

## Institutions of Identity and the Liberal Democratic Dilemma

By Sara Wallace Goodman  
*University of California, Irvine*  
[s.goodman@uci.edu](mailto:s.goodman@uci.edu)

*Summary:* While liberal democratic states enact new, cultural policies to regulate the boundaries of citizenship, populist opponents target these very definitions of “the people” as an assault on ethnonational belonging. This memo argues contestation over the national ingroup is both the foundation and frailty of modern liberal democracies—at the same time a source of stability and democratic deconsolidation.

---

What does it mean to be British? Or French? Or American? Can national belonging be achieved by meeting arbitrary criteria, like duration of residence or location of birth? Or does it also include certain, oftentimes unspoken norms, laid out not by law but by culture, like standing during the Star-Spangled Banner or speaking English? *And, who gets to decide?* Governments? Courts? Citizens? The loudest among us? Or those with soft voices, but who get to whisper into the ear of political leaders?

Answering these two central questions—*Who are we?* and *Who decides?*—points to both the foundation and the fragility of modern liberal democracies. “We” is an ingroup, defined by a series of rules and practices that determines who has status, i.e., citizenship, and who belongs, i.e., membership. Recognizing that status and belonging are not inherently coterminous and that—in fact—they often do not overlap allows us to unlock how definitions of the ingroup can be contested. For example, a central debate is over who claims to represent the “we” group. In developed democracies, the obvious, authoritative voice is the state, which uses citizenship rules, immigration and immigrant integration policies to determine who is in (and what that looks like) and who is out. And, after decades of immigrant settlement and demographic change, the state has become particularly active in defining national identity and the characteristics of the national ingroup.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, populists and their supporters also claim to represent the “we” group. By definition, populists claim to speak on behalf of the people—the *populus*. Acting on behalf of the “general will” of the “pure people” (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017), populist politicians represent the interests of those they view as the “legitimate” ingroup, excluding those that have been “othered.” This conflict between state actors and populists over defining the “we” group is not new, but until recently, we would have characterized populists as marginal figures in national politics. Today, populists are central agenda-setters on the national level—both in and out of government—and their political strength reflects a larger, global anti-liberal tide.

This memo places this debate over who defines “the people” at the very heart of the liberal crisis. The central argument is that the exact thing that states do to sustain liberal democracy—use institutions of identity to define membership and balance the peaks and valleys of immigration—inevitably is also the thing that makes them a populist target. The maintenance

---

<sup>1</sup> Citizenship laws remained largely unchanged in the postwar period until the 1990s, at which point liberalization became a common feature of most Western European states (Howard 2009, Goodman 2010b).

and contestation of the national ingroup is both a core feature of liberal democracy and, simultaneously, its source of vulnerability. Because of this, state actors cannot ‘beat’ populists at their own game by defeating ‘bad ideas’ with inclusive framing or membership benefits. This is because *populists target the very thing liberals do to stay liberal*, i.e., the preservation of pluralism through inclusive nationalism. Nor can democratic states regulate populists out of politics, because authoritarian and anti-elite parties continue to use democratic channels to gain popular support. Instead, the strategy of liberals on both the left and right remains to repeatedly beat populists at the ballot box<sup>2</sup>, in the hopes it might invigorate citizen faith in the democratic process, representation, and ultimately the promise of a liberal democratic national ingroup. Short of this, populists will only continue to sow the seeds of liberal democratic decline.

## Defining the Community

Scholars have pointed to nearly every corner of the liberal democratic state today to sound the alarm of crisis. One group of accounts center on the authoritarian and populist actors that push against democratic rules and practices (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018, Inglehart and Norris 2017). This includes a focus on how populists actively cultivate a hostility toward elites that motivates voters to choose them (Moffitt 2016, Rooduijn 2014), as well as a disregard for democratic norms that leads to the inevitable erosion of those institutions (Howe 2017). Both agentic and structural explanations observe the declining popular support for key institutions of liberal democracy and rising levels of institutional distrust (Citrin and Stoker 2018), and generic rise of anti-immigrant attitudes in both Europe (Ford and Goodwin 2014) and the US (Hooghe and Dassonneville 2018).<sup>3</sup> But part and parcel to these processes is not only how citizens understand their relationship to government and regime values, but also their relationship to one another. In other words, we cannot understand how the ingroup defines and participates in vertical (elites, government) and horizontal (outsiders, immigrants) conflict without looking first to how the ingroup *qua* national group is constructed, by whom, and why.<sup>4</sup>

Almost every subfield of political science recognizes the imperative of establishing coherent boundaries around the national political community. Of course, group identity as nationalism is central to understanding the modern state itself; ideas of who “we” are gets defined and replicated in myriad interactions, from the influence of religious institutions (Grzymała-Busse 2015) to the construction of the national calendar (Zerubavel 1995). From a functional perspective, the state additionally needs to create political boundaries for administrative purposes. National coherence is necessary for the distribution of goods, taxation, registering the population, etc. In this, the needs of demarcating an ingroup for democracies are similar to more generic, administrative needs of the state (Torpey 2000). But the democratic state also requires, at minimum, consensus about who is empowered to participate in politics.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Populists often play an influential role in politics when they are outside of government, as agenda-setters or in realigning rightist parties. A recent example is Sweden’s harsh stance on asylum seekers (enacted by a left government that defeated populists at the polls), but long-running examples include France and the Netherlands.

<sup>3</sup> There are other explanations still. For example, Matthijs (2017) points to euro membership as incompatible with democratic principles for periphery states.

<sup>4</sup> Not in an IR theoretical sense, but in a literal sense, through laws. It is also consistent with social identity theory (Tajfel et al. 1971).

<sup>5</sup> For example, Rustow (1970) argues that national unity is the sole prerequisite for democratic transition.

Establishing boundaries around an ingroup creates a linkage of legitimacy between what the state is doing and what people want and need; it establishes criteria and norms of representation, channels for participation, as well a foundation for legitimate lawmaking.

In democracy, this group is traditionally shaped by establishing and conferring citizenship, from Aristotle's (1984, 1247b) ideals of the city-state ("the state is a compound made of citizens") to Dahl's (2008, 37-38) seminal, process-oriented criteria for democracy ("all, or at any rate, most, adult permanent residents should have the full rights of citizens"). Brubaker (1992) necessarily views this act of citizenship conferring as an "instrument and object of social closure," whereby it is "internally inclusive" and therefore "externally exclusive."

Finally, the liberal democratic state rests on the liberal imperative of pluralism, buttressed by the principles of tolerance and equality (and, in principle, state neutrality to cultural difference). Encompassed in these tenets are all the specific rights that the members of the national group are granted: human rights, civil liberties, freedom of speech and assembly, access to a pluralistic media, and participation in free, fair, and competitive elections. Thus, a liberal democratic state needs a core ingroup not merely for administrative and legitimation needs, but to fulfill constitutive regime objectives.

Creating a national group is no easy task. Despite populist rhetoric, there is nothing entitative about national political communities.<sup>6</sup> War and decolonization are "easy" exogenous events that create national ingroups through "othering" (Colgan 2017). The deliberate creation and alteration of national identity is harder, however, especially during periods of peace or when there is no obvious "other." Of course, this is an endogenous problem: the imperative to make changes to institutions of identity may not seem necessary without a perceived threat from an outgroup. This is where immigration in the post-War period has shown to be consistently serviceable to national group-making. It is also where immigration presents an exceptional challenge, as it tests the elasticity of national belonging alongside other imperatives of state (e.g., economic growth, demographic decline). In fact, because an "axiological principle" of liberal democracy is preserving pluralism (Mouffe 2000, 19), recognizing different groups with different interests as legitimate, populist opponents are included in that vision, even if they reject it. In other words, liberal democracies are not merely accustomed to contestation, they *enable* it.<sup>7</sup>

It is a delicate tightrope walk for the liberal democratic state, to balance the needs and wants of its many constituents. On the one hand, it must be inclusive to allow for myriad immigrant-related and other types of diversity to have recognition and rights within the national political community. On the other hand, it also must strongly protect those boundaries, as the *well-defined* ingroup provides legitimacy for representative decision-making and policy.

---

<sup>6</sup> Even in the quintessential ethnocultural German case, Brubaker (1992) traces the instrumental choices made by Romantic elites to deliberate choose German ethnoculturalism as the founding script for the new state in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>7</sup> Rawls (2005) clearly argues that those that refuse the principles of liberalism should be excluded from 'reasonable pluralism,' though this does not change the fact that the state lacks little in the way of instruments to do so.

In balancing the often-dueling imperatives to both provide rights to immigrants and navigate particularistic cultural and national identities,<sup>8</sup> liberal democratic states confront two choices: they can either ignore immigration, creating political and resource-based asymmetries, or they can impute new standards for—or boundaries to—the national political community.<sup>9</sup> The former is not sustainable for liberal democracies (a point that courts have been proficient in asserting) or advanced industrialized economies, where labor market needs require workers beyond natural growth. The latter involves alterations to the concept of national belonging to allow it to include former outsiders. This is where populists always have an ‘in’; if national belonging is elastic, then any change moves away from “the people” and their interests. In short, the very thing that makes liberal democracies endure the challenges of diversity—test the malleability of the national community to encompass and promote tolerance and unity—is also the thing that make it vulnerable to populist assault.

### **State Alterations to the Institutions of Identity**

Having established *why* states need coherent ingroups—particularly liberal democratic states, this section briefly discusses *how* they do that. As mentioned, states primarily use citizenship to confer or withhold group membership. There are additional statuses and visas (e.g., permanent residence, indefinite leave to remain) that also offer quasi-membership in terms of providing access to residence, rights, and services, but do not connote full community membership. Since the 1990s, liberal democratic states have made it significantly easier to get citizenship, with few exceptions (Howard 2009, Goodman 2010b). By the mid-2000s, however, there were signposts that citizenship no longer denoted membership. Among these were postnational critiques concerning the validity of citizenship as both a source of identity and rights (Benhabib 2004), the decline of multiculturalism as an accommodation strategy (Entzinger 2003, Joppke 2004) alongside the perceived weakening of liberal democratic commitments. Case in point: where Tony Blair—after the 7/7 terrorist attack—described a state of passive, or “flabby liberalism,”<sup>10</sup> David Cameron would later describe Britain needing an active, “muscular liberalism.”<sup>11</sup> Both saw the problem as immigration—specifically Islamic extremism that challenged British way of life. Neither predicted a populist resurgence on the horizon.

In addressing the problem of weak or passive liberal commitments head on, states began to ask not only “Who is eligible?” to be a citizen but “What does citizenship *mean*?” To answer, governments in Britain and beyond—from both the left and right of the political spectrum—began to adopt new, cultural requirements for membership. Called civic integration, the idea was that “active and productive participation by immigrants in society and the labor market is possible through their acquiring a set of ‘citizen-like’, or civic, skills that include speaking the language of the host country, having knowledge of the country’s history, culture, and rules, and understanding and following the liberal-democratic values that underscore their new home”

---

<sup>8</sup> Habermas (1998: 115) refers to this as the “Janus face of the modern nation”, as states act in the name of universal principles but within the boundaries of particularistic national communities.

<sup>9</sup> As autocracies do not face any pressure to extend rights or recognition to immigrants, this choice is unique to liberal democratic states.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/education-35862598>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference>

(Goodman 2014, 1). In other words, the state uses naturalization (as well as settlement and immigration) to *explicitly* promote values like democracy, equality, and autonomy. These objectives are met and measured by participation in integration courses, language training, citizenship tests, oath ceremonies and pledges.<sup>12</sup> These policies have become ubiquitous across immigrant-receiving liberal democratic states, from Austria, the UK, Germany, and France to Australia.

Where the stated objective of these civic integration policies is to include immigrants by preparing them to participate ‘nationally’, the implication is that they then become part of society once these requirements are fulfilled. This is a testable proposition: whether an outsider who *naturalizes* is, indeed, perceived as ‘natural’, or at least indistinguishable from a native-born citizen. It is also an attempt to solve one of the most endemic problem of membership in liberal democracies: individuals may gain status but not feel that they belong (e.g., Muslim citizens of France) *or* individuals may feel like they belong but not have status (e.g., third-generation Turkish immigrants in Germany). Scholars have also pointed out how these neo-liberal integration schemes usually achieve the opposite of their stated goals by preventing integration of the worst-off migrants, who cannot afford to pay or take time of work to meet the arbitrarily high requirements of language and course attendance (Goodman 2014, van Oers 2013).

There are additional contradictions. Fundamentally, while philosophical liberalism espouses tolerance as a first-order principle, liberals cannot be tolerant of intolerance.<sup>13</sup> For immigrants, then, this means those from illiberal contexts are *not asked but required* to quickly assimilate their views (e.g., positions on women’s rights, same-sex marriage) to those of the majority (Goodman 2014, Orgad 2010, Triadafilopoulos 2011, Bauböck and Joppke 2010). It also assumes a context of reception that may be more illiberal than states care to acknowledge. In fact, one of the most surprising facets of the populist upsurge has been how sympathetic natives have proven to illiberal democracy and authoritarian ideas (Foa and Mounk 2017). Liberals do not have similar instruments at their disposal to address the illiberal attitudes of natives. The assumption has long been that socialization and education make natives into liberal democrats, in that there are no criteria for participation except aging into eligibility, but the recent electoral successes of patently illiberal parties suggests that liberal democracies cannot assume that natives are liberal democrats.<sup>14</sup>

In short, immigrants are asked to join an imagined community of liberal democrats, but the receiving society may not fully adhere to that standard. Pluralism allows and encourages that diversity. But the core contradiction is here: the liberal democratic state creates that inclusive

---

<sup>12</sup> These cultural requirements run orthogonal to access requirements (e.g., residence, renunciation of dual citizenship, etc.) in that they do not negate the latter, and you can have different constellations of policy design (e.g., permissive access rules but high cultural barriers or restrictive access rules and no cultural barriers) (Goodman 2010a).

<sup>13</sup> There are others. For example, requirements also seek to produce autonomous individuals, able to enjoy personal freedoms and labor market mobility, that, with few exceptions, is only realized through state paternalism. This is especially the case where welfare benefits and status acquisition is tied to markers of successful integration, like language proficiency and civic orientation (e.g., Germany).

<sup>14</sup> This signals a second crisis, not one of liberalism but one of meaningful citizenship. There is nothing amniotic about civic identity, so those that automatically acquire citizenship at birth require a substantive education. Currently, immigrants meet a higher bar than natives on this front.

nationalism but has little power to quell the illiberal voices that contradict it *from within*. It has a wide berth when it comes to controlling and conditioning illiberal views *from outsiders*, but little to say or do about contradictory ideologies from natives. It can try to defang and repudiate them, but it cannot expel them.

### **The Populist Revolt: Immigration and the Weak State**

As states were looking outward, to build up the borders of liberal democratic values at different stages of status acquisition, governments on the left and right were ill-prepared for challenges from within. Since the mid-2000s, far-right populist politicians have grown in visibility and support on a “membership counternarrative,” based not on pluralism and liberal values but “authentic” ethnonationalism. The particulars vary across cases. The United Kingdom Independence Party pushed the European Union Referendum (“Brexit”) around the messages of “gaining back control” from two interferences: Brussels elites and immigration. In Germany, the right-wing Alternative for *Germany, or AfD (Alternative für Deutschland)* is far warmer toward the European Union, but hostile not only to immigration but also to issues like marriage equality. Meanwhile, exclusivist, anti-immigrant far-right parties in France, Austria, Denmark, and the Netherlands exhibit traditional authoritarian attributes and issue positions and align with a broader populist transformation.<sup>15</sup> And, in case there were any doubt, the most explicit example comes from Hungarian nationalist leader Viktor Orban, who declared a successful replacement of liberal democracy with “Christian democracy.”<sup>16</sup>

Sometimes populists succeed in elections or in agenda-setting, and oftentimes they do not. Historically, states could just ignore the grumblings from the populist or fascist wings of their political spectrum. But they are unavoidable today, from the UK to Poland and the Czech Republic and everywhere in between. On the one hand, populists sometimes lose in elections but shift the terms of national political debate; Le Pen lost the French Presidential Election (2017) to Emmanuel Macron, but still posted a significant vote share at 33.9% (10.6 million votes). UKIP has only ever held 2 House of Commons seats, and yet managed to successfully commit a closely-divided nation to its *raison d'être*: Brexit. On the other hand, far-right populists can still “lose” an election but remain significant. The Dutch National Election (2017) was interpreted as a “win” for the democrats in that the populist Freedom Party did not come in first. But they came in second, with 13.1% of the national vote, resulting in the second most seats held in the Tweede Kamer (an increase in 5 seats from the 2012 election). In Austria, the Freedom Party did not “win” either, but as the third-largest party they are members of the governing coalition and hold key ministries, including security (which oversees migration). In Germany, the AfD did not “win” either (posting 13%), but it severely weakened Chancellor Merkel’s agenda and leadership.

A common sinew of populist far-right parties is their attack on institutions of identity through overt outgroup vilification, framed as an existential threat to ethnonationalism. French

---

<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting that while many of these parties are seen to be part of the Trump-led populist trend, all parties preceded Trump not only in formation and salience but also in electoral gains. A further example would be Denmark’s Danish People’s Party (DPP).

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.dw.com/en/viktor-orban-era-of-liberal-democracy-is-over/a-43732540>

National Front leader Marine Le Pen described French “civilization” as under threat because of immigration.<sup>17</sup> Geert Wilders, of the Dutch Freedom Party, ran on a campaign to “de-Islamize” the Netherlands, from accepting zero asylum seekers to closing mosques and banning the Koran, as a central tenant to making “The Netherlands Ours Again.”<sup>18</sup> The leader of Austria’s Freedom Party, Heinz-Christian Strache, has also made Austria’s “Islamification” the centerpiece of their recent electoral campaign. There are also explicit attempts to re-mythologize the past. Germany’s *AfD* politician Björn Höcke, in referencing Berlin’s Holocaust Memorial, argued Germany should make a “180 degree” turn regarding its sense of national pride, adding national identity as under further threat from the presence and accommodation of immigrants and refugees.<sup>19</sup>

While unpleasant, it is not the attacks on national belonging *per se* that makes populists a threat to liberal democracy. What makes these parties threatening is not the message, but the fact that they tie the hands of the state to respond. Unlike the institutional constraints faced by immigrants, there is no conditionality that can be leveraged against natives with regime-opposing beliefs. The crisis is thus: (1) far-right populist parties gain power and relevance in a context of immigration that is ripe for anti-democratic, entitlement claim-making, and (2) the state, as guardians of liberal democratic principles, has no effective instruments for fighting back. I’ll examine each in turn.

*Immigration context:* The bread-and-butter issue for populist parties on the right is immigration (much like income redistribution typifies parties on the left). Xenophobia is part and parcel to their messaging. A central insight from social psychology illustrates how building loyalty toward the ingroup on the part of individuals “can lead to hostile reactions toward other groups” (Druckman 1994, 44). Thus, the power of populists is in generating a shared, alternative vision of belonging that *necessarily* excludes others. That vision then can be easily weaponized to mobilize against an outgroup.

The contemporary political landscape offers fertile ground for xenophobic parties. While immigration has been a consistent feature of the post-WWII political landscape, current levels of public opinion present a ripe opportunity for populists to become popular. The following figure portrays immigration concerns across a sample of European countries, in asking respondents what issue they rank as among the “two most important issues facing (OUR COUNTRY) at the moment.”<sup>20</sup> Included in each mini-figure is national trend and EU average.

---

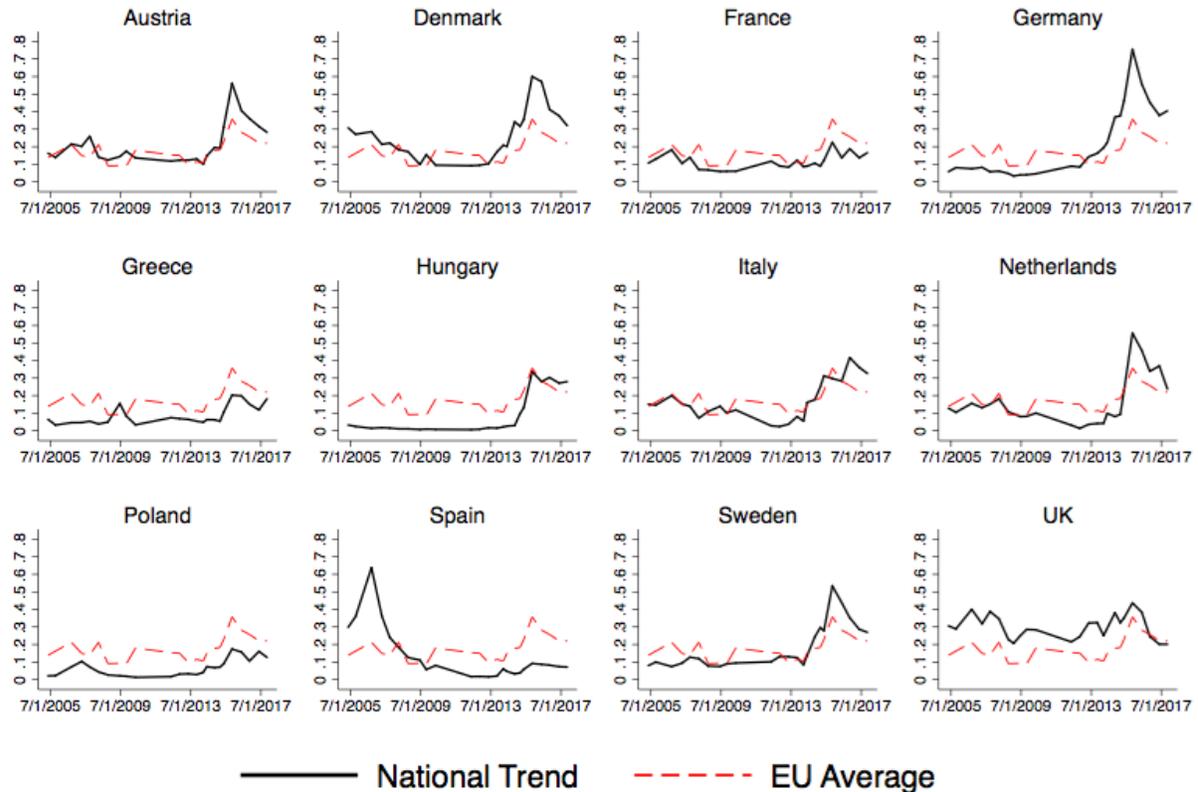
<sup>17</sup> “In France, we drink wine whenever we want. In France we do not force women to wear the veil because they are impure...In France, we get to decide who deserves to become French.” <https://www.ft.com/content/967daae-2412-11e7-8691-d5f7e0cd0a16>

<sup>18</sup> “Nederland Weer Van Ons!” See <https://www.pvv.nl/nederland-weer-van-ons.html> (accessed 24 May 2018)

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/interview-with-frauke-petry-of-the-alternative-for-germany-a-1084493.html>

<sup>20</sup> Public opinion data comes from Eurobarometer, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/index> (accessed 20 May 2018)

% ranking Immigration as among the "two most important issues facing (OUR COUNTRY) at the moment"



We see in almost every member state a noticeable spike in immigration concerns coinciding with the 2015 Refugee Crisis. With the exception of Spain,<sup>21</sup> each country has seen rising public concerns with immigration. Though, it is worth noting that, even at their lowest points, 10-20% of the population is still ranking immigration as a top concern. There has always been a latent constituency for anti-immigrant politics,<sup>22</sup> but it has only grown in time.

With populists seizing the opportunity of rising antipathy towards immigrants and fanning the flames further (Moffitt 2015), where does this leave the liberal democratic state? By some accounts, populists come to power because center-right parties have been unsuccessful in reducing and controlling immigration, creating a vacuum of opportunity. By other accounts, the working class has moved dramatically from left parties to populist parties (Betz 1994, Rydgren 2012), evidenced by the precipitous decline of Social Democratic parties across Western Europe.

<sup>21</sup> The Western Mediterranean crossing was the least active cross-point, thus minimizing a direct impact on Spain.

<sup>22</sup> Eurobarometer does not offer systematic data for years prior to 2005 on this question, but prior versions of Eurobarometer can shed light on public attitudes towards immigrants generally. For example, Eurobarometer 30 (1988, Table A24) asks a similar question, in which respondents "consider the importance" of eight different political issues (e.g., unemployment, the single market), of which immigration is not even listed. [http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb30/eb30\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb30/eb30_en.pdf) (accessed 29 May 2018). On a second question gauging whether respondent's feel non-EC migrants are good for the country, "four out of ten wants to "leave things as they are". Less than one in five favours a restriction of non-EC foreign residents' rights" (Eurobarometer 1988, 64).

Yet the problem is more endemic. It is not simply that the left and right abandoned key issues and constituencies; there is a deeper sickness to liberal democracy in which populism is but a symptom, not the disease. It had developed tools to fight off illiberal threats from outside, but not inside. By providing the policy tools through which to regularize immigrants, in turn, the liberal democratic state provides a convenient target for populists—who could correctly identify the state as complicit in shaping the political community.

*The Weak State:* By challenging the liberal democratic membership narrative, populist actors are also challenging the state’s authority to create a coherent and representative identity. In the context of immigration, the liberal democratic state needs to adjust the definition of the “we” group—to include different groups or rights over time. Yet, populists project national belonging as entitative; therefore, any change—even those of necessity to reflect changing pluralist needs and preserve democratic practice—is viewed as a deliberate distancing from that organic, ethnocultural core.

Political theorists have debated the question of tolerating intolerance for decades. A central insight from this literature for our purposes is David Miller’s distinction that “liberal states do not require their citizens to *believe* liberal principles...what they require is that citizens should conform to liberal principles in practice and accept as legitimate policies that are pursued in the name of such principles, while they are left free to advocate alternative arrangements” (Miller 2008). So herein lies the dilemma: what effective checks or instruments does the state have to mandate tolerance? For immigrants in the new citizenship regimes, there is *at least* a formal declaration of commitment to liberal democratic values.<sup>23</sup> There are also forms for naturalization and settlement that ask applicants if they have been members of illiberal political organizations (e.g., communist parties, in service to a fascist regime). And there are mandatory classes that expose immigrants to issues like intermarriage and homosexuality, as part of learning what is tolerable and legal practice in their new host society (and, conversely, what is not, e.g., honor killings). For natives, the only check is compliance with rule of law. Illiberal and undemocratic behavior is only sanctioned if it’s illegal.

All of these requirements set the bar higher for immigrants than natives. There is no civic education equivalent for the many natives who do not experience intergroup contact or tolerance cues, or may recognize alternative sources of legitimacy to liberal democratic law, like the Bible. While intolerance is one dimension of populist behavior, a more pernicious manifestation of intolerance is when illiberalism masquerades as tolerance. For example, a pillar of populist rhetoric is rejecting so-called “Muslim values,” not because they are religious but because they are anti-woman and homophobic.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> The gap between behavioral commitment and cognitive commitment is inevitably irreconcilable.

<sup>24</sup> The irony should not be lost that nativists are willing to exclude immigrants from the national polity for illiberal views when they, themselves, hold other illiberal positions. In this example, parties that decry Islam are often themselves sexist, hierarchical and anti-woman (e.g., Germany’s *Alternative für Deutschland*).

## Conclusion

Populism is not a problem in need of fixing; it is a symptom of discontent and a flaw in the design of liberal democratic institutions, wherein a system designed to sustain pluralism for a community has limited means to control the beliefs of those within that community. Those who seek to join it face meaningful obstacles; those already in it are insulated from much of the state's power.

Robust liberalism can accommodate continued immigration with strong definitions of achievable but also meaningful national standards for integration. But, we today observe how threats to the liberal order—particularly the successful rise of domestic populism—can upset this compromise by reframing inclusive nationalism not as a solution but as part of the problem.<sup>25</sup> If states want to continue to economically benefit from immigration while mitigating its social and cultural costs, they need to counterbalance that openness with the type of stability-signaling and legitimacy-bolstering policies of immigrant integration. Yet as I have argued, in this concession they may also be handing over a powerful tool to populists. Make identity too monocultural and narrow, and it either becomes rejected by the public at large or becomes ethnocultural, exposing immigrants, ethnic minorities, and other vulnerable populations to real harm. Make identity too multicultural, and it is subject to derision and populist capture. Make identity too thin, and it becomes nothing at all. Whether governments are able to navigate these dilemmas of policy design has direct implications for social cohesion, minority rights and recognition, immigrant accommodation and, the very fate of the liberal democratic state. The loss of national solidarity is a direct cause of democratic dysfunction and, ultimately, deconsolidation.

---

<sup>25</sup> This argues in the opposite direction to that of Slater and Tudor (2016), who posit inclusive nationalism is good for new and transitioning democracies.

## Works Cited

- Aristotle. 1984. *The Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bauböck, Rainer, and Christian Joppke, eds. 2010. *How liberal are citizenship tests?* Edited by EUDO Citizenship Observatory. Vol. 2010/41, *EUI Working Papers*. Florence, Italy: Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, EUI.
- Benhabib, Seyla. 2004. *The rights of others: Aliens, residents, and citizens*. Vol. 5: Cambridge University Press.
- Betz, Hans-Georg. 1994. *Radical right-wing populism in Western Europe*: Macmillan Basingstoke.
- Brubaker, Rogers. 1992. *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Citrin, Jack, and Laura Stoker. 2018. "Political Trust in a Cynical Age." *Annual Review of Political Science* (0).
- Dahl, Robert A. 2008. *On democracy*: Yale university press.
- Druckman, Daniel. 1994. "Nationalism, patriotism, and group loyalty: A social psychological perspective." *Mershon International Studies Review* 38 (Supplement\_1):43-68.
- Entzinger, Han. 2003. "The Rise and fall of Multiculturalism: The Case of the Netherlands." In *Toward assimilation and citizenship: immigrants in liberal nation-states*, edited by Christian Joppke and Ewa T. Morawska, 59-86. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Foa, Roberto Stefan, and Yascha Mounk. 2017. "The signs of deconsolidation." *Journal of Democracy* 28 (1):5-15.
- Ford, Robert, and Matthew J. Goodwin. 2014. *Revolt on the right: Explaining support for the radical right in Britain*: Routledge.
- Goodman, Sara Wallace. 2010a. "Integration Requirements for Integration's Sake? Identifying, Categorising and Comparing Civic Integration Policies." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36 (5):753-772.
- Goodman, Sara Wallace. 2010b. Naturalisation Policies in Europe: Exploring Patterns of Inclusion and Exclusion. In *EUDO Citizenship Comparative Reports*. Florence: EUDO Citizenship, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, EUI.
- Goodman, Sara Wallace. 2014. *Immigration and Membership Politics in Western European*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Grzymała-Busse, Anna. 2015. *Nations under God: How churches use moral authority to influence policy*: Princeton University Press.
- Hooghe, Marc, and Ruth Dassonneville. 2018. "Explaining the Trump Vote: The Effect of Racist Resentment and Anti-Immigrant Sentiments." *PS: Political Science & Politics*:1-7. doi: 10.1017/S1049096518000367.
- Howard, Marc Morjé. 2009. *The Politics of Citizenship in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Howe, Paul. 2017. "Eroding Norms and Democratic Deconsolidation." *Journal of Democracy* 28 (4):15-29.
- Inglehart, Ronald, and Pippa Norris. 2017. "Trump and the populist authoritarian parties: the silent revolution in reverse." *Perspectives on Politics* 15 (2):443-454.
- Joppke, Christian. 2004. "The retreat of multiculturalism in the liberal state: theory and policy." *The British Journal of Sociology* 55 (2):237-257.
- Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. *How Democracies Die*: Crown.

- Matthijs, Matthias. 2017. "Integration at what price? The erosion of national democracy in the Euro periphery." *Government and Opposition* 52 (2):266-294.
- Miller, David. 2008. "Immigrants, nations, and citizenship." *Journal of political philosophy* 16 (4):371-390.
- Moffitt, Benjamin. 2015. "How to perform crisis: A model for understanding the key role of crisis in contemporary populism." *Government and Opposition* 50 (2):189-217.
- Moffitt, Benjamin. 2016. *The global rise of populism: Performance, political style, and representation*: Stanford University Press.
- Mouffe, Chantal. 2000. *The democratic paradox*: verso.
- Mudde, Cas, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. 2017. *Populism: A very short introduction*: Oxford University Press.
- Orgad, Liav. 2010. "Illiberal Liberalism: Cultural Restrictions on Migration and Access to Citizenship in Europe." *American Journal of Comparative Law* 58 (1):53-106.
- Rawls, John. 2005. *Political liberalism*: Columbia University Press.
- Rooduijn, Matthijs. 2014. "The nucleus of populism: In search of the lowest common denominator." *Government and Opposition* 49 (4):573-599.
- Rustow, Dankwart A. 1970. "Transitions to democracy: Toward a dynamic model." *Comparative politics* 2 (3):337-363.
- Rydgren, Jens. 2012. *Class politics and the radical right*: Routledge.
- Tajfel, Henri, Michael G. Billig, Robert P. Bundy, and Claude Flament. 1971. "Social categorization and intergroup behaviour." *European journal of social psychology* 1 (2):149-178.
- Torpey, John. 2000. *The invention of the passport : surveillance, citizenship, and the state*. Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Triadafilopoulos, Phil. 2011. "Illiberal Means to Liberal Ends? Understanding Recent Immigrant Integration Policies in Europe." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37 (6):861-880.
- Tudor, Maya, and Dan Slater. 2016. "The Content of Democracy: Nationalist Parties and Inclusive Ideologies in India and Indonesia." In *Parties, Movements, and Democracy in the Developing World*, edited by Nancy Bermeo and Deborah J. Yashar. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- van Oers, Ricky. 2013. *Deserving Citizenship: Citizenship Tests in Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom*: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- Zerubavel, Yael. 1995. *Recovered roots : collective memory and the making of Israeli national tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.