

# Populist conservatism or conservative populism? The Republican Party, the new Conservative Revolution and the political education of Donald Trump

---

## Introduction

The American experience with populism – both empirical and theoretical – is very dissimilar to the European or even Latin American ones. The partisan framework of the nascent American democracy, its staunchly liberal intellectual foundations, but also the inbuilt racial and social tensions at the heart of the system, shaped along the 19th and 20th century a peculiar understanding of the main political categories of polity, politics and policy. These elastic labels make a pertinent in-

ternational analysis of the content of the populist – or for that matter of the conservative – label a difficult and challenging endeavor. Our paper will strive to map out the intellectual roots and the ideological expressions of an uniquely American form of populism, in the context of a federal republic whose experience of democracy and liberalism, both at national and state level, is fundamentally dif-

ferent from that of other Western developed countries. After briefly engaging in a theoretical exploration of the two main labels used in this study – namely populism and conservatism -, we aim to further question the nature of the trumpian breed of *anti-establishment* politics and the intricate relationship it developed with on the one hand the “mainstream” Republican conservative, and on the other hand with the far-right nebulae crystallizing in the murky no-man’s-land at the right of the Grand Old Party. The quintessential trumpian formula, with its robust blue collar appeal, was essentially a balancing act between the traditional conservative ethos (embodied by Trump’s 2016 vice-presidential running mate, Mike Pence) and more populist, unorthodox inspirations from the right-wing fringes (the figure of Steve Bannon, former chief executive chairman of the far-right news outlet Breitbart News, comes to mind); it would be therefore of particular interest to track how both components interacted, interweaved and were ultimately metabolized within this new Janus-faced synthesis.

---

### **Alexis CHAPELAN**

PhD student,  
Ecole des Hautes Etudes  
en Sciences Sociales  
chapelanalexis@yahoo.fr

---

Finally, this paper will attempt to address the overarching dilemma looming large over our current political horizon: the impact of this populist surge of the democratic infrastructure upon which not only the constitutional system, but our entire modern political culture, is built. With two attempted impeachments, multiple major scandals (ranging from Trump's own tax returns to the altogether more serious allegation of collusion with a foreign power) and a ratcheting-up of violent rhetoric against political opponents and democratic watchdogs, the hectic and eventful first mandate of Donald Trump presidency prompted with even more burning urgency such angst-laden questioning: was the election of a vitriolic outsider hell-bent on "draining the swamp" the chance to revitalize an exhausted system (or at the very least a deceptive red herring hardly masking the "business-as-usual" periodic cycle of Democratic-Republican alternance), on the contrary, a mortal threat to the very foundation of democratic culture. The nation which, emerging triumphant and with its political model unrivalled from the Cold War, had professed the "end of history" and had regarded authoritarianism as a simple matter of foreign policy is now at grips with the sense that its core democratic values may not be, after all, eternal and immutable<sup>1</sup>.

## **Populism: the "variable geometry" of a hypertrophied concept**

The term "populism" itself has an uncertain intellectual genealogy. While it is beyond the scope of this article to trace its exhaustive unfurling throughout the last two centuries, a succinct conceptual and historical mapping is still necessary to grasp the mechanisms of intellectual construction of the populist formula. Proto-populist movements appeared in Europe as early as the French Revolution, with radical revolutionary factions such as the *sans-culottes* and the *Enragés* led by figures such as Jacques-René Hébert or Jacques Roux rising against what was perceived as the capture of the Revolution by bourgeois elites<sup>2</sup>. In America the Democratic Party of Andrew Jackson was the first coherent expression of populist resentment against the coastal merchant elites that dominated the era of the "market revolution"<sup>3</sup>. The Jacksonians' tirades against the bankers (and especially foreign bankers and investors) laid the foundation of a nativist ethos that integrated a robust social-protectionist streak that will come to define later avatars of populism, especially the People's Party at the end of the 19th century. A parallel version of populism also blossomed during the mid-19th century in Russia, with the narodnik movement who sought a profound return to the "untainted" agrarian masses as the ultimate source of moral redemption but also, crucially, of political *sagesse*<sup>4</sup>.

The most interesting and pertinent historical analysis of the construction of the populist political culture, still highly relevant today, belongs to French historian Pierre Rosanvallon: in his seminal work, *La Démocratie Inachevée*, he explores one of the first avatars of what he calls *illiberal democracy* (a term that ought to sound familiar to those with an interest in contemporary populism) in the mid- and late-19th century France<sup>5</sup>. Rosanvallon's insight on bonapartism (which he called, oxymoronicly, *democratic caesarism*) was completed by Zeev Sternhell's piercing vivisection of boulangisme in the last quarter of the 19th century<sup>6</sup>. Both authors map out the emergence of an innovative political model. Political instability, corruption and the stark inequalities of the unfettered capitalism allowed anti-parliamentary and authoritarian solutions to gain traction, but what set this particular dynamic of contention radically apart from earlier anti-revolutionary thinkers such as de Maistre, de Bonald or La Tour

du Pin was the fusion of anti-liberal principles such as order and authority with a radical democratic and anti-oligarchic critique of the “bourgeois” regime.

The study of historical populisms across Europe and the globe highlights the main ideational invariants of the populist narrative, upon which there is a relative scholarly consensus: the “pathos of the little man<sup>7</sup>”, the fundamental dichotomy between the “pure people” and the “corrupt elites”, the distrust of professional politicians, the refusal of the institutionalisation and implicitly of the competitiveness of politics (the elites being perceived as extraneous to society or to the people, there could be no conflict *within* the people itself – if segments of the non-elite population happened to be resistant to populist rhetoric, it could only be as a result of a faulty understanding of their real interests due to propaganda and manipulation), and last but not least the emphasis on the unifying, quasi-sacred bond between the people and a charismatic leading figure<sup>8</sup>.

But given that populism, thus defined by this minimal core values, encompasses ideologies, regimes, parties and public figures ranging from late 19th-century proto-fascists<sup>9</sup> to 21st-century Latin American free-market enthusiasts<sup>10</sup>, some voices question the very academic utility of this overstretched concept and proposed its relegation to the realm of the media, as a normative synonym for demagoguery and brazen opportunism. Put through the acid test of the Sartori’s proverbial ladder of abstraction<sup>11</sup>, it certainly wouldn’t fare exceptionally well. Isaiah Berlin famously coined this scholarly dilemma “the Cinderella complex”:

There exists a shoe – the word “populism” – for which somewhere there must exist a foot. There are all kinds of feet which nearly fit [...] The prince is always wandering about with the shoe. And somewhere, we feel sure, there awaits a limb called pure populism. This is the nucleus of populism, its essence<sup>12</sup>.

To cut through the Gordian knot of ideational definition of the populism phenomenon, Cas Mudde proposed a different conceptualization, whose backbone would be the notion of “thin-centered ideology”. Mudde’s theoretical model was comfortable with one of populist studies’ most thorny issue: how can so many ostentatiously diverse, even antagonistic ideas and movements (e.g. Occupy Wall Street and The Tea Party, Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump), be huddled together under a unifying label? The young Dutch scholar contended that if populism is truly ideologically thin or hollow, than it has to attach itself to more robustly fleshed out “ideological hosts” to survive, for example socialism, nationalism or fascism<sup>13</sup>.

Does populism truly exist, after all? The scholarly dispute over the nature of *generic* populism risks becoming a never-ending moot point. Given the limited scope of the present paper, a shift to *empirical* populism – populism in one given national or regional context – might prove more fruitful. One might see it as turning around the “Cinderella complex” on its head: start with a real foot and tailor the shoe so that it fits right.

## **The American populist myth: from Jacksonian democrats to Trump**

The American case study is rife with insight of the nature of populism. The Market Revolution era was the crucible of one of the defining foundational populist movements, the People’s Party of the late 19th-century, whose ruggedly blue-collar ideological legacy still looms large over current populist political culture despite its short-lived political existence. The pop-

ulist lineage of the United States harks back to the Jackson presidency (1829-1837), when former militia leader Andrew Jackson was elected on a platform of opposition to the financial and banking aristocracy of New England. His trademark move was vetoing the recharter of the Bank of the United States in 1832, on the grounds the Bank was an instrument in the hands of an affluent elite (and more specifically of a foreign elite, as rich European investors heavily supported the Bank), estranged from the interest of the American nation and its people. The so-called Bank War waged by Jackson also had a distinct nativist bent:

If we must have a bank with private stockholders, every consideration of sound policy and every impulse of American feeling admonishes that it should be purely American. Its stockholders should be composed exclusively of our own citizens [...] <sup>14</sup>

Early on, American populism had thus operated the junction with nationalism and anti-foreign sentiments, which were to remain leitmotifs in later populist outgrowths, from the anti-catholic Know-Nothing Party or anti-Chinese Workingman's Party of the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century presidential bids of third party candidates such as George Wallace <sup>15</sup>.

Another salient feature of American populism was its proletarian tropism and the heavy emphasis it laid on social issues. Therefore, while its nationalist, anti-foreign and frequently racist undertones were rather right-leaning, its social preoccupation anchored it firmly in a left-wing political culture. The People's Party, who officially introduced the term populism to the American political lexicon, articulated a markedly left-leaning critique of the capitalist practices of the late 19th century America. While not *stricto sensu* "socialist" (the farmers were essentially small-scale entrepreneurs, very fondly attached to private property and that would have been appalled by the marxist calls to eradicate it), The People's Party platform integrated radical demands such as the nationalization of railroads, telegraph lines or natural resources, progressive income taxation, direct legislation through the means of public referenda, and even the expropriation of "all lands now held by railroads and other corporations in excess of their actual needs <sup>16</sup>". For the observer more familiar to the Tea Party-style anti-statalist populism, such readiness to entrust the federal government with ample swaths of the economy and social life is certainly bewildering. But the populist ideological lineage is rarely pure, excelling in hybridisations of disparate intellectual traditions. At its core, populism is an ideological collage.

Though this balancing act allowed populism to eschew being totally digested and "domesticated" by the Democrat-Republican dichotomy, one cannot fully grasp the particular nature of American populism outside the framework of the political and cultural bipolarism governing American political life. In Europe, populism rose as a damning indictment of traditional parties and developed and matured, both ideologically and organizationally, outside the confines of the political system: France's Front National was chastising since the early 1980s, through different formulas – "the gang of Four <sup>17</sup>" (for the then-four dominant parties in the French Assembly), the "UMPS <sup>18</sup>" (from the acronyms of the two main parties, center-right UMP and centre-left PS), the "LRPS <sup>19</sup>" (updated to reflect the new acronym of the party Les Républicains, formerly UMP) – what they condemned as the monolithic political bloc of the "establishment", regardless of each party's placement on the left-right divide, a divide whose very relevance they often empathically contest <sup>20</sup>. In the UK, the UKIP and the Brexit Party campaigned forcefully against the *first-past-the-post system*, alleging its propensity to favor large, established parties <sup>21</sup>. Indeed, despite sharing an ideational platform with the Conserva-

tive on key elements, Britain's populists remained hopelessly insulated at the fringes of the system, cut off from the political mainstream by their etiolated coalition potential<sup>22</sup>. In short, European populism largely nested in the mounting societal contempt and the disillusionment against the main parties, and expressed itself politically as a desire to eradicate them and the traditional narratives of conflict ( e.g., the left-right cleavage) attached to them<sup>23</sup>. In the United States, populism more often than not fused with Republican or Democrat political cultures, re-infusing them with radicalism.

The winning formula was not the boisterous, Wallace-style, third-party presidential bids, but rather the Tea Party-like silent infiltration of mainstream conservatism. If Donald Trump had adopted the former rather than the latter, one might contend that "trumpism" as a doctrine would never have taken roots. The key to the understanding of the Trump populist moment lies in the complex dynamics of ideological fluxes between mainstream Republicanism and more heterodox traditions of thought in search of a political vehicle.

## The Trump formula, the alt-right and the G.O.P.

It is increasingly clear that the fault lines of pro-Trump versus anti-Trump have largely realigned with the traditional Republican-Democrat partisan rift, as the impeachment support trackers have consistently shown. Polls aggregators highlighted a consistently robust support for the removal of Donald Trump from office on the part of Democrat-identifying respondents. The numbers varied between roughly 71% in September when the House Speaker, Nancy Pelosi, announced the impeachment inquiry, and 87% in mid-January, following the beginning of the Senate trial and new revelations in the Ukraine scandal. Only 12% of Republican-leaning respondents, on the other hand, supported impeachment. The numbers of self-identifying Republicans drop even lower, to only 8%, when the question is framed as support for the removal of Donald Trump from office (see figure 1)<sup>24</sup>.

Make no mistake, the Republican base's renewed support for Donald Trump – its approval rates consistently hovering around the high 80% range<sup>25</sup> – is the major shaping force at play in the shift from the early anti-systemic trumpism to "White House trumpism". As it moved from the periphery of the political system (and implicitly from the fringes of the G.O.P.) to its beating heart, trumpism morphed in more than one respect, although it never diluted fully into mainstream conservatism. Although Trump matured politically in an ideological space forcefully marked with the seal of law-and-order conservatism – as it transpires from his infamous "*Bring back the death punishment. Bring back our police*" political ad run in New York's newspaper in April 1989<sup>26</sup> – his personal footing was always uncertain and ambiguous. Suffice is to say Trump was never a long-standing member of the Republican Party: in the 2000 he was a registered member of The Reform Party, on which behalf we considered running for president in 2000, then a Democrat, before finally joining back the Grand Old Party in 2012<sup>27</sup>. Nor was he markedly right-wing: when in 2000 the "paleoconservative" Pat Buchanan announced his presidential bid on behalf of the Reform Party (thus directly challenging Trump), Trump lambasted him for his far-right platform and his alleged racism, anti-semitism and homophobia:

He's a Hitler lover. I guess he's an anti-Semite. He doesn't like the blacks, he doesn't like the gays. It's just incredible that anybody could embrace this guy. And maybe he'll get four or five percent of the vote, and it'll be a really staunch right wacko vote. I'm not even sure if it's right. It's just a wacko vote.<sup>28</sup>

If Donald Trump's positioning along the traditional left-right continuum was blurry, his political identity crystallized around an anti-establishment and anti-politician rhetoric. Trump's cowboyish, alpha entrepreneur persona supplied the ideological scaffolding of trumpism, the doctrine hardening around two main pillars: the conviction that a non-politician with ample experience of the workings of the "real world" could outperform in government any "stale professional politician"<sup>29</sup> ("I believe non-politicians represent the wave of the future [...] he wrote in a piece published in the Wall Street Journal in 1999<sup>30</sup>) and the sacredness of the original American Dream. His own success story was interwreathed with the foundational American narrative of the pioneer and the self-made man to forge a political brand with an evident broad, cross-class and cross-party appeal:

Here is the bottom line: any politician that won't face the future head on is putting the American Dream at risk. The Dream made it the best country in history. It's the dream the father and my mother dreamed, the one they made come true for my family. It's the one that took me to the top. When you mess with the American Dream, you're on the fighting side of Donald Trump<sup>31</sup>.

A strong populist undercurrent pervades the trumpian political imaginary: the rejection of the establishment, of professional politicians and of the traditional political game was manifestly the ideological anchor of Trump's identity<sup>32</sup>. Early trumpian populism was initially distinctly wary of attaching itself to the Left or the Right, harshly chestizing the alienating polarization of American politics:

I am considering a run only because I am convinced the major parties have lost their way. The Republicans are captives of their right wing. The Democrats are captives of their left wing. I don't hear anyone speaking for the working men and women in the center.

In this respect, early trumpism resembles other forms of inchoate, centrist populisms, even drawing on some of the traits of the catch-all model sketched by Otto Kirchheimer<sup>33</sup>; it was not dissimilar, at least in the general philosophy of its approach to politics, from campaign macronism. Both nurtured to an extent a palingenetic but pragmatic approach in terms of policy, and a distrust of the "old politics" and professional politicians, while emphasis the persona of a dynamic, outsider leader active in the "real economy".

But trumpism rapidly evolved under the pressure of an apparently inexorable right-bound tropism, metabolizing in the process nationalism (oriented outwards, towards foes like China or Iran) and nativism (oriented inwards against illegal immigrants or minorities) and fitting them into his palingenetic "Make America Great Again" narrative. The word "conservative" entered Donald Trump's lexicon. At the 2015 Conservative Political Action Conference, Trump fawned over his audience with this very term: "You're my kind of people. You're conservative. You work. You love your country. It's very simple<sup>34</sup>". As the fault line of a new, more bellicose trumpism came into focus, so did its synergy with Republican political culture. Michael J. Lee called trumpism a "performance of conservative", staged for a conservative audience<sup>35</sup>.

Nevertheless, Trump's strategy was distinct. The resentment he exploited were rooted in three different but overlapping dynamics. The first was socio-economic: the social costs of the tertiarization of the economy, accelerated by globalization and free trade agreements, was disproportionately absorbed by the rural, small-town or peri-urban working class; the second one was securitarian, with a heavy emphasis on the islamic terrorist menace; the third one, and pos-

sibly the most important, was cultural<sup>36</sup>. Rancor against elites was articulated into an increasing exasperation with what was perceived as their foremost cultural code: political correctness. Political correctness became the hallmark of the political and cultural alterity of elites, whether it was media, intellectuals or professional politicians. A study sampling 8000 individuals indeed highlighted that income and education largely predict relative support for political correctness, much more than age and race. For example, while 87% who have never attended college think that political correctness has grown to be a problem, only 66% of those with a postgraduate degree share that sentiment<sup>37</sup>. Trump's persona rowdily magnetized this diffuse resentment by posturing as the perfect antithesis of the politically correct politician type, participating also in a redefinition of straight-shooting, "common sense", blue-collar Americanism:

Our great first lady always says: 'Don't use certain words, please'. And I say: 'But the audience wants me to do it.' [...] If you tell a joke, if you are sarcastic, if you have fun with an audience [...] That's where we are, folks, that's where we are: we are in the swamp of Washington DC.<sup>38</sup>

The notion of free speech is a central ideologeme of American conservatism, steeped in two of its most potent and mobilizing mythologies: anti-totalitarianism and anti-statism. The "anti-PC culture" discourse, carefully choreographed as a fight against control of speech, strongly resonated with the conservative imaginary. But it crucially also made the junction with a populist undercurrent, as it clearly designated the enemy – "woke" liberal elites, the establishment, mainstream media, insulated progressive intellectuals and activists – and pitted it against the "silent majority"<sup>39</sup>. This synthesis of populist and conservative tropes not only proved electorally fruitful but also succeeded in bridging ideologically the rifts of a divided right-wing political culture, from mainstream liberal-conservatives attached to the sacredness of the First Amendment to fringe alt-right groupuscules.

## **Conclusions: populism and the challenge to liberal democracy**

Donald Trump won much to the surprise of most observers and political pundits. With the 2016 electoral battle set to go down as an indelible milestone of American political history, much like Andrew Jackson's 1829 or Ronald Reagan's 1980 election, the "Trump moment" begged the question of what new America will emerge from it. It was indeed in many respects a premiere in recent history, which had seen numerous populist surges both inside and outside the big tent of Republicanism but had never actually witnessed the institutionalization of a populist administration at the federal echelon.

To open the conversation about the impact of the Trump presidency on democratic processes is, first and foremost, to engage in a debate on the consequence of populism on the structure of liberal democracy. We will first review the ever-growing literature trying to articulate the intimate yet uneasy kinship between populism and democracy, before trying to narrow our focus and specifically apply these considerations to the United States context, who exhibits both some paradigmatic traits and some remarkable idiosyncrasies.

Dissecting 19th century bonapartism, one of the earliest political experience of populism, Pierre Rosanvallon extracts a common philosophical matrix of democracy and authoritarian

populism: the principle of the sovereignty of the people. Rosanvallon very pertinently emphasize the fact that the philosophical distance is far greater between bonapartism and monarchical absolutism than it is between the former and democracy. However, the ideological nucleus of populism lies in the triple framework forged to define and organise democratic expression: a philosophy of representation emphasizing direct and non-mediated consultation instruments, such as referenda; a entrenched distrust of intermediate bodies, such as parties, syndicates or associations (already forcefully denounced by Rousseau), seen as parasitizing the will of the people; and a belief that democratic will must be incarnated into the person of a charismatic leader. Illiberal democracy, posits Rosanvallon, is founded on the interaction and synergy of a central politico-philosophical “couple”: the *Man-people* (l’Homme-peuple) and the *People-as-One* (Peuple-Un). This quasi-ontological merging of the figure of the leader (“The Emperor is not a man, he is a people”, declared Arthur de la Guéronnière, one of Napoleon the III closest advisor) and the people defines the very essence of populism<sup>40</sup>. The conception of representation as modus of monolithic embodiment exploits one of democracy’s major aporia, by decoupling liberalism and democracy *per se*.

The idea of a widening fracture of liberalism and democracy – the essences of which are, respectively, the rule of law and the popular will – permeates populism studies, and it often singled out as a root cause of the current ideological turbulences. In *The People vs Democracy*, Yascha Mounk stresses the rise of two deficient political formulas derived from the same democratic matrix: “rights without democracy” (the undemocratic liberalism generated by the overreach of unelected technocratic institutions such as independent agencies, courts and state bureaucracies) and “democracy without rights” (authoritarian and plebiscitarian populist regimes). In Mounk’s account, populism is simultaneously the symptom and the cause of the present period of democratic stress: like a bout of fever, it indicates an ailment metastasizing in the deep structures of the democratic organism<sup>41</sup>.

Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau also affirm the decoherence of the liberal democracy canon. Unlike Mounk, however, they see in populism a salutary demotic political proposition that is fundamental to the establishing *radical democracy*. Laclau and Mouffe oppose this model of permanent conflict (for but also crucially *against* power) to liberal democracy’s model of enforced and obsolete “centrist” consensus. Populism, through its acceptance of antagonism, is thought as a carrier of essential nutrients for democracy<sup>42</sup>. Mouffe in particular calls therefore for an extension of populist strategy to left-wing parties and mouvement<sup>43</sup>.

A more balanced and exhaustive approach is developed by Cas Mudde and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser, who argue that populism can be both a corrective and a threat to democracies. One might view populism as a product of the very existence of democracy. Since the latter is based on the periodic free and fair elections, it provides mechanisms by which the people can channel their dissatisfaction with the political system. The competitive nature of politics in democracies – whether they are liberal or not – fuels and sharpens antagonism: populism is fundamentally a particularly virulent form of social and political dissension, falling on the far end of a continuum of democratic contention that is naturally occurring in any open society. When populism is seen as a corrective to the quality of democracy, emphasis is mostly put on the inclusion of marginalized groups and the extension of political participation to “apathetic” or “disenchanted” sectors of the electorate traditionally unresponsive to mainstream discourse. It can also increase democratic accountability by re-incorporating into the political realm issues and policies (such as environment, trade, economy or asylum rights) that had been anteriorly technocratized and depoliticized. However, the authors also stress the negative effects of

populism on democratic quality, ranging from the weakening of the checks and balances of constitutional government to the exacerbation of ideological polarization and the circumventing of minority rights<sup>44</sup>.

In the American context, the term populism long benefited from a positive bias (see John D. Hicks<sup>45</sup> or Henry Olsen<sup>46</sup>), but Trump's victory shattered the consensus of the benign, or even rejuvenating, nature of populism. Despite a history of democratic resilience, Trump's presidency is rarely depicted as a normal-politics challenge to a settled liberal policy order. The commentary focuses on two key areas: the race-laden undertones of Trump's rhetoric<sup>47</sup>, and the nepotism and corruption allegations<sup>48</sup> that coalesced into a historic impeachment trial in 2020. Other aspects are also worth taking into consideration, however, such as its relentless derision and attacks on non-affiliated media and the hyperpolarization of political life as an electoral strategy. However, the American case is singular because of the entrenched nature of the Constitution, which means that unlike strongmen like Orban or Erdogan, Donald Trump operates in a political framework that largely is out of his reach. Trumpism is therefore contingently conservative – and thus less likely to trigger significant regime stress – because it is tributary to a political culture fundamentally averse to any institutional design change not cautioned by tradition.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See for example “The rot at the heart of American democracy”, *Vox*, 4th of November 2019, retrieved from <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/11/4/20898605/america-democracy-populism-republicans-daniel-ziblatt>; “How democracy dies, American-style”, *The New York Times*, 9th of September 2019, retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/09/opinion/trump-democracy.html>; “Can American democracy survive a second Trump term?”, *The Washington Post*, 12th of November 2019, retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/11/11/can-american-democracy-survive-second-trump-term/>; “Trump's Reelection Could Spell the End of American Democracy”, *Truth Dig*, 17th of July 2019, retrieved from <https://www.truthdig.com/articles/trumps-reelection-could-spell-the-end-of-american-democracy/>; “Donald Trump's war against democracy: Is it already too late to save America?”, *Salon*, 31st of October 2019, retrieved from <https://www.salon.com/2019/10/31/donald-trumps-war-against-democracy-is-it-already-too-late-to-save-america/>; “Can the Constitution Survive Trump?”, *Democracy Journal*, 1st of September 2019, retrieved from <https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/54/can-the-constitution-survive-trump/>; “The Tyrannical Mr. Trump”, *Foreign Policy*, 2nd of October 2019, retrieved from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/02/the-tyrannical-mr-trump-authoritarian-impeachment-constitutional-crisis/>; “Another Way That American Democracy Might End”, *Verdict*, 26th of November 2019, retrieved from <https://verdict.justia.com/2019/11/26/another-way-that-american-democracy-might-end>.

<sup>2</sup> See Marc Crapez, *La gauche réactionnaire. Mythes de la plèbe et de la race dans le sillage des Lumières*, Berg International, Paris, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> See Sellers, Charles, *The Market Revolution. Jacksonian America 1815-1846*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1991.

<sup>4</sup> On the subject of the narodniki's “romantic” conception of the people, and more generally of the plethoric anarcho-revolutionary groups born out of the narodnik matrix, see Alain Besançon, *Les origines intellectuelles du léninisme*, Gallimard, Paris, 1977.

<sup>5</sup> See Pierre Rosanvallon, *La Démocratie Inachevée*, Gallimard, Paris, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> See Zeev Sternhell, *La droite révolutionnaire*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1978.

<sup>7</sup> Margaret Canovan, *Populism*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1981, p. 296.

<sup>8</sup> This overarching characteristics were roughly compiled from Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford University Press, London, 2017.

- <sup>9</sup> See Zeev Sternhell, *op. cit.*
- <sup>10</sup> See Kurt Weyland, “Neopopulism and Neoliberalism in Latin America: How Much Affinity?”, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 6 (December 2003), pp. 1095-1115.
- <sup>11</sup> See Giovanni Sartori, “Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics”, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (December 1970), pp. 1033-1053.
- <sup>12</sup> Isaiah Berlin, “To Define Populism”, *Government and Opposition*, vol. 3, no. 2 (Spring 1968), pp. 137-179.
- <sup>13</sup> Cas Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist”, *Government and Opposition*, vol. 39, no. 4 (Spring 2004), pp. 541-563.
- <sup>14</sup> “President Jackson’s Veto Message to the Senate Regarding the Bank of the United States; July 10, 1832”, *The Avalon Project. Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, retrieved from [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/ajveto01.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/ajveto01.asp).
- <sup>15</sup> See Dan LaBotz, *Le nouveau populisme américain*, Editions Syllepse, Paris, 2018.
- <sup>16</sup> “Populist Party Platform July 4 1892”, *Digital History*, retrieved from [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=4067](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=4067).
- <sup>17</sup> “Jean Marie Le Pen, ‘un apartheid politique’ et ‘la bande des quatre’. Réponse Stoléru sur l’immigration clandestine”, *Ina*, 5th of December 1989, retrieved from <https://www.ina.fr/video/I06338729>.
- <sup>18</sup> “Le Front national s’érige en seul adversaire de l’UMPS”, *Le Figaro*, 3rd of January 2015, retrieved from <https://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/2015/02/03/01002-20150203ARTFIG00423-le-front-national-s-erige-e-n-seul-adversaire-de-l-umps.php>.
- <sup>19</sup> Florian Philippot (f\_philippot), “Bienvenue à l’RPS ! Ça gratte ça démange c’est mauvais pour la France. #Herpès” [Twitter post], *Twitter*, 30th of May 2015, retrieved from [https://twitter.com/f\\_philippot/status/604603459283886080](https://twitter.com/f_philippot/status/604603459283886080).
- <sup>20</sup> See Marta Lorimer, “Ni droite, Ni gauche, Français! Far right populism and the future of Left/Right politics”, in Lise Esther Herman and James Muldoon (eds.), *Trumping the Mainstream. The Conquest of Democratic Politics by the Populist Radical Right*, Routledge, London, 2015.
- <sup>21</sup> See “Nigel Farage attacks ‘bankrupt’ electoral system that saw 4m voters elect 1 Ukip MP”, *The Telegraph*, 8th of May 2015, retrieved from <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/nigel-farage/11593312/nigel-farage-attacks-electoral-system-after-election.html>.
- <sup>22</sup> See “Brexit: Nigel Farage election pact proposal rejected by No 10”, *BBC News*, 11th of November 2019, retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-49665789>.
- <sup>23</sup> See Alain de Benoist’s quite unambiguously-titled *Le moment populiste: gauche-droite, c’est fini*, Pierre Guillaume de Roux, Paris, 2017.
- <sup>24</sup> “Do Americans Support Removing Trump From Office?”, *FiveThirtyEight*, 16th of January 2020, retrieved from <https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/impeachment-polls>.
- <sup>25</sup> “Trump Approval Inches Up, While Support for Impeachment Dips”, *Gallup*, 18th of December 2019, retrieved from [https://news.gallup.com/poll/271691/trump-approval-inches-support-impeachment-dips.aspx?utm\\_source=alert&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=morelink&utm\\_campaign=syndication](https://news.gallup.com/poll/271691/trump-approval-inches-support-impeachment-dips.aspx?utm_source=alert&utm_medium=email&utm_content=morelink&utm_campaign=syndication).
- <sup>26</sup> See “They admitted their guilt: 30 years of Trump’s comments about the Central Park Five”, *USA Today*, 20th of January 2019, retrieved from <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2019/06/19/what-trump-has-said-central-park-five/1501321001/>.
- <sup>27</sup> See “Bush says Trump was a Democrat longer than a Republican in the last decade”, *Politifact*, 24th of August 2015, retrieved from <https://www.politifact.com/florida/statements/2015/aug/24/jeb-bush/bush-says-trump-was-democrat-longer-republican-las/>.
- <sup>28</sup> Steve Kornacki, “When Trump ran against Trump-ism: The 1990s and the birth of political tribalism in America”, *NBC News*, 2nd of October 2018, retrieved from <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/when-trump-ran-against-trump-ism-story-2000-election-ncna915651>.
- <sup>29</sup> Donald J. Trump, *The America we Deserve*, Renaissance Books, Los Angeles, 2000, p. 5.
- <sup>30</sup> Donald J. Trump, “America Needs A President Like Me”, *The Wall Street Journal*, 30th of September 1999, retrieved <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB938645589464803190>.
- <sup>31</sup> Donald J. Trump, *The America we Deserve, op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> See for example on this topic Andrea Schneider, “Telling the Story of the Superhero and the Anti-Politician as President: Donald Trump’s Branding on Twitter”, *Political Studies Review*, vol. 17, issue 3 (August 2019), pp. 210-223.

<sup>33</sup> Otto Kirchheimer, “The Transformation of Western European Political Parties”, in Myron Weiner and Joseph Lapalombara (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966.

<sup>34</sup> “Trump’s Remarks at CPAC”, *C-SPAN*, 27th of February 2015, retrieved from <https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4529579/donald-trump-remarks-cpac-2015>.

<sup>35</sup> Michael J. Lee, “Considering Political Identity: Conservatives, Republicans, and Donald Trump”, *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Winter 2017), p. 726.

<sup>36</sup> See on this topic John L. Campbell, *American Discontent: The rise of Donald Trump and the decline of the Golden Age*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2018.

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Hawkins, Daniel Yudkin, Miriam Juan-Torres and Tim Dixon, “Hidden Tribes: A Study of America’s Polarized Landscape”, *More in Common Foundation*, 2018, retrieved from [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a70a7c3010027736a22740f/t/5bbcea6b7817f7bf7342b718/1539107467397/hidden\\_tribes\\_report-2.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a70a7c3010027736a22740f/t/5bbcea6b7817f7bf7342b718/1539107467397/hidden_tribes_report-2.pdf).

<sup>38</sup> “President Trump speaks at CPAC 2019”, *YouTube*, 2nd of March 2019, retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n\\_PT6fZtslo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_PT6fZtslo).

<sup>39</sup> See on this topic Valerie Scatamburlo-D’Annibale, “The Culture Wars Reloaded: Trump, Anti-Political Correctness and the Right’s Free Speech Hypocrisy”, *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1 (April 2019), pp. 69-119.

<sup>40</sup> See Pierre Rosanvallon, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-238.

<sup>41</sup> Yascha Mounk, *The People vs. Democracy*, Harvard University Press, New York, 2019.

<sup>42</sup> See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony And Socialist Strategy: Towards A Radical Democratic Politics*, Verso, New York, 2014.

<sup>43</sup> Chantal Mouffe, *Pour un populisme de gauche*, Albin Michel, Paris, 2018.

<sup>44</sup> See Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, “Populism and (liberal) democracy: a framework for analysis”, in Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (eds.), *Populism in Europe and the Americas. Threat or Corrective for Democracy?*, Cambridge University Press, London, 2012.

<sup>45</sup> John D. Hicks, *Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers’ Alliance and the People’s Party*, University Of Minnesota Press, Minnesota, 1931.

<sup>46</sup> Henry Olsen, “Populism, American-style”, *National Affairs*, no. 4 (Winter 2010), retrieved from <https://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/populism-american-style>.

<sup>47</sup> “Trump’s grotesque racism matters”, *The Washington Post*, 22nd of October 2019, retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/10/22/trumps-grotesque-racism-matters/>.

<sup>48</sup> “Nepotism and corruption: the handmaidens of Trump’s presidency”, *The Guardian*, 6th of March 2018, retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/06/nepotism-corruption-handmaidens-trump-presidency>.

## References

Crapez, Marc, *La gauche réactionnaire. Mythes de la plèbe et de la race dans le sillage des Lumières*, Berg International, Paris, 1997.

Sellers, Charles, *The Market Revolution. Jacksonian America 1815–1846*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1991.

Besançon, Alain, *Les origines intellectuelles du léninisme*, Gallimard, Paris, 1977.

Rosanvallon, Pierre, *La Démocratie Inachevée*, Gallimard, Paris, 2000.

Sternhell, Zeev, *La droite révolutionnaire*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1978.

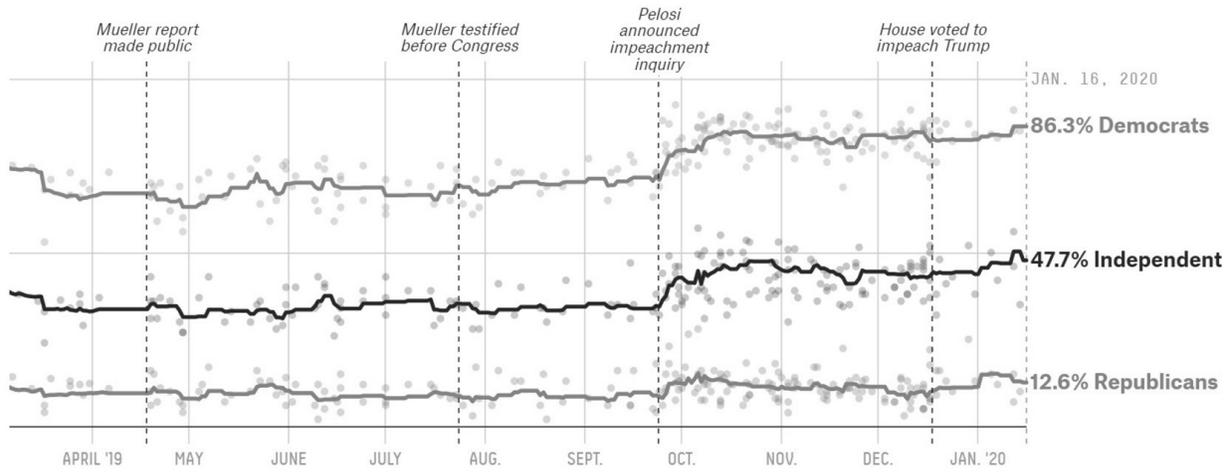
Canovan, Margaret, *Populism*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1981.

Kaltwasser, Cristóbal Rovira, Taggart, Paul, Ochoa Espejo, Paulina and Ostiguy, Pierre (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford University Press, London, 2017.

- Weyland, Kurt, "Neopopulism and Neoliberalism in Latin America: How Much Affinity?", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 6 (December 2003).
- Sartori, Giovanni, "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics", *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (December 1970).
- Berlin, Isaiah, "To Define Populism", *Government and Opposition*, vol. 3, no. 2 (Spring 1968).
- Mudde, Cas, "The Populist Zeitgeist", *Government and Opposition*, vol. 39, no. 4 (Spring 2004).
- LaBotz, Dan, *Le nouveau populisme américain*, Editions Syllepse, Paris, 2018.
- Lorimer, Marta, "Ni droite, Ni gauche, Français! Far right populism and the future of Left/Right politics", in Lise Esther Herman and James Muldoon (eds.), *Trumping the Mainstream. The Conquest of Democratic Politics by the Populist Radical Right*, Routledge, London, 2015.
- Schneiker, Andrea, "Telling the Story of the Superhero and the Anti-Politician as President: Donald Trump's Branding on Twitter", *Political Studies Review*, vol. 17, issue 3 (August 2019), pp. 210-223.
- Kirchheimer, Otto, "The Transformation of Western European Political Parties", in Myron Weiner and Joseph LaPalombara (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966.
- Lee, Michael J., "Considering Political Identity: Conservatives, Republicans, and Donald Trump", *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Winter 2017), p. 726.
- Campbell, John L., *American Discontent: The rise of Donald Trump and the decline of the Golden Age*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2018.
- Scatamburlo-D'Annibale, Valerie, "The Culture Wars Reloaded: Trump, Anti-Political Correctness and the Right's Free Speech Hypocrisy", *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1 (April 2019), pp. 69-119.
- Mouk, Yascha, *The People vs. Democracy*, Harvard University Press, New York, 2019.
- Laclau, Ernesto and Mouffe, Chantal, *Hegemony And Socialist Strategy: Towards A Radical Democratic Politics*, Verso, New York, 2014.
- Mouffe, Chantal, *Pour un populisme de gauche*, Albin Michel, Paris, 2018.
- Mudde, Cas and Kaltwasser, Cristóbal Rovira, "Populism and (liberal) democracy: a framework for analysis", in Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (eds.), *Populism in Europe and the Americas. Threat or Corrective for Democracy?*, Cambridge University Press, London, 2012.
- Hicks, John D., *Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party*, University Of Minnesota Press, Minnesota, 1931.
- Olsen, Henry, "Populism, American-style", *National Affairs*, no. 4 (Winter 2010), retrieved from <https://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/populism-american-style>.

## Appendices

Figure 1. Support for impeachment by party affiliation



Source: <https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/impeachment-polls/>.