosperity.²⁷ Undeniably, Great Britain is the most well-suited European nation in both widespread consensus and economy to depart from the European Union - this alone provides tangible evidence of the connection between British exceptionalism and Brexit.

To be sure, a host of issues are *directly* responsible for Great Britain's hasty exit from the EU: burdensome regulations, a disastrous, non-shared Euro, excessive immigration, and a "growing distrust of multinational financial, trade, and defense organizations" to name a few, but the unifying thread connecting each is that Great Britain, not a bunch of bureaucrats sitting in Brussels hundreds of miles away, can more effectively ameliorate each dilemma.²⁸ And indeed, in June 2016, just prior to the Brexit vote, British public opinion perfectly reflected such an assertion, as a mere 6% of Britons voiced a desire “to transfer more powers” to Brussels while 65% of the population wished for more powers to be returned to the national government.²⁹ Why? The answer is inherent and apparent - Great Britain is not another European state to play by 27 others' interests; Great Britain is a historically sovereign and overwhelmingly prosperous state that has known, and continues to know, how to best govern itself. There is no need for outside-interference or regulation; each of the distinctive historical developments discussed previously points to a conclusion that Britons evidently feel more passionate about than any other nation on Earth - Great Britain is exceptionally well-suited to autonomously govern itself. Fittingly, such exceptionalism directly intertwines with the very fact that Brexit is possible - Great Britain never abandoned its benchmark currency: the Pound.

Conclusion

The future implications of Brexit are sure to be diverse and, above all else, virtually impossible to currently ascertain. A rapidly evolving global landscape, bolstered by technological innovation of unimaginable proportion and drastically affected by the novel COVID-19 pandemic, signifies that the world is much different than in the decades before the EU when Great Britain quite literally ruled the world. Critically, however, historical precedent points to Great Britain once again emerging relatively unscathed. In the eyes of the British, a nation perpetually detached from

²⁶ Jim Mann, “Britain Uncovered Survey Results: the Attitudes and Beliefs of Britons in 2015,” *The Guardian*, 19 April 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/apr/19/britain-uncovered-survey-attitudes-beliefs-britons-2015>.

²⁷ Dorothy Manevich, “British crave more autonomy from EU as Brexit vote nears,” *Pew Research Center*, 8 June 2016, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/08/british-crave-more-autonomy-from-eu-as-brex-it-vote-nears/>.

²⁸ John Mauldin and George Friedman, “3 Reasons Brits Voted For Brexit,” *Forbes*, 20 April 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnmauldin/2016/07/05/3-reasons-brits-voted-for-brex-it/>.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

the consensus views of continental Europe, the idea of a renewal of "splendid isolation" is too good to refuse. A century of beneficial separation, principally due to advantageous geography, has permanently idealized such a notion, and the emergence of resentment due to French and German military and economic actions has substantially affirmed that very idea. The growing nationalism of Great Britain *is* British Exceptionalism, and the undeniable reality that *only* Great Britain can escape the supposedly pernicious grasp of the EU adds veracity to the pair.

In 2015, the European Commission (an executive branch of the EU) presciently commented on the ever-increasing plausibility of countries departing from the EU due to mounting levels of “euroskepticism” as a consequence of recent economic turmoil.³⁰ And, while Brexit may have ultimately been galvanized by the recent failures of the European Union in coping with the global financial and sovereign debt crises, it is historical British exceptionalism that explains *why* Brexit appears to the everyday Briton as so appealing. Whether coincidence or not, the idealized period of British hegemony and superiority over European contemporaries occurred prior, and not during, its membership in the EU. Most Britons are well aware of Great Britain’s unique history of affluence and exceptionalism, as well as both the absences or evils of European contemporaries along that path.³¹ Great Britain is exceptional both modernly, and more importantly, historically. And while the former *enables* Great Britain to leave the European Union, it is a century of British exceptionalism absent of EU interference that substantiates the idea that prosperity is better assured in Great Britain becoming the European exception once more by exiting the European Union. Brexit is, therefore, as much a consequence of recent socio-economic and political forces in the EU as it is a result of one now evident and indisputable truth, Great Britain is historically exceptional.

³⁰ Charles Wyplosz, “The Centralization-Decentralization Issue,” European Commission, *Discussion Paper 014*, September 2015, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/dp014_en.pdf.

³¹ “History programmes of study: key stage 3,” Department for Education, National Archives, 2013, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239075/SECOND-ARY_national_curriculum_-_History.pdf.

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Observations from the Eichmann Trial: The Democratic Necessity of Deliberation and Cognitive Diversity

Emma Schubart

ABSTRACT

Hannah Arendt's characterization of Adolf Eichmann in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* has significant ramifications for contemporary democratic theory, namely that articulated by Seyla Benhabib who advocates for inclusive deliberative processes and Hélène Landemore who emphasizes the necessity of cognitive diversity. This paper applies Benhabib's and Landemore's democratic theories to Arendt's characterization and diagnosis of Adolf Eichmann as an individual who was fundamentally incapable of thinking from the standpoint of others. In so doing, this paper seeks to emphasize the necessity of inclusive deliberation and cognitive diversity for healthy democratic processes.

Keywords: democratic theory, deliberation, cognitive diversity, Arendt, Eichmann trial

Introduction

In her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, political theorist and philosopher Hannah Arendt analyses the testimony of Adolf Eichmann and evidence presented at his trial held in Jerusalem in 1961. She reaches several important conclusions about Eichmann, though this paper will focus specifically on her observations regarding Eichmann's inability to think for himself or from the standpoint of others. In the fourth chapter of the book *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, philosopher Seyla Benhabib argues that deliberation is key to optimal democratic function. Political scientist Hélène Landemore argues in her book *Democratic Reason: Politics, Collective Intelligence, and the Rule of the Many* for the epistemic advantage of cognitive diversity in decision-making. Deliberation is the epistemic process by which logic and reason are employed in order to thoughtfully weigh options. Cognitive diversity refers to the inclusion of individuals with different approaches to problem-solving. In terms of ensuring the existence of robust democratic institutions, deliberation and cognitive diversity are two sides of the same coin. This paper seeks to apply the theories of deliberation and cognitive diversity as articulated by Benhabib and Landemore to the character, behavior and deeds of Adolf Eichmann, as uncovered by Arendt during Eichmann's eight-month trial in Jerusalem, in order to show how inclusive deliberation might be a practice that prevents democracies from devolving.

According to Benhabib, democracy should take the form of a "deliberative model" or "discourse model." Within this model, decisions are reached via collective, public consideration and debate by the members of a polity.¹ Deliberative processes are integral to democratic decision-making because they force individuals to think from the standpoint of others in order to formulate arguments that are persuasive to as many people as possible. As such, deliberation is imperative to healthy democratic processes because it leads "the individual to further critical reflection on his

¹ Seyla Benhabib, ed., "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy," in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 67-94, 69.

already held views and opinions.”² Benhabib explains that “reasoning from the standpoint of all involved not only forces a certain coherence upon one’s own views but also forces one to adopt a standpoint that Hannah Arendt, following Kant, had called the ‘enlarged mentality.’”³ Adopting an “enlarged mentality”, or the capacity to think beyond oneself, is vital if we wish to communicate with others effectively, which is a prerequisite for constructive deliberation.

Landemore takes this one step further and argues that “*inclusive* deliberation” is an epistemic necessity within the democratic process (italics mine). In other words, deliberation is more successful when the individuals deliberating form a cognitively diverse group. Inclusive deliberation “can be expected to have greater epistemic properties than less inclusive deliberation because of the greater cognitive diversity a more numerous group is likely to tap.”⁴ In fact, she posits that a group of individuals of average intelligence which is cognitively diverse is a more effective decision-making body than a group that is collectively more intelligent but cognitively similar.⁵ This is because cognitive diversity allows us to approach problems from different perspectives, thereby capitalizing on different areas of expertise. Landemore’s emphasis on inclusivity is key to addressing a possible criticism of Benhabib’s conception of deliberation. Benhabib stresses that an “enlarged mentality” is necessary to be as persuasive as possible. Though couldn’t this model be legitimately co-opted by extremists? For instance, the Nazis certainly were persuasive; they did indeed seem to appeal to the mentality of the German *Volk*. Koonz explains how Hitler’s gift for oratory was based on his ability to perceive the opinions and feelings of his audience.

Appropriating the formula of a successful salesman, he would begin by acquainting himself with his audience and studying their reactions to several topics. When he had identified their desires he would explain confidently why only his Nazi movement could fulfill them. Listeners would say to themselves, “Of course, that’s just what I have always believed.”⁶

Evidently, Hitler did possess a sort of “enlarged mentality.” However, Landemore would refute that this sort of persuasiveness is democratically or even epistemically valid. Hitler, and effectively the rest of the Nazi state, were never engaging in discourse that was remotely inclusive. Their rhetoric was meant to be persuasive *only* to ethnic Germans. The perspectives of non-ethnic Germans were certainly never welcomed. As such, the deliberative model that Benhabib and Landemore defend disqualifies any regime that is based on exclusivity from legitimacy.

The necessity of deliberative processes and of cognitive heterogeneity within these processes is made tragically obvious by the acts of Adolf Eichmann. Eichmann was an SS-Obersturmbannführer and an organizer of the Holocaust.⁷ Throughout the eight-month trial in

² Ibid, 71.

³ Ibid, 72.

⁴ Landemore Hélène, “First Mechanism of Democratic Reason: Inclusive Deliberation,” in *Democratic Reason: Politics, Collective Intelligence, and the Rule of the Many* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 89-123, 72.

⁵ Ibid, 90.

⁶ Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2005), 18.

⁷It is important to note that Arendt devotes considerable time to dismantling the myth propagated by both the prosecution and by Eichmann himself that he was more than a peripheral official within the highly complicated Nazi hierarchy. As such, Arendt dismisses the magnitude of technical responsibility that the trial levied against

Jerusalem, Arendt observed that Eichmann was incapable of thinking beyond himself. The “decisive flaw in Eichmann's character was his almost total inability ever to look at anything from the other fellow's point of view.”⁸ This was made especially evident when he explained that “the Jews ‘desired’ to emigrate, and he, Eichmann, was there to help them, because it so happened that at the same time the Nazi authorities had expressed a desire to see their Reich *judenrein*. The two desires coincided, and he, Eichmann, could ‘do justice to both parties.’”⁹ Not only was Eichmann unable to see himself as anything but a magnanimous middleman, but he was utterly oblivious to the perspectives of those Jews whom he was “helping.” He wanted the Jews to emigrate because he decided that emigration (though a more accurate term would be expulsion) of Jews was his area of expertise. Therefore, because he wanted the Jews to “emigrate,” he believed the Jews wanted to as well.

Upon observing his narcissistic tendencies, Arendt explains that Eichmann’s inability to think from the standpoint of someone else was inextricably tied to his inability to think—and consequently to speak—in anything but “stock phrases and self-invented clichés.”¹⁰ Even “when he did succeed in constructing a sentence of his own, he repeated it until it became a cliché.”¹¹ To some extent, even Eichmann was aware of this. During the trial he told one of the judges, “Officialese [Amtssprache] is my only language.”¹² In this context, the “officialese” refers to the language authorized by Nazi officials for use by any officials who were involved in the execution of the Final Solution. In fact, in all official correspondence with regard to the Final Solution “it is rare to find documents in which such bald words as ‘extermination,’ ‘liquidation,’ or ‘killing’...The prescribed code names for killing were ‘final solution,’ ‘evacuation’ (Aussiedlung), and ‘special treatment’ (Sonderbehandlung).”¹³ Arendt explains that these language rules served a dual purpose—they rendered morbid and violent acts sterile and strictly objective and they redefined truth as only what is expressed in accordance with the “language rules,” i.e. the murder of Jews was a lie, the evacuation of Jews was the truth.¹⁴ The cognitive, moral and psychological dependence on “officialese,” by Nazi officials of course meant that Eichmann was the perfect for the job. As Arendt concludes, “Eichmann's great susceptibility to catch words and stock phrases, combined with his incapacity for ordinary speech, made him, of course, an ideal subject for ‘language rules.’”¹⁵ He was not cognitively capable of questioning the Party, and because he never saw anyone else doing so, it never would have occurred to him to do so.

Obviously Eichmann’s “enlarged mentality”—his capacity for empathy—and his independence of thought were nonexistent. However, his competence lay elsewhere. He was undeniably skilled at organizing the bureaucratic means to execute his job, which was the identification, assembly and transportation of Jews from their homes in Germany and German-

Eichmann. In no way does she exonerate him, but she methodically explains the complicated chain of command within Nazi hierarchy—the nuances of which were not understood by either the prosecution nor even by the defense.

⁸ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 47-48.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Qtd. in *Ibid.*, 48.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 86.

occupied Europe to extermination camps. Arendt explains the terrifying bureaucratic efficiency of Eichmann’s forced emigration system. She quotes Jewish functionaries from Berlin who witnessed the procedure,

This is like an automatic factory, like a flour mill connected with some bakery. At one end you put in a Jew who still has some property, a factory, or a shop, or a bank account, and he goes through the building from counter to counter, from office to office, and comes out at the other end without any money, without any rights, with only a passport on which it says: “You must leave the country within a fortnight. Otherwise you will go to a concentration camp.”¹⁶

In Berlin, this system so efficiently stripped Jews of their rights and property and ejected them from the country that Eichmann was sent to Vienna and Prague to implement the same system.

The fact that Eichmann possessed instrumental rationality—the pursuit and organization of the means to an end—but had no capacity to think from the standpoint of others could illustrate that the difference between two types of reasoning—instrumental rationality, which involves objectivity and pragmatism, and value rationality, which involves deducing the ethical course of action. Sociologist Max Weber describes the differences between these two capacities.

Social action, like all action, may be...:(1) *instrumentally rational (zweckrational)*, that is, determined by expectations as to the behavior of objects in the environment and of other human beings; these expectations are used as "conditions" or "means" for the attainment of the actor's own rationally pursued and calculated ends; (2) *value-rational (wertrational)*, that is, determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other form of behavior, independently of its prospects of success.¹⁷

This type of value-based rationality, or moral reasoning, is vital to the democratic process, specifically within the context of deliberation. The ability to make moral judgements, to judge right from wrong, is crucial to robust political participation. This is especially true in instances of conflicting moral judgements within a body politic.

Landemore takes this a step further by demonstrating how important different perspectives are to deliberative processes. She cites Sidney Lumet’s film *Twelve Angry Men* to illustrate the existence of different types of reasoning. In the film, a juror played by Henry Fonda convinces the eleven other jurors to reconsider the guilty sentence they are about to pass on the defendant who has been charged with murder. During their reconsideration,

the contributions of each jury member vary and compliment each other: juror number 5, a young man from a violent slum, is the one who notices that the suspect could not possibly have stabbed his victim with a switchblade. No other juror was acquainted with the proper way to use a switchblade. Juror number 9, who is an old man, then questions the plausibility of the time it took one of the key witnesses to cross the corridor. One of the

¹⁶ Ibid, 46.

¹⁷ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 24.

most rational jurors, a stock broker who is not convinced by any of the other arguments, finally has to admit that a nearsighted woman is not credible when she pretends to have seen the murderer from her apartment across the street, through the window of a passing subway, while she was lying in bed, most likely without her glasses.¹⁸

Even though this is an example from a film, the point here can certainly be extrapolated to real life—different life experiences within a group of people results in a group of individuals that is cognitively diverse and can therefore solve problems more effectively together than they can alone.

Clearly, involving the perspectives of others in our own decisions, especially when these decisions affect others, is crucial. Eichmann presents perhaps one of the most atrocious examples of the consequences of failing to do so. According to Benhabib, ideally, this myopia is exactly what the deliberative process ameliorates. When we are deliberating we learn from others, sort through our preferences, analyze our opinions, and realize we have to think from another's standpoint in order to make arguments that would be persuasive to them. As such, deliberation refines our own opinions via collective, public evaluation. On this point Landemore is slightly more explicit. She argues that deliberation within the context of diverse perspectives leads to optimal outcomes because it will “enlarge the pools of ideas and information... weed out the good arguments from the bad” and “lead to a consensus on the ‘better’ or more ‘reasonable’ solution.”¹⁹ Indeed, thinking from the diverse standpoints of others leads to optimal outcomes, but it may very well be necessary in order to avoid the worst possible outcome. In the case of Nazi Germany, the worst possible outcome was the establishment of a totalitarian state which managed—by virtue of a distinct absence of diversity of thought—to exterminate nearly two-thirds of the European Jewish population.

One striking example of the necessity of diversity of thought and opinion is outlined by Arendt when she explains the extraordinary response of officials in Denmark with regard to the “Jewish question.” In Denmark, Nazis met with resistance to all their typical pre-emptive measures which were meant to ultimately lead to the deportation of all Jews in the occupied country to extermination camps. Besides actually using the Nazi’s revocation of citizenship from Jews to *protect* all the Jewish refugees in Denmark (“the Danes... explained to the German officials that because the stateless refugees were no longer German citizens, the Nazis could not claim them without Danish assent. This was one of the few cases in which statelessness turned out to be an asset, although it was of course not statelessness per se that saved the Jews but, on the contrary, the fact that the Danish government had decided to protect them”),²⁰ the Danes also managed to change the minds of Nazi officials who were stationed in Denmark with regard to Jews. Indeed, the German officials who had been living in the country for years were no longer the same. Not only did General von Hanneken, the military commander, refuse to put troops at the disposal of the Reich plenipotentiary, Dr. Werner Best, the special S.S. units (Einsatzkommandos) employed in Denmark very frequently objected to ‘the measures they were ordered to carry out by the central agencies’ - according to Best's testimony at

¹⁸ Landemore Hélène, “First Mechanism of Democratic Reason: Inclusive Deliberation,” in *Democratic Reason: Politics, Collective Intelligence, and the Rule of the Many* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 89-123, 98.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 97.

²⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 172.

Nuremberg. And Best himself, an old Gestapo man and former legal adviser to Heydrich, author of a then famous book on the police, who had worked for the military government in Paris to the entire satisfaction of his superiors, could no longer be trusted, although it is doubtful that Berlin ever learned the extent of his unreliability.²¹

Apparently, after being exposed to and living among perspectives that were not manufactured by the Nazi state, these individuals “no longer looked upon the extermination of a whole people as a matter of course.”²² Tragically, the events in Denmark were the exception to the rule. Arendt explains that in Italy and Bulgaria, anti-Semitism didn’t have much traction either, but in these countries resistance and protection of Jews was certainly not as blatant, nor did these countries manage to change the mind of Nazi officials. One of many lessons to be learned from the conduct of the Danes is the necessity of diversity of thought, the requirement that individuals be exposed to opinions other than their own. Indeed perhaps the greatest tragedy of the extraordinary events in Denmark is just that—they were not ordinary.

Arendt’s account of Adolf Eichmann and of the events during World War II which led to the Holocaust prove the necessity of inclusive deliberation, that is, collective decision-making within a group of cognitively diverse individuals. Arendt provides a historical reason for why we must take the theoretical arguments put forth by Benhabib and Landemore seriously. Public deliberation within the context of a variety of perspectives is perhaps the surest political method with which we can try to prevent such sinister politics from ever gaining traction again.

²¹ Ibid, 172-3.

²² Ibid, 175.

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The State of Populism in the Post-Industrial Democracies of the Global North: Fading Out, Growing Ever Stronger, or Preparing to Unveil a New Face?

Aleksandar V. Trivanovic

ABSTRACT

As it is new to the political realm, there are still a lot of questions to be asked and research to do with regards to right wing populism: how it functions, why it exists, what it is, and where we go from here. This essay will answer these questions, as well as investigate recent wins and losses for major far-right parties and movements across the globe. In seeking to answer these questions, I find that right-populism is not, in fact, the political fad many expect it to be and if it is to ever lose popularity, will likely only be pushed into obscurity by a major large-scale global event, or eclipsed by a more powerful political movement. In the short term, the COVID-19 pandemic and left-wing populism are right-wing populism's biggest challengers, but neither have seemed to make a big enough dent in the power of right-populism for it to be considered a loss for the far-right just yet.

Keywords: populism, COVID-19, left-wing political movements, the far-right, electoral success

Introduction

In recent years, political scientists across the globe have been baffled by the rise of populism, a “thin” ideology or rhetorical strategy often used by demagogues that pits the “pure people” against the “corrupt elite.”¹ The term “populism” has existed for centuries now, starting in the late 1800s with the Populist Party in the United States. The Populist Party, a left-wing group, led by William Jennings Bryan, was primarily made up of farmers. The Populists believed that the “big-wigs” in DC had forgotten about the hard-working farmers of Middle America as they continued to pass policies that disenfranchised the farmers while watching from their ivory towers. As a result, the farmers formed the Populist Party, advocating for the “pure people” (the farmers) over the “corrupt elite.” They endorsed policies like a graduated income tax and direct election of Senators, both policies that exist in today’s United States. Although no member of the Populist Party ever held as high an office as President, they were very effective in Congress at lobbying for their policies and speaking for the “little man.”²

These pro-worker, anti-corporatist populist ideals quickly spread their way across the world, notably in the Global South and Latin America. For the next century, the western world seldom used the term “populism” aside from describing these labor movements in the Global South. These movements include Thomas Sankara’s Populist Revolution in Burkina Faso, based on the teachings of Karl Marx, and the campaigns of Argentina’s Juan Perón and Brazil’s Getúlio Vargas.³ However, populism re-emerged in the West during the late 20th century, showing a much harsher face. Since 1990, the number of populists in power around the world has increased

¹ Mudde, Cas and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. *Populism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2017.

² de Wit, Maywa Montenegro et. al. *Agrarian origins of authoritarian populism in the United States*. Journal of Rural Studies, 2019.

³ Abankwa, Daniel. *Populism: Utility of its Approaches and the Prospects of the Phenomenon’s Resurgence in America*. Journal of Social and Developmental Sciences, 2021.

fivefold⁴, but instead of labor movements representing economic populism, most populists today are “cultural” populists that lie on the far-right of a hypothetical political spectrum. While countries in the Global South such as Bolivia and Venezuela still have strong left-populist movements, the traditional left-wing definition of the term has gone nearly extinct in the West, save for a few “flickers of hope” in areas such as Greece, France, and Spain (which have all but fizzled out in due time).

While left-wing populism has largely faded into obscurity, right-wing populism has dominated 21st-century politics. Nearly every post-industrial democracy has observed a strong and electorally viable far-right populist movement. Yet, despite this recent success, there is still much debate within the political science community about how populism will look throughout the rest of the century. On the one hand, many argue that the right-variety of populism is here to stay, as proven in its recent electoral success. But, on the other hand, it is certainly possible that massive public disapproval of how right-populist leaders have handled current crises such as recessions and the COVID crisis could lead to an implosion of the movement. If that is true, then what is to replace it? Will another political action begin to dominate world politics in the upcoming years? What political movement will garner enough working class support to succeed globally and how? This essay seeks to explore these questions as well as how right-wing populism in the 21st century has gotten so vogueish, how left-wing populism has observed lost interest, and where the state of global populism may head amidst an uncertain outlook.

The New Populism

Starting in the 1990s, right-wing populism began to find its way into the rhetorical strategies and ideologies of many significant political figures globally, such as The Netherlands’ Pim Fortuyn, France’s Jean Marie Le Pen, and Austria’s Jörg Haider.⁵ Right-wing populism adds another layer to the “us vs. them” mentality for what populism is known. The “pure people” are culturally homogenous, typically identifying themselves as a “silent majority” and aligning themselves with a notion of “common sense.” At the same time, the group of “corrupt elites” also encompasses immigrants and minorities (who are supposedly favored by the government elites). This form of populism is has become common in today’s global political sphere, gaining massive swaths of power in countries like Brazil, Italy, Hungary, the UK, Turkey, and Australia⁶.

Why is Right-Wing Populism so Powerful?

Right-wing populism has become very popular, but the answer to why this is has caused much debate amongst political scientists. One hypothesis comes from Margaret Canovan of Keele University in England. Canovan states that democracy presents “two faces”: a pragmatic side and a redemptive side to politics. These two sides often clash, as they are opposed yet interdependent. In between “lies a gap in which populism is liable to appear.” Canovan explains the pragmatic side of politics as the side made up of institutions and “systems of processing conflicts without killing one another.” However, the redemptive side is the notion that a government should be “of the

⁴ Kyle, Jordan, et. al. *Populists in Power Across the World*. Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2020.

⁵ Eatwell, Roger. *Introduction: The New Extreme Right Challenge*. Routledge Press, 2003.

⁶ Wike, Richard et. al. *Globally, Broad Support for representative and direct democracy*. Pew Research Center, 2017.

people, by the people, and for the people,” and people are often prone to emotional responses.⁷ A thriving democracy can find the balance between the two faces to keep everyone pleased; a safe, strong, and prosperous state held up by institutions, where the people feel as though they are in control. However, Canovan highlights that the conflicts between the faces of democracy have gotten worse in the 21st century due to political elites in countries worldwide ignoring the redemptive “face,” therefore ignoring “the will of the people.”⁸ In Europe, institutions like the EU continue to grow in power and influence, mandating refugee quotas for countries like Spain and Italy, much to the demise of ordinary folk who “don’t like to see the demographics of their country changing.”⁹ When candidates promise to care about the people’s voice at the expense of the institutions and “elites,” it frequently comes across as a pleasant change of pace.

Another theory comes from Peter A. Hall of Harvard University, in what he calls the “third-rung phenomenon.” Suppose you ask a group of people to imagine a ladder with ten rungs (with the first rung representing the lowest social status and the tenth rung of the highest social status). In that case, a disproportionate amount of people nowadays will put themselves somewhere around the third rung due to an extreme lack of social mobility in some of the world’s largest superpowers, such as the US. Putting themselves on the third rung means that they know they have something to lose, but are still near the bottom, have been that way, and wish to be higher. Because of this, “third-rungers” are the group most prone to right-wing populist arguments and tend to support right-wing populist politicians. They know the “elites” are above them and thus believe that “elites” constantly attempt to push the ordinary person down the ladder in favor of those currently below them.¹⁰ The “first and second-rungers” that serve as scapegoats for the far-right politicians vary by country. In Spain, for example, they tend to be refugees and feminists. As a result, Santiago Abascal’s far-right Vox movement has observed immense popularity in Spain scapegoating these groups. In the United States, they are immigrants (typically working-class and from Mexico or Central America) and black people. Hall concludes that due to the lack of social mobility of the working class in a capitalist world and dissociation between the political elites and working class in many countries, populism has a large gap to fill.¹¹

Lastly, the Dutch political scientist Cas Mudde, known as the “father of modern populism,” has a different notion of why populism is so popular today. He believes that the reactions of various political movements in trying to curb populism have strengthened the populist movement rather than weakening it. That allows for populist movements to grow in size and strength that they maintain over time. He states that when political campaigns try to shame populism and limit their membership, populism only grows stronger because they value output over input and leadership over participation.¹² Populism thrives on having the loudest and most compelling voices in the room instead of having the most members with pragmatic trains of thought. As a result, populist leaders look to have the most devout followers at their core with room to grow. Mudde also states that the global narrative of the “war on terror,” set by the US and Britain, made it easy for

⁷ Canovan, Margaret. *Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy*. Political Science Journal, 1999.

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ Bruneau, Emile. *The unique effects of blatant dehumanization on attitudes and behavior towards Muslim refugees during the European ‘refugee crisis’ across four countries*. European Journal of Social Psychology, 2018.

¹⁰ Gidron, Noam and Peter A. Hall. *Populism as a problem of social integration*. Comparative Political Studies, 2020.

¹¹ Hall, Peter A. *The Shifting Relationship Between Postwar Capitalism and Democracy*. Harvard University, 2021.

¹² Mudde, Cas. *The Populist Zeitgeist: Government and Opposition*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

immigration, Islam, and security to become the “hot-topic” issues of the 21st century, the main talking points of the far-right.¹³

Each of these theories seems to have a significant degree of validity. Not only are they essential to discuss why far-right populism has taken over mainstream politics, but we can also use these theories to discuss a hypothetical downfall of right-wing populism. If these far-right leaders no longer uphold a convincing redemptive side to their politics, can no longer effectively scapegoat historically oppressed populations, or can be drowned out by another political campaign that *embraces* populism, they essentially have nothing to stand on. I will revisit this notion later after further discussion and theory-building concerning similar world-scale political movements.

Similar “Trends” in Global Politics

It is certainly possible that this far-right brand of populism is, in essence, a fad and is not here to stay. Many political scientists have dedicated their careers to arguing that the mere existence of time will render right-populism useless in the upcoming years. This reasoning comes from the observation that there have been many voguish “fad”-like trends observed in the way people prefer their politics. Still, these have often faded out after time invalidates them or a large-scale event makes them irrelevant. For example, the voting population of the United States used to value military experience as one of the essential traits in a President. Now, such accreditation rarely crosses one’s mind when filling out their ballot, as three out of the last four American Presidents had no experience in the military. Many people now actually prefer someone seen as an “outsider” instead of someone with experience. Perhaps Americans have begun to distrust the military. Perhaps Americans underwent a paradigm shift after observing the weighty foreign policy stances taken by Presidents Obama and Clinton despite no military experience. Any conclusions drawn from this data would be circumstantial at best. All we know is that military service is no longer a significant factor in deciding who would be a better President in the eyes of the American public. This preference was a trend. For years, political scientists have been discussing the phenomenon of populism in the Western world as a trend. The current discussion has shifted: should right-wing populism still be considered a trend with an end to its appeal on the horizon, or is it here to stay?

Why Right-Populism is Here to Stay

There are various arguments as to why right-wing populism won’t be going anywhere for quite a while. Mainly, left-leaning (or even center to center-right) movements globally have consistently failed to defeat far-right parties in elections, despite their best efforts. In fact, on balance, far-right parties have continued to grow in support the longer they’ve been in office throughout this century.¹⁴ All across the globe, far-right leaders are enjoying immense popularity and continue to win elections. Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro, Hungary’s Viktor Orbán, The Philippines’ Rodrigo Duterte, India’s Narendra Modi, and the PiS Party in Poland are enjoying record-high levels of support domestically (no matter how unpopular they remain abroad). These levels of support could partially be attributed to the weakening of the free press and constitutional courts

¹³ Mudde, Cas. *Europe’s Populist Surge: A Long Time in the Making*. Foreign Affairs, 2016.

¹⁴ Borg, Karl. *The radicalization of politics in Europe: the rise of the far-right in the age of austerity*. University of Malta, 2014.

that these governments have all pushed for, effectively destroying their once-existent democracies, but regardless, the ideals that they uphold persist. Even when right-populists lose elections or are ousted from office (i.e., France’s Marine Le Pen, The United States’ Donald Trump), they continue to have a strong base of ardent supporters who have shifted the Overton window (the everchanging spectrum or range of politically acceptable ideas within a population)¹⁵ of their respective countries into uncharted territories. Furthermore, handing right-populists a loss in an election is incredibly difficult. In a meta-analysis done by Yascha Mounk, Professor at Johns Hopkins University in 2020, results showed that six years after they are first elected, populist leaders are twice as likely as non-populist leaders to still be in power; twelve years after they are first elected, they are more than five times as likely.¹⁶

These ideas spread rapidly; countries who haven’t yet seen an executive dominated by right-populist ideals may very well see one soon. Countries like Denmark and Finland have far-right populist parties in the metaphoric “passenger’s seat” of their legislatures, making up the main opposition (and starting to “backseat drive” the policy direction of the majority on issues like immigration). More and more Danes and Finns are identifying as “nationalists” each year. The aforementioned Vox in Spain has seen a meteoric rise, and many political scientists keep an eye on them ahead of the upcoming elections in Spain, especially with the popularity of the Sánchez premiership remaining uncertain during the COVID crisis.¹⁷ The far-right Italian party, Brothers of Italy, the only major Italian political party to not join the newly formed broad government coalition led by Mario Draghi, has become the next most popular Italian party in mere months.¹⁸

This newfound success of right populists is much to the dismay of social democratic and traditional conservative parties, many of whom now see historically low support. Moreover, most efforts of these parties have been futile in countering the influence of the far-right. Mudde finds that traditional parties will most often cave into right-populist parties and adopt some of their policy proposals to “win back the working class.” He highlights European leaders like Macron, who have pivoted towards a more “authoritarian” stance on issues like immigration in recent campaigning. Unfortunately, this proves rather detrimental for multiple reasons.

I. Mudde explains that if these parties like *En Marche!* or the SPD in Germany continue to pivot right, nothing fundamentally changes.¹⁹ These pivots do nothing to stop right-wing populism and only delay the inevitable. Suppose “moderate” parties begin to agree with far-right parties on issues such as immigration. In that case, the people will come to the realization (or illusion) that the far-right was almost prophetic in predicting the problems for which every politician suddenly cares. Additionally, when these “moderate” parties change their policy positions to reflect what they believe the working class embodies based on their support for far-right populism, the populists have effectively won to frame the current political climate. This notion of the left creates a slippery

¹⁵ Karpenko, Oleksandr Valentinovich. *The Overton Window as a Manipulative Mechanism of Public Values Transformation*. National Academy of Culture and Arts Management Ukraine, 2019.

¹⁶ Mounk, Yascha and Jordan Kyle, *What Populists Do to Democracies*. The Atlantic, 2018.

¹⁷ Vampa, Davide. *Competing forms of populism and territorial politics*. Journal of Contemporary European Studies, 2020.

¹⁸ de Luca, Marino. *The new Draghi government and the face of populism in Italy*. London School of Economics, 2021.

¹⁹ Mudde, Cas. *Why Copying The Populist Right Isn’t Going To Save The Left*. The Guardian, 2019

slope. When the traditionally or economically liberal parties that previously dominated European elections continue to lose recent polls to the far-right, what other “compromises” will they make? Is climate policy next? Will we see another exodus of countries leaving the EU like Britain or flat out ignoring EU demands like Hungary?

II. The opposition has failed to make any sufficient gains in suppressing the ideas of right-populism in the long term. Even if this “pivoting” works short-term, liberal parties tend to overvalue small victories. Look no further than Poland: in the 2007 elections, the center-right “establishment” Civic Platform Party recovered well after considerable losses to the far-right PiS in previous elections. At this point, Civic Platform became the Polish government and ousted PiS from power. While in power for eight years, the Polish people were disappointed at the lack of substantive policy change brought about by Civic Platform, which led to PiS regaining power and growing more prominent and popular than ever before.²⁰ Ever since, PiS has continued to gain clout and support by eroding press freedoms, stacking constitutional courts, and restricting free speech and immigration. Civic Platform has yet to recover from these losses, while PiS’ popularity is sky high.

Mudde predicts a similar observation in the United States in the coming years.²¹ After the recent electoral defeat of Donald Trump, many Democrats already believe that they’ve “won back the Rust Belt” and that the Blue Wave has reached its crest, never to crash again. Assuming this would be nonsense. Donald Trump was leading polls by double digits before an inadequate response to the COVID crisis.²² The American people didn’t suddenly become repulsed by the ideals of right-populism overnight; they didn’t have a choice. What happens if the Republicans nominate another politically popular right-populist like Tom Cotton or Ron DeSantis to be their Presidential nominee in 2024? The Democrats have far from won back working-class support, and they won’t do it without making substantial efforts to better the lives of the working-class people of America. The same goes for social democratic parties in European democracies, such as Germany’s SPD, Britain’s Labour Party, Spain’s PSOE, and more.

Failures of Modern Social Democrats

The question then remains; why has it become so hard for social democratic parties to make substantial reform for the working class? The answer is twofold: First, as previously discussed, liberal parties have become infatuated in making compromises with far-right parties to stay “electable” in their own eyes. Playing electoral politics and becoming obsessed with optics distracts politicians from making reforms genuinely “for the people.” Democrats in the United States are shaking in their boots, terrified of coming out to support policies like the Green New Deal and Medicare for All. They are most worried about being branded radicals by their opposition (despite polls showing 70%+ approval amongst Americans for these “radical” policies). Second, reform for the working class can only go so far within a capitalist economy. If capitalists still own the means of production in any system, workers will always feel disenfranchised and in a state of

²⁰ Szczerbiak, Aleks. *An anti-establishment backlash that shook up the party system*. Journal of European Politics and Society, 2017.

²¹ Mudde, Cas. *Why Copying The Populist Right Isn’t Going To Save The Left*. The Guardian, 2019

²² Erikson, Robert S. and Christopher Wlezien. *Forecasting the 2020 Presidential Election*. Political Science and Politics, 2021.

wage slavery. Likely, it’s not so much the *policy* of far-right groups that bring them such great appeal in the eyes of ordinary people, but the fact that they stand for change and the ideals of the government looking out for the “everyday” working-class citizen. If social democrats decide they will adopt right-wing immigration policies, they won’t gain any support from right-populists. National Rally supporters in France aren’t flocking to support Macron; this would be illogical.

This malleability is the problem with traditional social-democratic political parties. They should not treat the working class like pawns, solely focusing on their benefits within an electoral system. To garner working-class support, social democracy (or socialism) needs to be revitalized, and the idea of working-class-centered politics needs to stay in the mainstream. Otherwise, it is incredibly easy for the working class to become infatuated with the scapegoated politics of the far-right.²³ It’s challenging to defeat right-populists in national elections without local support and community organization. I argue for organizers to start at the local level by enlightening the working-class and pushing for class consciousness while strengthening the vehicles of working-class mobilization within the democratic system, such as trade unions. Without this mass organization, I would argue that right-populism will grow to be the preferred politics of much of the working class.

Could We Be Turning a Corner Already?

However, there are also arguments about why this new form of populism could be on its last leg. The reason for this mainly lies with COVID-19. Historically, political ideals tend to shift amongst the masses during and after large-scale crises. The most significant gains acquired by far-right parties in Europe, in particular, happened following the financial collapse and global recession in 2010²⁴. No crisis in recent history has been more significant in scope and scale than COVID-19. Nearly 200 million people have suffered from the disease worldwide, and well over four million people have died²⁵. During crises of this scale, people can’t help but blame the political administrations in charge.

Additionally, many of the countries hit the hardest by the pandemic have had right-populist leaders in charge of handling the COVID procedure. As previously mentioned, the main reason Donald Trump lost re-election in the United States is due to how the pandemic has hit America hard. It did not help that President Trump refused to acknowledge the benefits of mask-wearing, social distancing, and other recommended COVID-deterrents until hundreds of thousands of Americans, many of those his ardent supporters, had already suffered. The United States never went into a single nationwide lockdown. While President Trump still has a group of staunch supporters that agree with his every move during the pandemic, many Americans were all but forced to look at the ordinary lives of others across the globe. New Zealand summers were filled with music festivals and beach vacations after essentially conquering the pandemic following their strong (and early) response.

This disappointment in far-right leaders during the pandemic is not an isolated American issue. Far-right parties all across Europe saw substantial losses throughout 2020. For example,

²³ Kitschelt, Herbert. *The Radical Right in Western Europe*. The University of Michigan Press, 1995.

²⁴ Funke, Manuel, et. al. *The Financial Crisis is Still Empowering Far-Right Populists*, Foreign Affairs, 2018.

²⁵ *COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic*, Worldometer, July 2021.

Greece’s ascendant far-right household name Golden Dawn saw a massive hit to their popularity and is now officially branded by Greeks (and many abroad) as neo-Nazis.²⁶ Simon Schütz of the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies at Johns Hopkins University illustrates the bind that right-populist parties have faced during the pandemic, highlighting Germany’s AfD.

Schütz finds that COVID has caused countries like Germany to resort to extreme measures, such as shutting down borders, giving massive swaths of funding to small businesses, and focusing primarily on national interests instead of supranational interests (such as the EU or WHO). Many of these policies have been advocated by far-right parties for years. In the last year, these policies have been forcibly thrust into the mainstream by politicians of all parties. Unfortunately, people are still worse off than they were before the pandemic. Economies have slowed down, crime is still high, and the working class has been laid off from their jobs in droves. The far-right promise has shown to be a failure. These policies have proved not to be the “cure-all” that parties like the AfD have promised they would be, which has led to splitting support for these parties.²⁷

The Far-Right Double-Bind

Now, far-right parties have two options. On the one hand, they can continue to stick to their wheelhouse and envision this dwindling support as a short-term issue. Perhaps they can phrase this as a win for the far-right at the end of the day. Many traditionally far-right policies found their way into the mainstream. The problem with this idea, Schütz continues, is that these parties no longer have their immense populist appeal. If everyone from social democrats to conservatives to greens advocates for their policies, they are no longer outsiders but effectively the “establishment” they continuously denounced. The popularity of parties that choose this path will undoubtedly take a hit.²⁸

On the other hand, with dwindling support, far-right parties could try to do something to reinvigorate their base and continue to be contrarian, pivoting even further to the fringes of the political spectrum. Many AfD members have resorted to joining the Querdenker movement, a loose grouping of libertarians, vaccination opponents, and conspiracy theorists that has steadily gained support for its protest rallies against government health restrictions and lockdowns. A recent poll showed that 24% of AfD members don’t believe in the pandemic and are under the impression that liberal governments across the world conspired to create the notion of this pandemic to create chaos discontent. These fringe beliefs are also sure to alienate voters. As a result, AfD’s support has slashed in half since 2018.²⁹ At the very least, right-populist parties will fracture into two different camps: traditional right-populists and fringe conspiracy groups. It is much tougher for these splintered groups to survive on their own in an electoral system. While AfD is still polling in fourth place ahead of the 2021 German federal elections later this year, their support is still on a downwards trend and they did not fare well in many of the local elections that took place earlier this year.

²⁶ Schütz, Simon. *How The Pandemic Dented The Popularity of Germany’s Far-Right AfD Party*. NPR, 2020.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

With dwindling support over their COVID response worldwide, political scientists will have to wait and see what the outcome will be for right-populists. However, many right-populist parties still saw increases in their voter base during 2020, primarily when led by figures with a cult of personality (i.e., Viktor Orbán³⁰ and Narendra Modi³¹). Even if right-populism takes a massive hit in the coming years, it is unlikely it will completely disappear like other political trends before it.

A Return to the Left?

If right-populism continues to lose support in post-industrial democracies globally, what will be the next political belief to replace its popularity? Many political scientists believe that global politics may see a return to the “traditional” populism of the left. This shift could be a critical development, as left-populism provides the type of focus on the working class that Mudde finds so integral to global democracies today. I would contend that the far-right’s “anti-establishment” calls for supporting the “little man” are not what makes them so dangerous. Instead, I believe that their poisonous cocktail of xenophobia, racism, and authoritarianism that is spoon-fed to the masses across the globe is what makes them threatening. Left-populism gives an alternative to its right counterpart without spewing hate and ignorance. That is not to say that left-populism is a cure-all; it certainly has its flaws. However, left-populism may be the most straightforward transition to make from right-populism. Often, left-populist parties can poach supporters from the far-right with more inclusive calls for corporate accountability and working-class support. These parties and politicians classified as “left-populists” incorporate a wide area of the political spectrum. I will also refer to them throughout this article as left-wing, leftist, and socialist, despite the “scary” and radical connotation that some of these terms have garnered in many post-industrial democracies in recent years.

Is the Left Doomed to Fail?

However, it is tough to remain optimistic over the prospects of a sustainable global left-populist movement, given its massive failures in recent years. Six years ago, international relations experts predicted that a new left-populist campaign was among us. After the global economic recession, left-wing parties started to pop up across Europe, rapidly gaining clout. Former Communist and current leader of Syriza, Alexis Tsipras became the Prime Minister of Greece, campaigning on rejecting EU calls for austerity measures against the Greeks. Jeremy Corbyn found himself as the leader of the British Labour Party, a party that rather conservative Blairites had primarily dominated throughout the 21st century thus far. Pablo Iglesias Turrión’s Unidas Podemos coalition was influencing Spanish politics in an unprecedented manner. Bernie Sanders was mere votes away from becoming the Democratic nominee to take on Donald Trump for the Presidency. Six years later, all these movements have failed. In the most recent elections, Syriza was dominated by New Democracy, a liberal-conservative party, removing Tsipras from his seat as Prime Minister.³² Corbyn was ousted from his leadership in the Labour Party, replaced by the unremarkable Keir Starmer.³³ Iglesias became the Vice President in an increasingly unpopular and

³⁰ Cervenka, Eve. *Public Opinion in the United States and Hungary*. International ResearchScope Journal, 2020.

³¹ Batra, Jagdish. *The two years of Modi rule*. Jindal Global University, 2021.

³² Rori, Lamprini. *The 2019 Greek Parliamentary Election*. West European Politics, 2020.

³³ Martell, Luke. *Beyond factionalism to unity: Labour under Starmer*. Renewal Journal, 2020.

rather conservative Spanish government led by Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, with limited influence on policy after an underwhelming performance in both 2019 elections. He retired from politics completely after the 2021 Madrilenian regional election, facing pressure from a massive outpour of death threats addressed to him and his family for his political beliefs and the fact Podemos failed to gain even 8% of the total vote.³⁴ Sanders once again lost the Democratic nomination in 2020 and (arguably prematurely) endorsed a Biden presidency without securing a single seat for the left in Biden’s cabinet.³⁵ How could this be? Is left-populism doomed to fail?

These movements had one thing in common: they caved into moderate-led demands within their respective electoral systems. The reality may be that these leftist movements cannot survive within any electoral systems without compromising that will eventually prove damning to their cause. Many of these recent movements, especially Tsipras’ Syriza (as well as most truly leftist movements; arguments can be made for many of these movements to be liberal social-democratic merely), take inspiration in their political philosophies and the way that they organize from leftist thinkers such as Marx, Lenin, and Luxemburg. All of them advocated for armed revolution as means of change, as opposed to bourgeois electoralism. Many have brushed these aspects of their theories to the side: calling for revolution will undoubtedly alienate most of the base that has supported these movements thus far.

Additionally, today’s Greece, USA, and Spain’s material conditions are far different from late 20th century Germany and Russia. However, leftist movements trying to accumulate power within any existing political system is always a risky move. Predictions made by revolutionaries such as Mikhail Bakunin about leftist politics dating back to the 1870s have continued to ring true through to the present.

Why the Left Has Been Unable to Change Their Fate

One of these predictions stated that leftists are wrong to think that they can enter the existing capitalist state, transform it from within, and use it as a tool to build towards a leftist society.³⁶ Instead, the capitalist state, an inherently hierarchical institution that perpetuates the power of the economic and political ruling classes, will transform *them*. They will be gradually corrupted by power and will become concerned with expanding and maintaining it through any means (abolishing any electoral system, for example) rather than achieving their original goals. Bakunin predicted that socialist politicians would come to do awful things to preserve and expand their power while thinking they were doing it to advance their original causes. That’s because they’ve come to view themselves and their power as indispensable to their achievements of moving towards a “socialist” society. Look no further than figures like Lenin, Stalin, and Mao to see that this prediction has been fulfilled.

The second prediction sounds even more familiar to today’s left-populists. If left-populists don’t become corrupted by power, they will enter an electoral system to garner as many votes as possible.³⁷ Catering to electoralism inherently means a political shift towards a more “big-tent”

³⁴ Custodi, Jacopo. *The case of Podemos*. Nations and Nationalism, 2021.

³⁵ Watson, Anthony. *A study of the modern progressive movement*. Missouri S&T Press, 2021.

³⁶ Bakunin, Mikhail Aleksandrovich. *Statism and Anarchy (English Translation)*. Cambridge University Press, 1990.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

platform. It is necessary to gain votes from traditionally left-center or center-right voters to advance any policy. Thus, socialist parties will need to reduce their goal to making minor reforms to existing capitalist society and make alliances with existing bourgeois parties to form coalitions or successfully pass reforms. These compromises will continue to pile up until the original message of left-populism has diluted so much that there becomes no discernable difference between them and the bourgeois parties that they vowed to overthrow.

As touched on previously, Syriza, British Labour, Unidas Podemos, and more could not escape this latter prediction and change their fates. To maintain the amount of popular support needed to keep his premiership, Tsipras caved in to the austerity measures proposed on the Greeks by the European troika that he vowed with never to work. He flirted with militarism in the Aegean Sea and sold Greek port access to China. Even this pivoting wasn't enough to keep him in power, as Syriza lost its Parliamentary majority in 2019. British Labour MPs rallied around removing Corbyn from his leadership position once he was seen as “too radical” and unwilling to compromise with the opposition. This is despite Corbyn refusing to take a strong stance against Brexit. How much does the left need to bow down to their opponents to become “electable”? How much compromise is acceptable before it becomes immoral? Unidas Podemos is essentially a nonstarter in Spanish politics today; their approval ratings continue to fall as they become replaced by the insurgent Vox.

How the Left Could Succeed

Despite all of this, political theorists like Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau believe that there is a future for left-populists, specifically if they start by campaigning on issues in an incredibly vague way (intentionally so). Their theories have been studied intensely over the last few years, with other electoral experts tweaking, critiquing, and providing their takes on the matter. Overall, the theory states that if left-populists start their campaigning around an anti-establishment, pro-working-class platform designed to accommodate causes and grievances supported by the masses, they can quickly get an outright majority of votes in most systems. The catch is that they have to not focus on policy-based rhetoric or identify with traditional leftists movements and phrases with poor connotations, such as “socialism.”³⁸ This is because most of the world's voters don't own any capital or private property and are thus members of a class with inherent grievances in the current system that would identify with the rhetorical strategies of this party. However, words like socialism, communism, redistribution, and shifting ownership of the means of production still leave a bad taste in the mouth of many, especially in older generations who lived through or witnessed communism during the mid-20th century.

Additionally, society continues to progress. We are now at a point where most post-industrial democracies tend to have more egalitarian views on society (supporting gay rights, women's rights, etc.). Once a party like this achieves a majority, there isn't a need to make alliances with bourgeois parties. Instead, the left-populist party can start slowly dismantling oppressive mechanisms of capitalism from within. Think of these parties or political figures as “secret socialists.” Mouffe primarily has worked closely with France's Jean Luc Melenchon and other European politicians to tweak this theory and possibly put it into effect.

³⁸ Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and socialist strategy*. Verso Trade Publishing, 2014.

Criticisms of Mouffe and Laclau

While, on paper, I am intrigued by Mouffe and Laclau’s theory, I remain highly skeptical for a variety of reasons:

1. Voters are never 100% rational, and people frequently vote against their interests. Despite living as wage slaves, many working-class members with the “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” mentality love the current system in which they live and work.
2. People might care more about voting for non-progressive social issues than progressive economic issues.
3. Recent elections across the globe have shown the effect that the late-20th and early-21st century campaign against socialist ideals has had on voters’ opinions.

Even politically uninspiring, moderate politicians within bourgeois political parties such as Joe Biden and Pedro Sánchez have been branded as “unelectable, radical socialists by their opponents and the media. Moreover, if even being called socialist acts as a deterrent to political success, genuine socialists will have a tough time getting elected.

Regardless, even if left-populist politicians gain the amount of support needed to lead individual countries here and there, it is unlikely that left-populism will have the immense effect on global politics that right-populism has. However, if there is a time for left-populists to capitalize and grow their clout, it is now, in an age where right-populism may very well be teetering on the brink of a collapse.

Looking Forward

The next decade will be a crucial one for political scientists and those who study populism to watch. What will the world look like in 2031? Will right-populism continue to grow and dominate, or will it fall into obscurity? Will left-populism take its place, or is it truly doomed to fail? Will neoliberal institutions regain the power they had before populism cast doubt on their efficacy? How will COVID affect how people view our politicians? For now, it is too early to tell. One can only make predictions based on the information we have right now.

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Comparing the Societal Impact of Parental Leave Policy in Sweden and Italy

Jack Ryan Twaronite

ABSTRACT

This work analyzes differences in policy, specifically parental leave, between societies whose cultures have been dominated by social-democratic and Christian-democratic governments. It examines the effects between two drastically different positions from the developed world on the issue, specifically the traditionally gendered policies of Italy as well as the comparatively gender-neutral arrangement found in Sweden.

Keywords: parental leave, social policy, Christian Democracy, Social Democracy, comparative politics

Introduction

The transition to the financial security of new mothers being assured by the state began in the first half of the twentieth century. In 1919, the International Labour Organization came to the resolution that a mother should be guaranteed twelve weeks of paid leave by the state as well as inalienable job security upon her eventual return to work.¹ European nations would accomplish this goal using very different approaches and today every European state offers the opportunity for new mothers to take paid leave, via maternity leave, a program whose origins stem from protecting a mother from potential workplace strain or injury during a period of time which should be geared towards recovery and self-care, or gender-egalitarian parental leave, a relatively modern concept emanating from the protection of societal expectations and obligations concerning neonatal child-rearing.² This paper will explore the different origins and subsequent societal effects of adopting parental leave in Italy and Sweden, such as the retention of women in the workforce or the prominence of fathers employing their privileges to access parental leave.

Policy Breakdown and Origins

In Italy, five months of maternity leave is compulsory by law for all new mothers. Traditionally, this was divided into two months of prepartum leave and three months of postpartum leave.³ This was changed, however, in the 2019 national budget and mothers can now elect to take their five months of leave exclusively postnatally.⁴ In this five-month period, mothers receive at least eighty percent of their previous salary which is funded exclusively by the National Institute

¹ Convention concerning the Employment of Women before and after Childbirth, International Labour Organization § C003 (1921).

² Prpić, Martina. "Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave in the EU." European Parliamentary Research Service, March 2017.

³ Saurel-Cubizolles, Marie-Josèphe, P. Romito, and J. Garcia. "Description of Maternity Rights for Working Women in France, Italy and in the United Kingdom." *European Journal of Public Health* 3, no. 1 (March 1, 1993): 50.

⁴ Webster, Fiona, and Stephanie Rousseau. "Italy: Women Can Now Work Up to Childbirth Then Take Maternity Leave." GRIST Law & Policy Group, Mercer, April 23, 2019.

for Social Security.⁵ New fathers are also subject to an obligatory leave of five days during which they receive the entirety of their usual salary.⁶ In addition to the standard maternity and paternity leaves, Italians also have a gender egalitarian parental leave option at their disposal. Each parent can take advantage of as many as six months of leave so long as the total leave does not reach ten months jointly for any individual child. As long as the child in question is less than six years old when this leave is employed, parents are entitled to thirty percent of their previous salary which is provided by the public purse in a similar fashion to that of maternity leave.⁷ Adoptive and foster parents are entitled to the same benefits as natural parents.⁸

Sweden’s approach to parental leave is much more gender egalitarian than the orthodox vision of distinct maternal and paternal leaves. Mothers are obligated to take two weeks of maternity leave and pregnant women may also benefit from an optional leave of sixty days (or, for more laborious work, the entirety of the mother’s pregnancy) during which they are guaranteed 77.6% of their previous earnings by the Ministry of Social Affairs. Fathers receive an optional ten days and are paid similarly to mothers during this timeframe by the same ministry.⁹ That said, what makes Sweden stand out writ large is its extensive, egalitarian, gender egalitarian parental leave policy.¹⁰ Upon the birth of their child, both a mother and a father are each eligible to take as an individual entitlement eight months of parental leave during which they would be paid 77.6% of their former earnings for 195 days and a flat rate of 250 kronor every day thereafter. The parents do not have to take their leaves concurrently and, as such, it is possible for a child to be in the exclusive care of at least one of the parents for a full sixteen months.¹¹

The maternity leave regulations currently employed in Italy originate from the 1971 enactment of Law 1204.¹² The matricentric approach featured in Italy’s policies is somewhat typical of Christian Democratic administrations.¹³ In the second half of the twentieth century, Italy’s government was dominated by the Christian Democracy Party who were responsible for the 1971 implementation as well as its less effective 1950 predecessor.¹⁴ The infamous fascist regime that preceded the redemocratization of Italy pushed a natalist policy which exclusively advantaged women in their roles as child-bearers.¹⁵ Though the contemporary Italian state seems to be advancing towards gender egalitarianism in terms of their familialist policies, they are largely still rooted in the traditional values of male-breadwinner familial models. The specificities of how

⁵ Addabbo, Tindara, Valentina Cardinali, Dino Giovannini, and Sara Mazzucchelli. “Italy: Annual Review & Report.” International Network on Leave Policies & Research, April 2019, 2.

⁶ Ibid, 3.

⁷ Ibid, 4-5.

⁸ Ibid, 6.

⁹ Duvander, Ann-Zofie, and Niklas Löfgren. “Sweden: Annual Review & Report.” International Network on Leave Policies & Research, April 2019, 1-2.

¹⁰ Almqvist, Anna-Lena, and Ann-Zofie Duvander. “Changes in Gender Equality? Swedish Fathers’ Parental Leave, Division of Childcare and Housework.” *Journal of Family Studies* 20, no. 1 (April 2014): 19.

¹¹ Duvander and Löfgren, 3-4.

¹² Giorgio, Adalgisa. “Motherhood and Work in Italy: A Socio-Cultural Perspective.” *Journal of Romance Studies* 15, no. 3 (January 2015): 6

¹³ Häusermann, Silja. “Different Paths of Family Policy Modernization in Continental Welfare States.” *Swiss Political Science Association*, November 2, 2006, 14

¹⁴ Giorgio, 3-6

¹⁵ Ibid, 6-7

parental leave in Italy came about are predominantly due to the dominance of center-right policies espoused by the Italian government from the 1950s to the 1990s.

Contemporaneous to the dominance of the center-right in Italy was the paramountcy of the Social Democratic Labour Party in Sweden.¹⁶ The egalitarian parental leave policy, known as *Föräldraförsäkring*, for which Sweden is renowned worldwide came about in 1974 during the administration of the Social Democrats, though the move was supported almost universally. Prior to the adoption of this policy, Sweden operated on a traditional matricentric system of maternity leave.¹⁷ Part of the rationale for the policy’s enactment was actually to encourage dual-income households as opposed to the orthodox view of single-earner families.¹⁸ The push for such a policy long preceded its 1974 enactment, as in 1966, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation came to a resolution supporting a gender-egalitarian parental leave policy and spearheaded the promotion of dual-income families.¹⁹ The push for the inclusion of women in the workplace and dual-income families in Sweden is not limited to their policies concerning parental leave and is but a mere part of its larger familialist policies of gender egalitarianism at-large. Being steadfast in their ideals that the state should strive for universal equality, the revolutionary approach Sweden adopted in regards to parental leave is, in large part, the product of center-left Social Democratic governance during the second half of the twentieth century.

Effects

The societal impact that the two different approaches to parental leave have imparted upon Italy and Sweden respectively is substantial, particularly in the outcomes concerning the presence of women in the active workforce. In 2016, 51.6% of women and 71.7% of men in Italy participated in the labor force. That same year, 79.2% of women and 83.0% of men in Sweden participated in the labor force.²⁰ The percent differences in between men and women in the Italian and Swedish workforces are 20.1% and 3.8%, respectively. The contrast, however, is not only limited to female participation in a professional capacity, as there is a distinct difference between Swedish and Italian fathers who take advantage of their legislatively guaranteed leaves. Roughly nine out of every ten Swedish fathers take advantage of at least part of their leave, with the average new father taking seven weeks of leave.²¹ Italy, on the other hand, has a high participation of men in the very brief obligatory postnatal leave, while only 7% take advantage of the optional parental leave, due in part to the imbalance of funds available during leave as opposed to working full-time.²² Moreover, in one study, 20% of men in Italy appeared to have no knowledge of the

¹⁶ Palmowski, Jan. “Social Democratic Labour Party, Sweden.” In *A Dictionary of Contemporary World History*. Oxford University Press, 2016.

¹⁷ Duvander, Ann-Zofie, Tommy Ferrarini, and Sara Thalberg. “Swedish Parental Leave and Gender Equality: Achievements and Reform Challenges in a European Perspective.” Working Paper. Institutet för Framtidsstudier, 2005, 8

¹⁸ Almqvist and Duvander, 19-20

¹⁹ Lundqvist, Åsa. “Towards Gender-Neutral Ideals and Gender Equality Policies.” In *Family Policy Paradoxes: Gender Equality and Labour Market Regulation in Sweden, 1930-2010*, 1st ed., 61–82. Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2010, 65

²⁰ “European Semester Thematic Factsheet: Women in the Labour Market.” European Commission. Accessed March 2, 2020.

²¹ Hedlin, Simon. “Why Swedish Men Take So Much Paternity Leave.” *The Economist*, July 23, 2014.

²² Catalino, Lidia. “Paternity Leave Made Difficult in a Country of Empty Cradles.” Translated by Anna Martinelli. *La Stampa*, January 16, 2018.

existence of any program that would give them the opportunity to take leave.²³ This falls in line precisely with the variations of familialism used in Italy and Sweden, and the differences in the way they employ traditional familial and gender egalitarian policies respectively, and the related expected outcomes.

The gender egalitarian policies, striving to support dual-income households, espoused by Sweden in their hopes of revolutionizing the structure of the family, could ultimately be deemed a success. Alternatively, Italy, and its espousal of a more traditional familial base for its leave policies, appears to have worked similarly in a way to give preference to families whose sole breadwinner is the father. The different approaches to parental leave found in Sweden and Italy have had deep societal impacts that are clear byproducts of their very different familialist ideals.

²³ Bertolini, Sonia, Rosy Musumeci, Manuela Naldini, and Paola Maria Torrioni. “Working Women in Transition to Motherhood in Italy.” *Journal of Romance Studies* 15, no. 3 (Winter 2015): 65.

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