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Frozen Parties, Failing Markets

Discontent in the United States and United Kingdom

When the financial crisis of 2008 struck, it formed the final element that would become a perfect storm for democratic discontent in the United States. The crisis unfolded in an environment where economic precarity had become the norm for large swaths of the population, including those who had previously known plenty and security. And the political system tasked to deal with the wreckage was already fraying at the seams, stretched thin and stressed from trying to fit institutions designed for an agrarian, preindustrial society onto the most economically and technologically powerful hegemon in the world. Although Donald Trump's victory shocked many, including the authors of this book,[1] in retrospect we should have seen it coming. Things were only marginally better in the United Kingdom, which witnessed a rapid increase in the electoral fortunes of the PRR, first under Nigel Farage and UKIP and later under the leadership of Boris Johnson as he took over the Conservative Party.

In this chapter, we trace the rise of both Trump and UKIP using the theory of APE we developed and tested in earlier chapters. Here, we focus on Trump, given his relatively greater success and more available data, although we point to similarities to UKIP where relevant. Despite longstanding cultural and political tensions in both countries, absent the Great Recession they would have remained nothing more than that: tensions, perhaps gradually increasing, perhaps abating over

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[1] One of us confidently predicted before a full class that Donald Trump could never be elected in the United States, due to its institutional barriers to populists, personalists, and outsiders. Needless to say, the class after election day was one of the more interesting teaching experiences this co-author has had to endure.

time. The crisis (and the political response to it) ripped the veneer of stability and civility off both countries; yet the first attempts to mobilize discontent into actual political action fell short, failing to break through: Occupy Wall Street and especially the Tea Party managed to provoke shifts toward the extreme sides of the ideological distribution but failed to overthrow established actors or centers of power within their partisan spheres. UKIP continued in its pre-crisis boom-and-bust cycle, surging during European elections and collapsing during general elections. Trump, Farage, and Boris Johnson succeeded by doing what previous PRR leaders could not: craft a narrative about the ills of their respective countries that linked economic distress and cultural discontent to a single source, namely the losers, reprobates, and traitors in Washington DC, London, and Brussels.

5.1 BEFORE THE STORM: POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND CULTURAL DYNAMICS BEFORE THE CRISIS

It would be misleading to argue that the Great Recession was singularly responsible for the rise of Trump, Brexit, Farage, or Johnson. The financial crisis did not ruin ideal economies, nor did it turn perfectly healthy democracies into polarized blood sports, nor harmonious and tolerant citizenries into aggressive, xenophobic cultural warriors. The real story is subtler but nonetheless clear: both the USA and UK were uniquely vulnerable to the crisis because both had latent economic, cultural, and political tensions that had been biding their time for years.

5.1.1 The Left behind in the USA and UK

To begin, both countries had a significant population of left behind citizens. We have discussed how we define the left behind in general terms as those disproportionately harmed by economic change, and we do not wish to retread this ground here. That said, we do wish to point out some specific aspects of the left behind in the North Atlantic countries. First, we reiterate that while the left behind appellation in the North Atlantic countries encompasses people living in deindustrialized and hopelessly depressed communities (Gest 2016), in this region much of the left behind is defined by insecurity rather than poverty. Some are quite well paid and live middle-class lifestyles, complete with comfortable homes, cars, etc. Yet even among those with sizable incomes, a lack of social insurance and protection meant that the left behind were at constant risk of losing

everything; in other words, while many in these countries were not living paycheck to paycheck, they could not live without a paycheck for long.

The left behind tend to cluster in economic sectors that are in decline (Goetz et al. 2019, Rothwell and Diego-Rosell 2016) or particularly exposed to foreign competition. Several scholars have found links between exposure to globalization and support for Brexit, for example (Carreras, Irepoglu Carreras, and Bowler 2019, Goodwin and Heath 2016, Becker, Fetzer, and Novy 2017, Colantone and Stanig 2018a), while Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck (2018, 2017) have found that being white and lacking university credentials was a major predictor of supporting Trump. The connection between economic and social misery and supporting Brexit can be further illustrated in a particularly ghastly correlation: between so-called "deaths of despair" such as drug overdoses and suicides and the percentage who voted for Brexit in a given area. One analysis found that an increase in drug-related deaths of 10 per 100,000 led to a 15.25 percent increase in support for Brexit (Koltai et al. 2019).

Self-employed individuals were also more likely to support Trump (Rothwell and Diego-Rosell 2016), a relationship that appears to be driven by heightened insecurity among this group. Even individuals who make comfortable livings face the prospect of economic devastation due to even temporary and modest downturns in their industry, or due to exogenous shocks like health problems or even bad consumer reviews (Schonfeld and Mazzola 2015). Along with greater insecurity comes an impoverished safety net to manage it; self-employed individuals are typically ineligible for unemployment insurance or (prior to Obamacare) subsidized health insurance. Finally, the loss of one's business can be more destructive to self-image and social position than the loss of a job. Self-employment, particularly for those of modest skills, offers the prospect of autonomy and an escape from the deep authoritarianism of firms (Anderson 2017). This escape, and the self-esteem that comes from self-reliance, is part of the reason why people take the risk of business ownership in the first place (Williams 2019).

5.1.2 The Great Risk Shift: Economic Insecurity and the Great Recession

The insecurity that defined the North Atlantic left behind was not merely a by-product of economic change but the result of deliberate policy choices. Declining real wages and income, increasing personal debt, and growing job insecurity had defined the economic systems of the USA and UK since

the 1970s. This decades-long process has been given several names. Crouch (2009, 2011) describes a shift in public policy he refers to as "privatized Keynesianism." During the postwar era, the USA and UK both adopted a Keynesian capitalist model, wherein states smoothed out the business cycle by borrowing during bad times and running surpluses when times were flush (at least in theory; in practice, states frequently fail to cut back during the good times). This, in combination with a robust welfare state and widespread unionization, allowed workers to enjoy a comfortable and (more crucially) stable standard of living well into the 1970s, which large-scale capitalism needs in order to maintain a reliable consumer base (Crouch 1993, ch. 6).

As global competition intensified, the Keynesian system broke down. Corporations and wealthy individuals became increasingly unwilling to shoulder the high tax burden associated with Keynesian capitalism, arguing that these costs damaged their competitiveness with new exporters. Yet the contradiction remained: something had to smooth out the ups and downs inherent to capitalist creative destruction if the system were to survive. The workers themselves stepped in to fill this breach, albeit without realizing what they were doing. Borrowing and debt would still be the principal financial stabilization measure, but that debt would be private, rather than public. Individual workers began to self-insure against periods of wage decline, unemployment, or disabling illness through new or expanded financial products like home equity loans, lines of credit, and credit cards. Governments in the North Atlantic countries[2] shifted policy in subtle but decisive ways that encouraged private borrowing, such as low interest rates and support for housing prices and mortgage lending (Hay et al. 2008, Hay 2009).

The process that Crouch describes is only one facet of a more ubiquitous transformative process that Hacker calls the "Great Risk Shift," which he describes as "America's sweeping ideological transformation away from an all-in-the-same-boat philosophy of shared risk toward a go-it-alone vision of personal responsibility" (2008, 34). Hacker documents a staggering panorama of risks that shifted from society to individuals in the past decades: rising home foreclosures, increasing personal debt, and wilder income swings to name but a few. Hacker attributes this to the retrenchment of public welfare, but more importantly in the United States to the elimination of "mini-welfare states," that is, protections granted by corporations (often in negotiations with unions) that were backed by tax incentives (Hacker 2008, 7–8).

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[2] Canada was a partial exception to this trend, as we discuss in Chapter 8.

The picture that emerges from the discussion in Section 5.1 is of a group of citizens desperately clinging to their lifestyles and livelihoods,[3] facing an increasingly risky world with steadily eroding protections. By the time the housing market collapsed, to paraphrase Eichengreen (2018, 114), powerful actors had spent decades rending the net under the economic trapeze.

The reactions of the left behind were different from those who had never had much to lose. Fearing the loss of jobs, incomes, homes, businesses, and social standing that comes with those things put large groups of citizens in what prospect theory calls the "domain of losses" (Kahneman and Tversky 2012, 269). The attitudinal and behavioral responses that accompany this state have been extensively studied in political science: it leads to extreme distress (as people mourn losses more than they value gains), and a much increased tolerance for risk, as they take desperate measures to escape a dire situation (Weyland 1996). Importantly, when in the domain of losses, individuals are less likely to support incumbent political leaders (Quattrone and Tversky 1988), and perhaps entire political regimes. Furthermore, the left behind (who typically belong to the ethnoracial majority) lacked strategies and coping methods that ethnic and racial minorities developed over long decades of marginalization.

5.1.3 Strong Silence: Problems of Voice and Responsiveness

US and UK democracies were ill-equipped to handle this sort of economic crisis: namely, one which called into question economic orthodoxies and demanded new ideas and bold actions. Through a variety of factors (some shared, some unique to each case) both countries faced the Great Recession with ossified party systems where virtually all major actors were firmly committed to the economic doctrine that had facilitated the crisis. Neoliberalism is more than simply a rejection of the statism of the postwar era (hence the neo), and a concomitant belief that markets are more efficient and effective economic mechanisms than states. Neoliberalism goes further, exhibiting a faith in markets (and a distrust of states) that is more religious than empirical: it holds that markets almost never fail, that states are always the problem, and that social insurance and welfare should be rigidly means-tested and available only

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[3] The allusion to Barack Obama's infamous gaffe about clinging to "guns and religion" is intentional; we argue that there is a causal connection between these observations.

to the poorest individuals. Long before the crisis this neoliberal ortho-
doxy was widely embraced by the major parties in both the USA and the
UK. Although the "Third Way" ideas embodied by Tony Blair and Bill
Clinton sought to soften the harms of economic liberalization, in practice
they never seriously questioned its underlying assumptions. Much like
the Great Depression, which challenged the dominance of free-wheeling
capitalism, the Great Recession called into question the wisdom of radi-
cal liberalism. Movements and leaders quickly rose to challenge the con-
sensus, but (very much *unlike* the Great Depression) in neither country
did any of the major political parties channel these sentiments into pro-
ductive political change. Parties in the UK and the especially the USA had
little incentive to adapt, given the lack of citizen voice in both systems.

The lack of strong voice in the US system is a feature, not a bug. The
ethos underlying the US system, inspired more by classical liberalism than by
democracy, envisioned a country ruled by a natural aristocracy of educated
elites, with limited input from voters. Despite centuries of reform to this sys-
tem, the basic structure remains. Governing majorities can do little, if any-
thing, on their own. Indeed, the concept of a "governing majority" is barely
even applicable in the USA; exactly how many of the branches and chambers
must a party hold before it could be given such a label? This problem was
surmountable (mostly) in the postwar period, as the single-member district
plurality (SMDP) electoral system did its work producing two large, moder-
ate parties (Cox 1990), making interparty compromise achievable in many
circumstances. Conservative Democrats and liberal Republicans would
work across party lines until the changing racial dynamics of the 1960s led
to the disappearance of these groups as the parties became increasingly ideo-
logically (and sociodemographically) homogenized (Mason 2018).

Since the 1960s, the moderating effects of the SMDP system has waned.
A growing lack of cross-party competition in many, if not most, districts
shifted the nexus of electoral competition within parties, as party prima-
ries became more relevant than general elections in many districts. As a
result, parties became affectively polarized while converging on neoliberal-
ism, all while the ability of voters to hold leaders accountable or influence
policy waned. As in Britain, the demographic decline of the white working
class eroded the social base of left parties. At the same time, new political
demands emanating from educated sectors addressing postmaterialist value
issues (e.g. feminism, anti-racism, LGBTQ rights, environmentalism) caused
a great deal of strain on parties across the developed world (Huntington
1965, Crozier, Huntington, and Watanuki 1975). A diversified electorate
became atomized and difficult to organize, while simultaneously directing

more of their energies and efforts toward nontraditional participation and away from parties (Dalton 2013, Luther and Müller-Rommel 2002).

In the USA the rigid two-party system made the problem worse. Both parties ended up with unruly coalitions, where pleasing one constituency would often alienate others. Democrats trying to satisfy culturally liberal white Americans or attempting to redress racism directed against Black Americans would risk the ire of what remained of the white working class; Republicans had to balance the economic demands of their wealthy core constituency with the cultural conservatism of their working-class Evangelical faction (Ginsberg and Shefter 1999).

Perhaps more crucially, the changing nature of the partisan coalitions led to geographic clustering, a kind of "natural gerrymander." Democrats came to rely heavily on younger, ethnically/racially diverse, highly educated urbanites, while the Republican Party found its voter base (if not its core constituency, which remained the wealthy elite) in rural areas (Scala and Johnson 2017, Gimpel et al. 2020, Eichengreen 2018, 125). As Jacobson (2013) points out, this leads to a natural "wasting" of votes in cities and safe Republican districts in rural areas. As a result, incumbents were reelected in more than 90 percent of House elections (Malbin et al. 2003) and over 80 percent in Senate elections, rates which increased from 1980–2010 (Pastine, Pastine, and Redmond 2014). By the dawn of the crisis, voters were nearly meaningless, to the point where voter preferences had virtually no influence on policy (Page, Bartels, and Seawright 2013, Gilens 2005, Gilens and Page 2014, Matsusaka 2010). This is the antithesis of strong voice; in the United States, strong silence reigned.

While the United Kingdom did not share the gravest democratic pathologies of the US system, it had its own set of defects. Unlike the Democratic party in the USA, the UK's Labour Party did not have a historical tradition of moderation and was openly democratic socialist and statist for much of its history. Serious drubbings in a series of elections began in 1979, with a period of unrest and strikes called the "winter of discontent" preceding the brutal once-in-a-generation trouncing of 1983 that continued until Tony Blair's victory in 1997. Blair was part of a new crop of Labour leaders who accepted the neoliberal consensus (albeit with a softer touch and more concern for the harms such policies could do) as they abandoned the diminishing labor movement in favor of the socially liberal educated middle sectors. While Labour moved toward the Tories on the economy, the Conservatives moved (much more tentatively) toward Labour on postmaterialist issues, gradually warming to issues like climate change and gay marriage.

In short, both the UK and the USA entered the crisis with an oligopoly of neoliberal parties. The great irony here is that, in their failure to chart a course through the crisis, these parties exemplified the kind of market failure their economic philosophy is so desperate to ignore. Oligopoly allowed moribund and mediocre parties to survive without adaptation, whereas strong competition from new or newly ascendant minor parties might have forced the issue. Terrified by the specter of their big government/big spending/big deficit reputations, the center-left had little appetite for shifting away from the consensus model even as the crisis revealed its flaws. Finally, the lack of differentiation on economic issues compelled the parties to focus more on cultural conflicts over race, gender, and sexual orientation, and to prioritize attacking and defaming the other party (Hacker and Pierson 2020). As we show later in this chapter, these democratic deficits were crucial in enabling the rise of discontented political movements in both countries.

5.2 THE NEOLIBERALS RESPOND: EARLY DAYS OF DISCONTENT

Responses to the financial crisis in both countries were, to be charitable, underwhelming. In both cases, initial responses were defined by inadequacy (under Obama in the USA) or active immiseration (in the case of the UK). Discontent flared immediately but then flailed about, doing some damage but hardly upsetting the neoliberal apple cart. The financial crisis called out for two responses, neither of which was satisfactorily pursued in either country. The first was immediate relief to citizens who lost jobs, homes, and businesses through no fault of their own. We do not wish to get bogged down in a pointless debate about whether homeowners who took out subprime loans should have known better. What is clear is that the root causes of the crisis – namely an overly permissive lending environment, a massive bubble in housing prices, and failure to adequately regulate the financial services sector – can be most clearly laid at the feet of the financial elites and the state. The housing bubble itself was in large part driven by public policy, with debt secured by housing used in place of public social insurance to smooth out the business cycle.

5.2.1 Doubling down on Neoliberalism: Immediate Responses to the Crisis

The inadequacy of the Obama administration's response quickly became apparent. Comparisons to the recent response to the Covid-19 crisis are

instructive. The combined stimulus for the 2008 financial crisis (not including the Troubled Asset Management Relief Program, TARP) came to just under a trillion dollars (Kambhampati 2020); the three packages released in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis totaled 5.1 trillion dollars. Prior to the third stimulus package, total recovery spending came to 12.1 percent of GDP; the relevant figure for the 2008 crisis was 4.9 percent (Cassim et al. 2020).

The relatively miserly response in 2008–2009 resulted from the inability of major political actors to break with neoliberalism. In his own account, Obama comes off as a leader willing to try dramatic gambits but hemmed in by naysaying advisors and conservative foes within his own party (2020, chs. 10 and 11). Additionally, Obama was fighting with one hand tied behind his back: the public was already so angry about the massive amount spent on the TARP bailout for the banks that (according to Lawrence Summers, who incidentally is a nearly Platonic idea of the neoliberal Democrat) there was no chance to pass a stimulus outside the hundreds of billions of dollars range. There was also increasing dysfunction in the legislature, particularly the Senate, where the filibuster allowed a small minority of Republicans and conservative Democrats to block any legislation put forth through normal procedures that challenged economic orthodoxy.

Simply put, despite a landslide election that handed Obama and his party commanding majorities in both the legislature and the White House, the neoliberal orthodoxy held firm. After the rout in 2010, wherein Republicans recaptured the legislature, no further aid would be forthcoming. The British response was even more destructive: the Conservative Party, having convinced the electorate that the recession was driven more by government deficits than a financial collapse, pursued a brutal austerity policy that very likely made the recession worse than it otherwise would have been (Gamble 2015).

The second (and even more neglected) needed response was to punish the guilty, especially the economic elites whose labyrinthine financial chicanery had created the collapse. Perhaps the most abysmal failure of two successive US governments was that the first "relief bill" of the crisis bailed out the banks, and then did nothing to punish them. Again, a comparison between 2008 and another financial crisis is instructive, namely a housing crisis in Sweden in the early 1990s. In this case, the Swedish state did not simply bail out the banks but seized them in a not-quite-nationalization, taking equity as the "price of bailing them out" and wiping out the shareholders. As Sweden's finance minister at the time put it, "for every krona we put into the bank, we wanted the same influence" (Dougherty 2008). We do not dispute that allowing banks to

simply collapse in 2008 would have been among the most irresponsible decisions ever made by a modern government. Yet a more aggressive and punitive response was called for, more for political reasons than economic ones. Simply put, the punitive drive tends to grow and metastasize until satisfied, and the lack of punishment against economic elites created a seething citizenry, looking for someone, anyone, to blame.

The result of these mistakes, spread across both the Bush and Obama administrations, was a grinding, agonizingly slow slog out of the worst recession in living memory. Based on our theory, we would expect a tremendous upswelling of both resentment and anxiety as a result of these events. Sadly, there are no contemporary data available to analyze the emotional responses of citizens to the financial crisis. Yet both the experimental evidence we provide in Chapter 4, showing that economic discontent produces anxiety and resentment, as well as the general tenor of politics during the depths of the crisis, strongly suggest that emotions were running hot. The result was predictable: the wave of discontent that would engulf both the USA and the UK quickly began to gather force.

5.2.2 The Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street: Discontented Baby Steps

Although the crisis that would become the Great Recession began in 2007, it was not until the passage of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 (the act that established TARP) that growing resentment and discontent was imbued with meaning. The bank bailout (or at least some action to stabilize the financial sector) was an economic necessity, but to many it was also a classic example of a norm violation. The financial sector was widely perceived as responsible for the crisis by giving out ludicrous mortgages and thus crashing the economy, and yet as a punishment they were rewarded with over $800 billion of taxpayers' money, although the program eventually netted a profit for the government (Isidore 2014). Combined with the anemic stimulus package and a failure to provide effective relief for homeowners, this struck many as a severe injustice. Within a few months of TARP's passage, an online advocacy organization called Adbusters organized a "million-man march on Wall Street" to protest the political favoritism shown to banks over ordinary people. The march eventually spawned the Occupy Wall Street movement, where mostly left-leaning individuals began occupying public spaces to protest the lack of punitive action taken against the banks and the failure to aid economically distressed workers.

Arguments that the government was going too easy on the authors of the crisis were not exclusive to the left. Just a few weeks after the million-man march,[4] commentator Rick Santelli delivered a rant on the floor of the Chicago Stock exchange, decrying Obama's limited mortgage relief program. He argued that "responsible" homeowners, in trouble through no fault of their own, were being ignored while those who had taken out loans they should have known were far too large were getting bailed out, along with the hated banks (Etheridge 2009). Santelli called for a new "Tea Party" to right these wrongs. The movement that would become the Tea Party did not emerge *ex nihilo* after this rant. But Santelli gave the movement a name and crystallized the lingering resentment than many on the right felt as the recession continued and became Obama's responsibility.

From the beginning, the Tea Party movement intermingled economic grievances with Republican Party racial politics. Santelli's rant did not mention race at all, but it was made in the context of longstanding Republican cultivation of the notion that people of color and Latine people (especially unauthorized immigrants) were "welfare queens" and parasites leeching off "hardworking" (i.e. white Protestant) people (Quadagno 1994, Neubeck and Cazenave 2001). These ideas trace back to the adoption of neoliberalism under Ronald Reagan, who adapted the racial dog whistles of George Wallace and Richard Nixon to build popular support for his new economic paradigm. Under Reagan and the neoliberal Republican Party, bankers and employers were redefined as producers (a concept long deployed by US populist movements to describe ordinary working people), and the new parasites were those that relied on state support; these latter were subtly but unmistakably portrayed as people of color (Kazin 1998, ch. 10).

5.2.3 The Cultural Worldview of the PRR

At this point, we need to digress from our recounting of the evolution of the PRR and briefly discuss the cultural worldview of those who sympathize with it. This can be difficult from an academic perspective. Given the offensive rhetoric often used both by grassroots supporters and their leaders, it can be quite uncomfortable to see these individuals as they seem themselves and to describe their self-image accurately and without bias. We attempt to do so here, and we hope readers will understand that we are describing but not endorsing the self-image of those who sympathize with the ideas of the PRR. Drawing from ethnographic

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[4] Which like almost all "million-person marches" included far fewer than a million people.

works by Cramer (2016) and Gest (2016), statistically focused analyses by Abramowitz (2018) and Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck (2019), works on UKIP by Ford and Goodwin (2014), Goodwin and Milazzo (2015), and Goodwin and Heath (2016), and works on Brexit by Clarke, Goodwin, and Whiteley (2017) and Sobolewska and Ford (2020), we can deduce cultural ideas that are broadly shared by those who would become part of the grassroots Tea Party and eventually the social base of Trumpism and UKIP.

The most critical common element that arises from these books is a zero-sum view of cultural conflict. Individuals who sympathize with the PRR see intrinsic connections between the rise of a highly educated economic elite who benefit from globalization and the rise of multiculturalism. With their growing economic power, the "globalists" can impose values that actively damage the universalist values of cultural conservatives, such as the sanctity of the family (including the preservation of gender norms and roles), moral issues related to sex and procreation, and the importance of religion in public life.

Protests by PRR-sympathizing conservatives are frequently met with accusations of racism, homophobia, and other forms of prejudice. The PRR views these charges as disingenuous: such accusations are not sincere expressions of outrage but merely another cynically deployed tool to silence "real Americans." This tool is drawn from the same box as economic globalization and serves the same malign purpose, namely, to neuter the ability of the PRR to resist globalism. Additionally, criticism of left behind sympathizers of the PRR is often tinged with classism (Williams 2019), and with a view of working-class white people as morally degenerate (Gest 2016, 3–5).

It seems clear that the economic decline of the left behind is intrinsically intertwined with this sense of cultural conflict as a bloody fight to the death. The fact that those lobbing accusations of racism or bigotry are often members of relatively privileged social classes who sometimes treat working-class and rural people with thinly veiled disgust, along with the fact that the economic fortunes of those social groups that most enthusiastically embrace multiculturalism have brightened as those of the left behind have dimmed, cannot and should not be ignored.

5.2.4 The Tea Party's over: Moving toward Radical Right Populism

These growing cultural resentments proved an insurmountable challenge for the Tea Party's insurgency, as it set up a hidden conflict between the priorities of grassroots militants and Tea Party leaders. The Tea Party's

raison d'être (aside from knee-jerk opposition to Obama) was militant fiscal conservatism, with cultural conservatism an important but secondary aspect of the faction's identity. This image was a reasonably accurate representation of the movement's leadership. For the most part, the leadership prioritized doctrinaire neoliberalism, pillorying government spending and using the various veto points embedded in the US political system to force spending and tax cuts, a strategy Williamson (2013) calls "austerity by gridlock." The rhetoric and policy priorities of the Tea Party's congressional leaders were more like the free market neopopulists of Latin America like Menem or Fujimori than George Wallace.

Yet the connections between economic and cultural discontent that the leadership failed to effectively make were of paramount importance to the Tea Party's grassroots militants, many of whom were rapidly embracing PRR cultural views. These dynamics played out at the national level through Tea Partiers' reactions to the Obama administration. Obama's race, biography, youth, and even his foreign-sounding name led many grassroots Tea Partiers to perceive him as a champion of the young, multiracial, educated urbanites they despised, which helped propel resentment against his administration (Abramowitz and McCoy 2018, Abramowitz 2011).

Taken together, we see a significant disconnect between Tea Party elites and grassroots supporters. The former pushed hardest on economic priorities, driven more by ideology than by discontent. As such, they failed to effectively channel the discontent seething among the base, which was both economic and cultural, frequently intermingling the two. The greatest sign of this failure was the fact that Mitt Romney, the consummate Republican moderate whose highest previous office was as governor of one of the most left-leaning states in the USA, would face Barack Obama in the 2012 presidential elections. In short, the Republican Party moved right but remained a typical conservative (if more ardently neoliberal) party. The Tea Party's most enduring legacy would be as merely a steppingstone on the road to radical right populism. In both the USA and the UK, it took two enterprising leaders – Donald Trump (USA, Republican) and Nigel Farage (UK, UKIP) to seize the day and transform their parties into genuine vehicles for the PRR.

5.3 THE PRR RISES: EXPLAINING SUPPORT FOR TRUMP

Trump managed to accomplish what the FR had previously failed to do: provoke a populist rupture, breaking through the partisan oligopoly and taking the highest office in the country. Our goal here is to explain why Trump succeeded when other would-be populists (e.g. Ted Cruz, Ron

Paul) were unable to build coalitions large enough to seize power. While this ultimately comes down to the attitudes and behaviors of nonelites, we cannot ignore the role that elite rhetoric plays in shaping and influencing public opinion and political behavior. With this in mind, throughout this section we will analyze both public opinion data and Trump's rhetoric. We do not expect Trump's pitch to voters to match our complex theory of how democratic discontent comes consistently and perfectly. That said, if analyses of the ideas and arguments appearing frequently in Trump's political communication is at least consistent with our approach, it would provide further support for our argument.

5.3.1 An Overview of Support for Trump

We begin by analyzing a model of support for Trump, using data from the PSAS-US.[5] Analyzing support for Trump specifically can be difficult, as measures of it tend to be contaminated with support for Republicans more generally. As such, we rely on a modified version of a strategy used by Goetz et al. (2019), who subtracted support for Mitt Romney, a mainstream Republican and major Trump opponent, to obtain a measure of support for Trump over mainstream Republicans. We adapt this strategy using feeling thermometers: we subtract a respondent's score on a feeling thermometer for Romney from their placement of Trump on another thermometer.[6] As predictors, we include the major elements of our theory (see Chapter 4 for details on measurement):

- Populist attitudes: we include both anti-elitism and people-centrism, as well as a multiplicative term combining the two (Wuttke, Schimpf, and Schoen 2020).
- Economic discontent: measured using our economic distress index.
- Cultural discontent.

Our measure of cultural discontent is deliberately nonspecific, to allow it to measure a sense of cultural alienation without resorting to attitudes toward specific policies, trends, or groups. However, since in this case we are looking at support for a specific political actor, it makes sense

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[5] Data were collected in February and March, 2021. Our story here concerns Trump's rise, rather than his fall, after which these data were collected. Sadly, there are no contemporaneous datasets that include all the concepts and measures we require to test our theory. Based on the experimental data we present, we can be confident that the relationships established by these data have not changed a great deal over time.

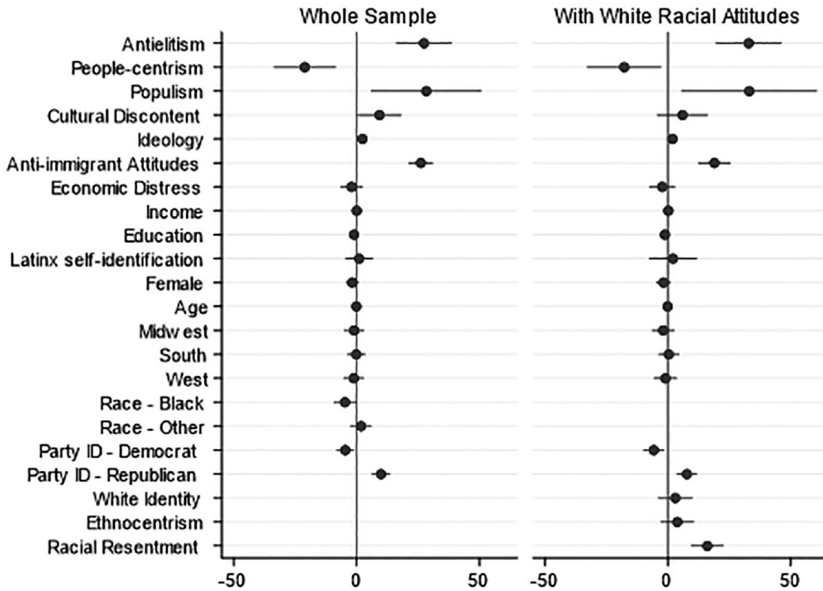[6] Results did not significantly change when using the Trump raw feeling thermometer.

FIGURE 5.1 Tobit model of support for Trump.

to include specific manifestations of cultural discontent here. In Trump's case, we include an index of negative AUI, a major target for the former president. We also include a number of demographic controls: income, education, race, Latine self-identification, gender, age, region, party identification, and ideology.[7] We also specified a second model of support for Trump that includes several factors related to Trump's racial rhetoric: white identification, ethnocentrism, and racial resentment. As our theory holds that crises will possibly affect members of minority groups differently than members of the majority, we only include white respondents when estimating the parameters of this model. For both models, we used Tobit regression analysis. Tobit models are designed for use on variables that are not normally distributed due to censoring on the upper or lower bound (our measure is rescaled to run from 0 to 100, where 0 represents a strong preference for Romney over Trump, and 100 indicates much stronger support for Trump than for Romney, and 50 represents equal support for Trump and Romney). A chart of coefficient estimates for these models with 95 percent confidence intervals is presented in Figure 5.1.

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[7] In most models we include only ideology, not party identification. These measures are highly correlated and thus can inflate standard errors in quantitative analyses, and our theories concern worldview rather than group attachment, making ideology the more appropriate choice.

A few elements of this chart bear special notice. One which might seem to militate against our approach is the lack of a significant effect of economic distress on support for Trump. This is, in fact, to be expected: recall that we argue economic discontent is not the immediate cause of populism or support for populist figures, but rather a root cause of cultural discontent, which is the proximate cause. We will return to this issue later. For now, the more important issue is to identify the major sources of support for Trump. We identify the following as especially important: populism, cultural discontent, and racial/identity politics. We discuss each of these in turn, in the context of Trump's rhetoric, for the remainder of this section.

5.3.2 "The System Is Rigged": Populist Attitudes and Arguments

> These are special interests, folks. These are lobbyists. These are people that don't necessarily love our country. They don't have the best interests of our country at heart. We're not going to let it happen. We can't – we have to do something about it. When you see – when you see the kind of deals made in our country, a lot of those deals are made because the politicians aren't so stupid. They're making them for their benefit. We have to stop it. We have to stop it. We are now going to make it for your benefit. We're going to make the deals for the American people.[8]

Perhaps the most crucial difference between Trump and other pretenders to the populist throne was his status as a genuine political outsider. Other Republicans like Ted Cruz, Sarah Palin, Michelle Bachman, and Ron Paul had tried to seize the populist mantle with little success; as lifelong Republicans, they lacked the credibility to truly challenge the political elite. More to the point, while the Tea Party wave of Republicans that rose to prominence after 2010 might have been further to the right than their predecessors, they offered little but a more obstinate defense of the Republican Party's post-Reagan platform of Christian nationalism, dog-whistle racial politics, and neoliberalism. Despite their bombast, they also were unable to deliver on their promises, as Obama remained in office, Obamacare was still in force, and LGBTQ rights continued to advance.

Trump broke with all these conventions to varying degrees. Although he eventually governed as a reliable partner for political Evangelicals and Christian nationalists, during his campaign Trump seemed relatively unconcerned with issues like gay rights; in fact, he promised to protect

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[8] This and all other quotes from Trump speeches are taken from the database assembled by Hawkins et al. (2019) unless otherwise noted.

LGBTQ individuals from Islamic terrorists. Appreciated by his followers for his bluntness and willingness to "say what everyone is thinking," Trump ripped the veneer off the Republican Party's southern strategy, no longer bothering to hide the racial resentment and xenophobia that underlies it. And while Trump could castigate taxes, welfare, and government regulation as well as any other Republican, he was more than happy to throw over neoliberal priorities he felt allowed the system to take advantage of his followers, especially on the issue of trade (more on this later).

Equally crucial was Trump's unerring focus on the evil and negligence of the political elite. Trump mentioned words and phrases related to political elites in 85.71 percent of the speeches collected by Hawkins et al. (2019); only Bernie Sanders, another populist outsider, mentioned it more. Allusions to the political system being rigged appear in 61.9 percent of Trump's speeches, compared to 33.3 percent for other Republicans.[9] More holistically, Trump's entire campaign was based on a populist narrative. His speech at the 2016 Republican National Convention accepting the party's nomination is a typical example:

The most important difference between our plan and that of our opponents, is that our plan will put America First. Americanism, not globalism, will be our credo. As long as we are led by politicians who will not put America First, then we can be assured that other nations will not treat America with respect. This will all change in 2017 … Big business, elite media and major donors are lining up behind the campaign of my opponent because they know she will keep our rigged system in place. They are throwing money at her because they have total control over everything she does. She is their puppet, and they pull the strings.

Evidence from our data supports the notion that these claims resonated with Trump's most ardent supporters. In the models introduced in Section 5.3.1, we included both constitutive dimensions and the multiplicative populism index because Trump support may be influenced in nuanced or even contradictory ways by populist attitudes: specifically, the combination of anti-elitism and people-centrism may have a unique relationship with Trump support (or discontent more generally) while each dimension individually exerts its own effect. As we see here,

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[9] Fifty-five speeches were analyzed from the Kirk A. Hawkins (2016) United States 2016 Presidential Campaign Speeches Dataset (available for download at http://populism.byu .edu/). Other Republican candidates include Rubio (four speeches), Cruz (three), and Kasich (two). The dataset includes twenty-one Trump speeches, twenty Clinton speeches, and five Sanders speeches. Categories were created using the Topic Extraction module in Word Stat 7, which uses factor analysis to create a topic model based on co-occurrence of the words in sentences. This created a categorization dictionary, which was then applied to each document.
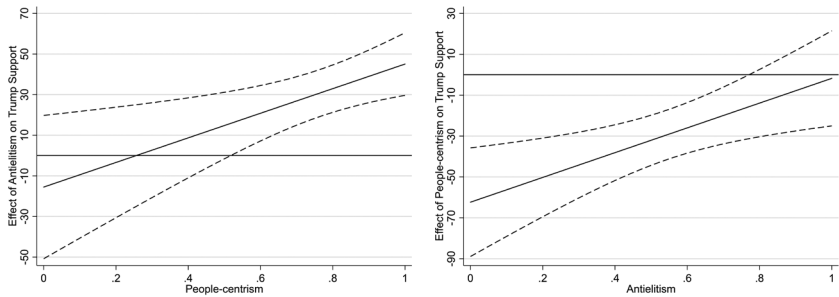
FIGURE 5.2 Interactive effect of populism dimensions on Trump support.

anti-elitism and populism are both powerful predictors of Trump support, while people-centrism has a negative effect. This can be seen in another way by presenting the effect of both dimensions, conditional on the value of the other. The horizontal line is at y = 0, or no effect; dashed lines define the 95 percent confidence interval (Figure 5.2).

Interactive effects can be difficult to interpret, so we use the simplest language possible here. To start, imagine someone with profound anti-elitist sentiments. If that person also has strong people-centric attitudes, they likely have positive attitudes toward Trump. However, if the person does not have people-centric attitudes, their anti-elitism will not lead to any appreciable increase in Trump support; without the belief that power should rest in the hands of the people, hatred of elites will not lead someone to embrace a leader making populist appeals. Although the consequences of this constellation of attitudes are not totally clear from these data, the most likely result is frustrated apathy rather than active rage.

Next, imagine a person with strong people-centric views. Absent anti-elitism, this person will actually be much *less* likely to support a populist like Trump. In this case, people-centrism operates more as a preference for direct or participatory democracy, and without antagonism toward the elite, this person will be repelled by the obvious authoritarianism and illiberalism of a figure like Trump. Add anti-elitism to the mix, however, and things change; now this person, embittered by their disgust with the elite, will no longer be repelled. People-centrism in combination with anti-elitism sets up a narrative of mortal struggle between the two sides, which justifies aggressive acts toward elites and their allies and the negation of democratic niceties that would not arise from people-centrism in isolation.

Although this interaction is complex, the important conclusion is clear enough: populism, especially its anti-elitist dimension, is profoundly

associated with Trump support. We should note here that Trump's public appeals do not necessarily reflect his actual views. Trump's political communications, like those of all politicians, are an amalgam of his own views, political calculus, and the views and priorities of his advisors. For example, Trump's populism appears to become less specific and less eloquent after his break with Steve Bannon. Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser (2018) find that Trump was far more populist in speeches written by Bannon or Stephen Miller than by others.

5.3.3 The Great Globalist Conspiracy: Cultural Attitudes and Trumpism

> These families have no SPECIAL INTERESTS to represent them. There are no demonstrators to protest on their behalf. My opponent will never meet with them, or share in their pain. Instead, my opponent wants Sanctuary Cities. But where was sanctuary for Kate Steinle? Where was Sanctuary for the children of Mary Ann, Sabine and Jamiel? Where was sanctuary for all the other Americans who have been so brutally murdered, and who have suffered so horribly?
>
> –Donald Trump, speaking of people allegedly killed by unauthorized immigrants.

Populist attitudes increase support for Trump, but this leaves a great deal unexplained: if hatred of elites drove people to Trump, where does that hatred come from? Here we return to the debate between economic and cultural issues that we have addressed throughout this book. Economic distress had no direct effect on Trump support in our analysis presented earlier (something we address later), and the bulk of the public opinion research on the subject we discussed earlier points to cultural discontent, especially as manifest in conservative backlash toward multiculturalism, as the dominant (or as we argue, proximate) cause.

Cultural backlash is not an incidental part of Trumpism; rather, it lies at the core of his overall social narrative (Inglehart and Norris 2019). Trumpism is far more elaborate than the simple "we are the 99 percent" division of society favored by the populist left, and one that resists fitting into the simple people vs. elites framing of the typical ideational approach. According to Trump, politics is the struggle between two forces: globalism and America First (i.e. nationalism). With globalism – the dominant ideology of the political elite – the people are under constant assault: from criminal aliens, Islamic terrorists, violence-plagued "inner-cities" desperately in need of "law and order" (classic right-wing code for Black-on-white

crime), trade deals that let corporations make billions at the expense of US workers, and so on. Throughout his political speeches, Trump draws connections between the political exclusion of the people and the denigration of their values and beliefs. This quote is illustrative:

The establishment and their media enablers wield control over this nation through means that are well known. Anyone who challenges their control is deemed a sexist, a racist, a xenophobe and morally deformed. They will attack you, they will slander you, they will seek to destroy your career and reputation. And they will lie, lie and lie even more. (Hawkins et al. 2019)

Here, Trump is tying cultural discontent to the rise of multiculturalism and shifting standards of acceptable discourse. In doing so, he evokes the idea that the cosmopolitan elite and their urbane allies are trying to destroy the national culture, using accusations of racism or other forms of prejudice. In other words, Trump makes appeals that echo what academics have called "backlash" (Inglehart and Norris 2019), feeling like a stranger in one's own land (Hochschild 2018), resentment based in rural consciousness (Cramer 2016), or the conflict between those from somewhere and those from anywhere (Goodhart 2017). Note especially the connection between the illegitimate control of elite multiculturalists and accusations of racism. To Trump and his followers, "canceling" is not a genuine expression of outrage but a power play, a cudgel against criticism and a weapon against the only effective bulwark against globalism, that is, national unity through cultural homogeneity. Our data suggest that this strategy was successful. Cultural discontent had a significant influence on Trump support in the all-sample model, but the effect was not significant in the white-only model.

Yet both these models underestimate the role of cultural discontent. We would not expect a leftist believer in multiculturalism who feels alienated in a society they feel is tinged by patriarchy, heteronormativity, and racism to then throw in with Trump. In short, we expect discontent to influence support for Trump only among those on the political right (and perhaps moderates). Among leftists, we expect the relationship to be null or even negative (this latter possibility we discuss in Chapter 9). Figure 5.3 (taken from the whole sample model) shows how the effect of cultural discontent changes as ideology changes; starred data labels indicate significant differences from the grand mean. Each bar represents a value on our seven-point ideology scale, with liberals on the left and conservatives on the right (of course).

These figures show that cultural discontent is far more powerful among conservatives than among liberals. Among liberals, discontent either reduces or barely increased support for Trump. But among conservatives,
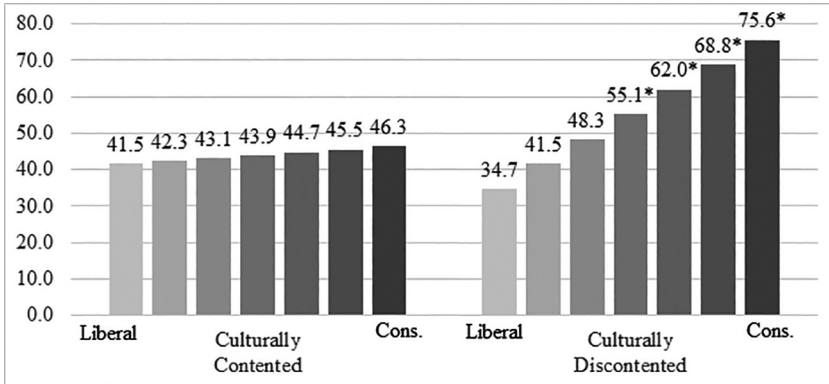
FIGURE 5.3 Predicted mean of Trump support by cultural discontent and ideology.

the effects are much more substantial; discontented extreme conservatives are nearly 30 points more supportive of Trump, as are contented conservatives.

5.3.4 Is Trump (or Trumpism) "Racist"? White Supremacy, White Nationalism, and the PRR

It is worth remembering here that Trump did not come to political prominence with an impassioned populist message. Trump's recent political trajectory began instead with a tweeted conspiracy theory, namely that President Barack Obama was born in Kenya, not Hawaii, and was thus ineligible to be president. This was no anomaly. As we alluded to earlier, perhaps the most common theme in Trump's discourse, even more than his populism, is the equation with anything unfamiliar or "foreign" (in this case, the latter term seems to include virtually anything that does not come from the white rural heartland) as evil and threatening.

Indeed, Trump's presidential campaign announcement in 2015 began with him calling Mexican immigrants "murderers" and "rapists." Jardina (2019, 230–242) provides an excellent overview of the various ways in which Trump appealed to the grievances and fears of white America. Among other things, Trump frequently evoked stereotypes about Black Americans (particularly related to crime and violence) when arguing about the decline of the USA, emphasized the threat posed by Islamic terrorism in broad terms that tended to imply that all Muslims

were dangerous and promised to ban Muslim immigration, and referred to unauthorized immigrants almost exclusively as criminals who pose a grave risk to US security. Most of Trump's signature issues, such as the border wall, family separation, or the travel ban on Muslims, have clear prejudicial undertones at the very least.

More extreme forms white backlash can be seen in the rhetoric of groups supporting Trump. In the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, groups of whom Trump later spoke positively evoked the white genocide myth by crying "you will not replace us," an allusion to the Great Replacement conspiracy theory that elites encourage immigration deliberately to eliminate the white native-born population through demographics. The Proud Boys, a violent FR gang Trump would later tell to "stand back and stand by" during a debate with Joe Biden, identify unapologetically as "western chauvinists."

Nevertheless, many Trump supporters vehemently deny that he or his movement are racist or prejudiced. For example, they point to his stated concerns for African Americans (Trump often describes the poverty and misery of inner-city African Americans, mostly to point to the failures of the Democratic Party), LGBTQ individuals (always in the context of threats to this community by Islamic terrorists), and the presence of racial or ethnic minorities in his political circle. This raises the question in the title of this section: is Trump (or Trumpism) racist? This question is commonly posed but is, to be blunt, pointless. The term "racism" is so imprecise and can mean so many things to so many different people and groups as to defy scholarly analysis.

That said, we can fit Trump's racial and ethnic appeals into more specific categories. Specifically, Trump squarely fits into the concepts of ethnonationalism, specifically white nationalism, often with a distinctly rural Protestant bent. Many scholars of the FR (e.g. Golder 2016, Georgiadou, Rori, and Roumanias 2018) distinguish between two tendencies within the FR: the extreme right, which is openly authoritarian and embraces white supremacy and ethnic cleansing or even genocide against minorities and opponents, and the ethnonationalist PRR. Unlike the openly fascistic extreme right, the PRR embraces what Golder (2016) calls "ethnopluralist nationalism" in which "different cultures [are considered] to be equal, but distinct and thus incompatible. Proponents of ethnopluralism claim to celebrate cultural differences and argue that these differences must be protected from things like mass migration, cultural imperialism, and one-worldism" (Golder 2016, 480; see also Rydgren 2005). In addition, the PRR generally lacks the "blood and

soil" view of culture as encoded in genes and thus immutable and fixed. Instead, members of marginalized cultural groups and immigrants are expected to assimilate into the cultural mores of the dominant group (Golder 2016).[10]

In short, whether or not Trump or his rhetoric are racist is neither here nor there. What is undeniable is that Trump has (ironically for a nationalist) imported a European-style radical right ethos, where Protestant, white, small-town culture is equated with the culture of the nation, with all who fail to fit that mold expected to conform or leave, while still allowing him to point to people like Ben Carson (who is Black)[11] or his son-in-law Jared Kushner (who is an observant Jew) as evidence of his lack of racism or anti-Semitism. The radical right welcomes those few members of minority groups who are willing to completely conform to the demands of dominant culture, while heaping hostility and scorn on the rest, who wish to simply preserve some of their cultural traditions and mores. Simply put, while Trumpism is not white supremacist (in the sense of biological superiority of white persons), it is undeniably and explicitly white nationalist.

Bringing this discussion back to our approach, one can see a clear link between cultural discontent and white nationalism. Both reflect profound concern about the relative value assigned to different cultural groups, and a combination of in-group solidarity and out-group hostility and suspicion. In a sense, in-group solidarity (white identity and ethnocentrism) and out-group hostility (racial resentment and AUI) are forms of cultural discontent, with its vague sense of alienation imbued with meaning by specification of the groups involved in the cultural conflict. To test this contention, we analyzed the influence of cultural discontent on all four concepts. As with Trump support, we allow the effect of cultural discontent to vary with ideology (discontented liberals are unlikely to have negative attitudes toward African Americans or Latine immigrants, given the prominence of anti-racism and multiculturalism in liberal thought). Predicted mean levels of intergroup attitudes by cultural discontent and ideology (left and right represent minimum and maximum values on the ideological scale respectively) are presented in Figure 5.4; starred data

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[10] Başok and Sayer (2020) review several ways in which Trump and his allies pushed assimilationist policies, including advocating for English as the official language at both federal and state level, and eliminating bilingual education programs.

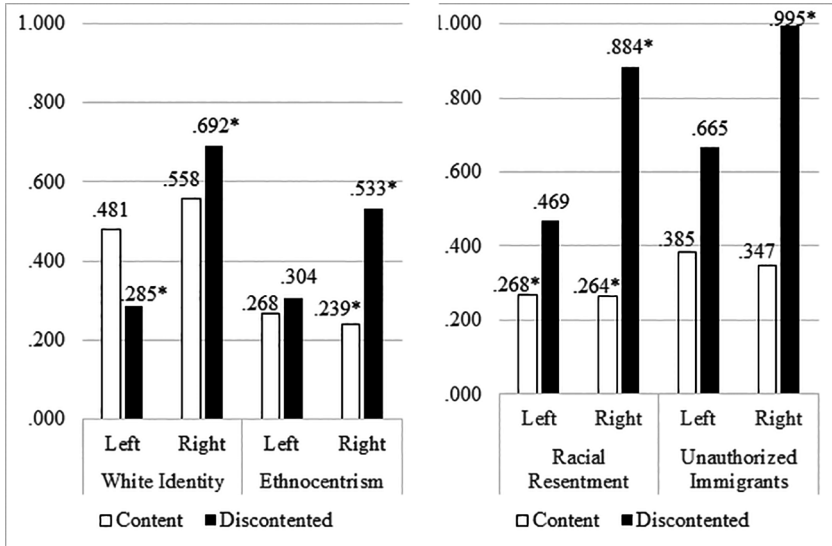[11] An elite version of the infamous "but I have a Black friend" defense.

FIGURE 5.4 Predicted mean of intergroup attitudes by cultural discontent and ideology.

labels represent combinations with a mean that is significantly different from the grand mean at the 0.05 level.

For those with low levels of cultural discontent, differences in negative intergroup attitudes are minimal. Among discontented individuals, leftists tend to be somewhat *less* ethnocentric than the average person; their discontent provoked a backlash against the backlash. This finding was consistent with those of Jardina, Kalmoe, and Gross (2021), who argue that disgust with Donald Trump reduced white identity politics for those on the left.

Conservatives, however, showed dramatically increased ethnocentrism, racial resentment, and hostility to unauthorized immigrants when discontented, although discontent did not increase white identity. Cultural discontent does indirectly affect white identity by activating ideology; there is no significant difference between contented liberals and conservatives in white identification, but among the discontented, conservative white identification is almost three times as large as among liberals, who recoil from white identification when discontented. Given that some of these factors predicted Trump support in our model presented earlier, these results indicate that cultural discontent's influence on Trump support is even larger than previous analyses suggested.

5.3.5 It *Is* the Economy, Stupid! The Economic Roots of Trumpism

> Free trade can be wonderful if you have smart people, but we have people that are stupid. We have people that aren't smart. And we have people that are controlled by special interests. And it's just not going to work.[12]

At first blush all this discussion of culture would seem to contradict our theory. After all, these findings match up with much of the public opinion literature on Trumpism, which has consistently found cultural issues to be a much more important antecedent of Trump support than economic woes. Yet questions linger. If culture is so important, what to make of the various studies finding meso-level effects of economic discontent? Although analyzing voting patterns can be difficult, strong evidence has emerged that a surge of low-propensity left behind voters can explain Trump's victory (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2017, Morgan and Lee 2018, Goetz et al. 2019, Patenaude III 2019, Thompson 2016). These findings are consistent with earlier research in other regions showing that populists often increase the political engagement of economically marginalized citizens (Piñeiro, Rhodes-Purdy, and Rosenblatt 2016).

Furthermore, if economics matter so little, why does Trump talk about economics so much? As it turns out, Trump's political communication references the economy more than almost any other topic. His candidacy announcement speech from 2016 is infamous for his description of immigrants as criminals and rapists. However, the speech barely addresses cultural issues: the vast majority is focused on manufacturing jobs and trade (including the contention that Trump could reverse outsourcing with a few phone calls). In the speeches included in the Hawkins et al. (2019) database, Trump mentioned trade deals in 80.95 percent of his speeches, more than twice as much as Clinton (30 percent) or even Sanders, another critic of trade deals (40 percent), and much more often than he mentions immigration (61.9 percent) or the border (57.1 percent). He also mentioned manufacturing jobs more than Sanders (47.6 percent to 40 percent). These discussions of economics are nearly always tied into his broader populist narrative: the economic decline of his left behind base is not due to technology or the inexorable crush of globalization, but due to the idiocy and greed of political elites with a globalist agenda.

We never expected economics to displace culture through some methodological trick. Instead, our theory holds economic discontent to be an

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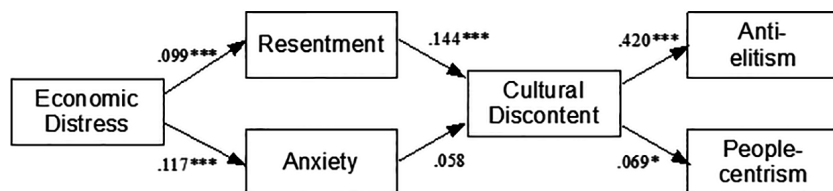[12] Candidacy announcement address, 2016.

FIGURE 5.5 Path SEM model of populist attitudes. * = sig. at 0.05 level; ** = sig. at 0.01 level; *** = sig. at 0.001 level.

important root cause of these cultural conflicts, by intensifying negative emotions that cause hypersensitivity to threat (anxiety) and increased salience of preexisting prejudices and identities (resentment). In short, economic turmoil inflames cultural tensions, which then provokes populist attitudes and behavior (i.e. supporting a populist insurgent like Trump). This mediated effect of economics on populist attitudes and behavior in the United States can be seen in our survey data. We use path analysis from the SEM framework to estimate the direct, indirect, and total effects of economic discontent on populism. The model we specify is presented in Figure 5.5 (all the typical control variables were also included in each step). The numbers on the flow chart are the corresponding regression coefficients.

These results reinforce both the conclusions we drew in Chapter 4 based on experimental data and our theory of how populist attitudes are fomented during times of economic turmoil. All paths here are significant, as predicted, except for the effect of anxiety on cultural discontent. This seems to confirm findings from Chapter 4, namely that anxiety seems to play a much smaller role, if any, in translating economic discontent into cultural discontent. Cultural discontent had, as we expected, a strong influence on populism. Moving from zero to one on the cultural discontent scale produced an expected change in anti-elitism equivalent to 42 percent of the variable's scale. Cultural discontent had a more modest influence on people-centrism. As predicted by the AIT framework we have adopted for this book, resentment rather than anxiety drives cultural discontent. Finally, and as predicted, economic distress was associated with significantly higher levels of resentment and anxiety.

These effects can be further clarified by combining direct and indirect effects to produce estimates of the total effect of each variable on our populism dimensions. We use the same path model presented in the overall analysis of Trump support (whole sample), combined with the mediated model presented in the flow chart earlier in this section (Figure 5.5). For intergroup attitudes, we combine the flow chart model with our models
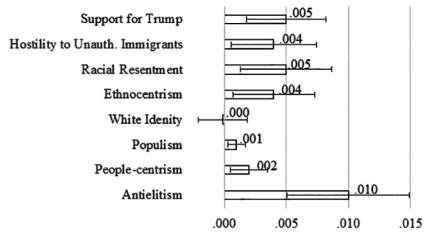
FIGURE 5.6 Total effects of economic distress on populism and intergroup attitudes.

of intergroup attitudes. In all cases, the influence of economic distress is mediated through cultural discontent (Figure 5.6).

As Figure 5.6 shows, economic discontent had a significant direct effect on both dimensions of populism, on the multiplicative populism index, and on support for Trump. These effects did not appear in the results presented earlier in this chapter because the effects of economic discontent are mediated through cultural discontent and emotions. We find similar results when analyzing intergroup attitudes: economic discontent significantly increased ethnocentrism, hostility to unauthorized immigrants, and racial resentment. Distress did not significantly impact white identity.

This, we contend, is why analysts have thus far underestimated the influence of economics on Trumpism. Economic effects are everywhere: in how people feel about their culture, how they view groups who they may mildly dislike or actively despise depending on circumstances, and on how they view their political representatives. Trump would not have been able to exploit cultural grievance and backlash so efficiently in the absence of major economic strain. With the lingering effects of the Great Recession, combined with the influence of neoliberalism, Trump's white nationalism gained an appeal they would never have had otherwise.

5.3.6 Trumpism as Failure of Democracy

> Every day I wake up determined to deliver for the people I have met all across this nation that have been neglected, ignored, and abandoned ... These are the forgotten men and women of our country. People who work hard but no longer have a voice. I AM YOUR VOICE.[13]

The deficiencies of US democracy played a similar role to economic discontent: driving up outrage and fear, intensifying the tendency of that fear

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[13] Acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention, 2016.
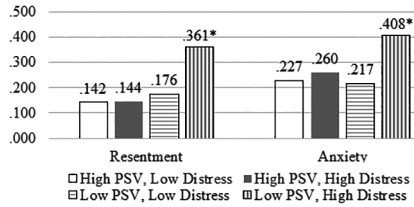
FIGURE 5.7 Predicted mean of resentment and anxiety by PSV and economic discontent.
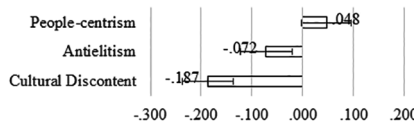

FIGURE 5.8 Effect of PSV on cultural discontent and populism.

to spill from the economic to the cultural arena, and convincing people to abandon "the system" in favor of a charismatic outsider. Trump was not the only candidate to excoriate the elite for ignoring their constituents: Bernie Sanders sounded a similar note, as had Obama eight years before, although with a more upbeat tone.

This lack of a strong voice in the United States exacerbated virtually all the economic and cultural antecedents of populism and Trumpism discussed in this chapter. To begin, the lack of voice exacerbates emotional responses to negative outcomes. As such, we would expect economic discontent to produce more resentment and anxiety among those who perceive the US political system as providing them with little influence on politics, that is, who score low on our PSV index. To test this, we include PSV and a multiplicative term with PSV and economic distress into the regression models used to predict negative emotions presented earlier. Predicted levels of emotions by PSV and economic discontent are presented in Figure 5.7.

As these results show, economic distress had no influence on negative emotions among those with high perceptions of strong voice. Only those who felt voiceless react to economic distress with resentment and anxiety. We would further expect Trump's appeal to act as the people's voice to fall on deaf ears if those people felt they could exercise voice through the political system. We therefore analyzed the influence of voice on cultural discontent and the two dimensions of populism; the results are presented in Figure 5.8.

PSV had a significant influence on cultural discontent and anti-elitism. Moving from low to high PSV decreased cultural discontent by nearly

20 percent of its range while significantly decreasing anti-elitism. PSV had a positive influence on people-centrism, although the effect was not significant. Like economic discontent, PSV dances all throughout the background of Trump's rise and eventual ascension to the presidency. A lack of strong voice intensified the resentment and anxiety the crisis produced (and also probably led to more negative evaluations of controversial policies like TARP), and increased cultural discontent and anti-elitism, two of the primary drivers behind support for Trump in our data.

5.4 ACROSS THE POND: COMPARING TRUMPISM AND UKIP

Astute readers will have noticed that the UK has been absent for a substantial part of the chapter. We return to this thread here, albeit with less detail and attention than we paid to Trumpism. There are multiple reasons why we treat the UK as a minor case here, including the absence of original data. The main reason is that the rise of the PRR in Great Britain hits so many of the same notes as its North American counterpart that an in-depth examination would likely bore the reader to tears with redundancies.[14] Instead, we highlight key similarities between Trump and the British PRR, as embodied first by Nigel Farage and UKIP and later by Boris Johnson, to demonstrate that the dynamics shown in the USA are far from anomalous.

5.4.1 Shared Trajectories: Comparing the Rise of UKIP and Trump

Much like the Tea Party in the USA, the greatest impediment to the PRR as such sentiments rose in society was a failure to reconcile elite and mass priorities. This failure was more extreme in the UK than in the USA: in the latter, the rise of the PRR was stymied by Tea Party elites' obsession with austerity and fiscal discipline, but elites sympathized with the cultural attitudes of militants, based as they were in the long-term grievance politics of the Republican Party. UKIP, however, began life as "a small band of academics and political obsessives" that had virtually nothing to say about any issue other than Britain's membership in the European Union (Ford and Goodwin 2014, loc. 334). For years, the party had a rollercoaster trajectory, peaking during European elections wherein

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[14] For excellent and thorough treatments of this subject, see Clarke, Goodwin, and Whiteley (2017), Goodwin and Milazzo (2015), Ford and Goodwin (2014), Sobolewska and Ford (2020), Clarke, Goodwin, and Whiteley (2017).

votes were seen as a way of protesting the national government, and then floundering in national elections, where votes meant actual policy support. The party was disdained by mainstream politicos: they were a party of "fruitcakes, loonies and closet racists," as David Cameron put it (Ford and Goodwin 2014, loc. 365).

As in the USA, it took a charismatic political entrepreneur to turn things around, and similar tactics to do so. Specifically, Farage (like Trump) explicitly connected economic, cultural, and political grievances. He staked out an explicitly populist social narrative, arguing that Britain's ongoing membership in the European Union was the result of the evisceration of British sovereignty and its subsequent enslavement to a "European dream" irrationally held by bureaucrats in Brussels.[15] Farage depicts British politicians of all parties as cowards and liars, who (it is implied) knew the truth about the horrors of EU membership for ordinary Britons but were simply too afraid of being labeled as xenophobes or racists to do what was necessary. This theme is common in his pre-Brexit speeches, where he castigates both the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties for promising and failing to deliver a referendum on membership.[16] Finally, he escaped UKIP's status as a single-issue party by tying the EU issue to rising cultural concerns, especially related to immigration. Farage often embraces welfare chauvinism when discussing immigration, arguing that financial strains on social insurance and the National Health Service (NHS) can be attributed to unproductive immigrants from other EU countries, especially those in eastern Europe.[17]

Farage also parallels Trump in charting an ethnonationalist course between the increasing social liberalism of his country's conservative party and the open and unapologetic racism and fascism of the extreme right (Sobolewska and Ford 2020, 3). As alluded to in Section 5.3, Farage endlessly flogged immigration, to the consternation of more mainstream advocates of Brexit (Clarke, Goodwin, and Whiteley 2017, 34–35), but virtually always in economic rather than cultural terms. For example, he often tied his party's opposition to immigration to the harm it does to native-born workers, rather than to cultural conflicts. Yet cultural discontent has a habit of obliquely popping up at the end of Farage's sentences. A typical gambit is for Farage to go on at length about the economic risks of unlimited immigration (typically infused with populist grievances),

[15] Speech in Canada, July 2013. From McDonnell and Ondelli (2020).
[16] Speech in Eastbourne, June 7, 2014, ibid.
[17] Speech in Cambridgeshire, May 2, 2014, ibid.

and then to quickly drop terms like "speak our language"[18] or reference a willingness to welcome immigrants who "make sure their kids integrate and become British."[19] Here again we see the ethnonationalist openness to individuals from other races and ethnicities, but only if they abandon their own culture and assimilate into that of the ethnoracial majority. Nevertheless, Farage and UKIP explicitly rejected extreme right elements in British society, spurning the quasi-fascistic British National Party and the English Defense League (a British analogue of the Proud Boys in the USA), with one UKIP activist describing the latter as "fucking nutters" (Ford and Goodwin 2014, loc. 1808).

In a final link to Trumpism's trajectory, UKIP and Farage benefited politically from the Great Recession and mainstream parties' responses to it. As with Trump, Farage explicitly connected economics, culture, and politics, in a way that reflected the process of attitude formation under emotional duress that we have analyzed in this chapter and Chapter 4. We can show that a similar process unfolded in Britain through both timing and survey data. UKIP continually boomed and busted until the Great Recession, when austerity policies embraced by all three major parties provided UKIP with a major opening (Clarke et al. 2016). Labour suffered doubly, first for having been in power when the crisis broke and second for its embrace of austerity (Campbell 2018, 333–334), while the Liberal Democrats had lost much of their anti-system luster by joining the Conservative government from 2010 to 2015 (Bartle 2018, 273). UKIP was by no means anti-neoliberal or anti-austerity, but the savage cuts made by both Labour and the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition in 2010 gave new salience to UKIP's signature issues: the party frequently opined that tax rises were disproportionately harmful to working-class Britons, and that such rises and cuts would be unnecessary were Britain not accepting millions of immigrants nor sending billions of pounds to Brussels every year.

Survey data from the 2010 British Election Study (Whiteley and Sanders 2014) supports this conclusion. We used a structural equation path analysis model (path SEM) to analyze the influence of economic threat (measured using prospective and retrospective economic evaluations of personal and national economic situation) on attitudes toward immigrants, measured using questions about immigrants' contribution to crime, the economy, unemployment, culture, English identity, and the

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[18] Speech in Doncaster, September 25, 2015, ibid.
[19] Speech in Belfast, July 9, 2013, ibid.

threat of terrorism. We then regressed the influence of economic threat on immigration attitudes, and the influence of immigration attitudes and economic threat, on a feeling thermometer for UKIP. In each model, we controlled for income, gender, age, education, ideology, and race. Economic threat did not directly influence attitudes toward UKIP, but it did influence negative attitudes toward immigrants (standardized coefficient = 0.113; SE = 0.031; p = 0.000). Negative attitudes toward immigrants in turn positively affected attitudes toward UKIP (standardized coefficient = 0.186; SE = 0.035; p = 0.000). This model does not match our theory as closely as those for Trumpism, which is typical when using publicly available general topic surveys; yet the results are consistent with our experimental, observational, and qualitative findings.

5.4.2 Roads Diverge, or Do They? Populism Moves from Farage to Johnson

The major point of departure between the USA and the UK can be put down to a single event: the referendum on European Union membership in the UK (Brexit). Even as the major parties converged, David Cameron's ill-fated attempt to silence Eurosceptic forces on the right created a source of political flexibility in a political system that was otherwise ossified by the dominance of neoliberal parties. The nationalist victory at the polls upended the internationalist element of the UK political consensus by validating Euroscepticism, but it also proved a devastating blow to the relevance of UKIP, which quickly translated into an evisceration of the party's electoral support. With its signature issue now a *fait accompli*, UKIP could only watch as the Conservatives did something unusual in such a moribund party system: they adapted to the new reality, as Cameron resigned in favor of Eurosceptics Theresa May and, later, Boris Johnson, who shared with Farage both ethnonationalist and populist tendencies.

Boris Johnson seized the populist baton from Farage and proceeded to mimic Trumpism once again, albeit to a slightly diminished degree. From his purging of internationalists from the Conservative Party to the controversy over his prorogation of parliament, even to the scandal over funding of renovations to his residence, hypocritical violations of Covid-19 restrictions, and a sexual harassment scandal involving a member of his government, Johnson matched Trump beat by beat. The only exception being that the UK Conservatives eventually tired of Johnson's antics and evicted him from the premiership, while the Republican Party took only the most tentative steps away from Trump.

5.5 CONCLUSIONS

Whether due to a coincidental alignment of grievances or political canniness, Nigel Farage, Boris Johnson, and especially Donald Trump gouged quite effectively at nearly every wound and sore in their societies. Yet as our findings show, these attempts would likely have proved futile (or at least not sufficiently successful to allow outsiders with questionable qualifications to ascend high offices) without the economic devastation wrought by the Great Recession and the stifling of strong voice under ailing democracies. Emotions unleashed by economic hardship (and worsened by the ineffective and lopsidedly pro-finance government response to the crisis) intensified social grudges and prejudices.

The rise of Donald Trump in particular abounds with tragic irony; we have already mentioned some instances throughout this chapter. Perhaps the most perverse is that Trump benefited from challenging the neoliberal orthodoxy on trade. The irony comes in because Trump is the embodiment of the neoliberal ethos in many respects, excluding its internationalism. Like the philosophy that gave rise to privatized Keynesianism and the great risk shift, Trump pitched a view of the world in which all of us are profoundly, desperately alone, and where there are only two types of people (and nations): those that amorally exploit others, and those who get exploited. To the extent one can derive a consistent worldview from Trump's lifetime (if consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, Trump might be a very stable genius after all), it is this binary division of society. This incidentally is the only way that Trump deviates significantly from populism as commonly defined in the ideational approach: his division of the world is binary, but not Manichaean. There is no moral conflict in Trump's worldview because morality is for suckers; in Trump world, there is no good and bad, only smart/tough and stupid/weak. The dog-eat-dog ethos of radical neoliberalism nods approvingly.

Deepening the irony further is Trump's appeal as an outsider, someone unencumbered by the norms and traditions of "politics as usual." Trump was hardly a commoner; he had been a wealthy man and a celebrity for decades before he entered the political fray. But Trump's consistency with politics as usual goes further. Far from some radical departure, Trump was simply the logical conclusion of the Republican Party's use of racial and cultural grievances to encourage voters to accept its neoliberal policies ("welfare queens") or to draw their attention away from their unpopular stances on economic issues, especially as the Democrats embraced neoliberalism and thus squeezed out much of the

daylight between the two parties. The newest aspect of Trumpism was in synthesis: Trump finally managed to weave the two threads of late twentieth-century conservatism into something whole, a cohesive story with a foundation in white nationalism to explain all the damage and decline that characterized that same period. Eurosceptic populists in the UK largely followed suit, with similar (if somewhat less dramatic) results.

The patterns seen here will repeat as we go through the remaining case studies in this book. The political battles fought during the Great Recession were rarely waged predominantly on economic grounds. This was certainly true of Trumpism, with its focus on race, ethnicity, immigration, and gender, and we will see similar dynamics in other countries over corruption, national identity, and other noneconomic concerns. Yet economics is always there, turning up the temperature on social debates through resentment and (to a lesser extent) anxiety, driving polarization, contention, and even the threat of political violence across the world.