Online Exchange on "Democratic Deconsolidation"

In July 2016 and January 2017, the *Journal of Democracy* published two articles on "democratic deconsolidation" by Roberto Stefan Foa and Yascha Mounk. These essays not only generated a great deal of commentary in the media, but also stimulated numerous responses from scholars focusing on Foa and Mounk's analysis of the survey data that is at the heart of their argument.

Several prominent experts approached the *Journal* asking if we would publish their critiques of the Foa and Mounk articles. This created a dilemma for us. Given our space constraints and our commitments to authors writing on other topics, there was no way we could publish these critiques quickly enough to keep pace with discussion in other forums.

Moreover, given their extensive reliance on graphics and the necessarily technical character of arguments about the interpretation of survey data, there was no way that we could accommodate these critiques within the usual confines of our print issues. The *Journal* has always sought to make its articles reader-friendly to non-academics. Accordingly, we strictly limit the length of articles and avoid extensive use of graphics and endnotes. We also edit articles intensively and with great care to make them as accessible as we can to political practitioners and activists, as well as to a general audience. It would have been an insuperable task, especially given our small editorial staff, to try to adhere to these standards with regard to these critiques of Foa and Mounk.

Therefore, in a departure from our usual practice, we have decided to make three of these critiques—by **Amy C. Alexander and Christian Welzel; Pippa Norris;** and **Erik Voeten**—available to readers *exclusively on our website*, along with a **reply by Foa and Mounk.** The three critiques and the reply may be viewed **here.**

Our regular readers will note that they do not resemble typical *Journal of Democracy* articles. They have not been condensed or edited by us, and they contain extensive graphics. An advantage of presenting them solely online, however, is that we are able to display these graphics in full and in a much more readable form than would be possible in our print edition.

We are pleased to be able to make available in this way a timely discussion of some of the important issues raised by the Foa and Mounk articles, and we hope that interested scholars will find this exchange useful. As is the case with all articles in the *Journal*, our parent organization, the National Endowment for Democracy, does not necessarily endorse the views expressed here, which are those of the authors.

—The Editors, 28 April 2017 (updated 26 June 2017)

The Myth of Deconsolidation:
Rising Liberalism and the Populist Reaction[1]

Amy C. Alexander[2] & Christian Welzel[3]

> "We all agree that pessimism is a mark of superior intellect."
> (John Kenneth Galbraith)

Introduction

In two widely read articles, Roberto Foa and Yascha Mounk[4] reach the alarming conclusion that support for democracy is in a rapid generational decline. The remarkable point about this diagnosis is its emphasis on the Millennial generation's fading support for democracy and the claim that democratic support is steeply eroding in even the most mature democracies. The latter contention marks a significant turning point in the debate. Public discourse has taken a pessimistic tone since quite some time, bemoaning the apparently ubiquitous resurgence of authoritarianism outside the Western world. But the mature democracies of the West seemed to constitute an insurmountable firewall against the authoritarian offense. The novelty in Foa and Mounk's analysis is that it questions this very premise, resonating with growing concerns in the face of spreading populism. Indeed, Foa and Mounk imply that the generational erosion of democratic support is responsible for the populist turn throughout the electorates of mature democracies, especially among younger cohorts. In conclusion, Foa and Mounk suggest that democracy itself is in danger, including places where it seemed safest over many generations.

For decades, public discourse experiences a recurrent ebb and flow in the "crisis of democracy" rhetoric. The crisis rhetoric reached a first peak in the aftermath of the flower power movement of the late 1960s when Samuel Huntington and his co-authors[5] criticized the student revolts as causing a "governability crisis." Another peak appeared in the early 2000s when Robert Putnam[6] attested to the rise of a "post-civic" generation whose members lack the social capital by which democracy thrives. Despite the fact that post-war democracies have weathered these and other problems, alarmist messages continue to find a sympathetic audience. As the burgeoning literature on democratic backsliding[7] documents, we face today another high tide in the "democracy in crisis" rhetoric. Foa and Mounk have quickly become leading voices in this choir.

We question their alarmist claims on a number of accounts. To begin with, Foa and Mounk heavily overstate the age differences in democratic support. Second, the obvious age pattern in indicators of political disaffection has little to do with generations; it is instead a lifecycle effect: younger people showed stronger signs of disaffection already in earlier decades, but this age pattern is not linked to a uniform temporal trend towards increasing disaffection in the electorates of mature democracies. Here, we agree with Pippa Norris's contribution to this debate forum.[8]

Third, and more importantly, Foa and Mounk overlook that support ratings for democracy are largely incomparable across birth cohorts. The reason is that the moral values on which people base their democratic support have turned dramatically more liberal over the generations. As a consequence, support for democracy has changed its *meaning*: while older generations continue to endorse illiberal notions of democracy, younger generations support an unequivocally liberal notion.

Fourth, key quality aspects of democracy at the system level depend critically on the *type* of support that prevails. Specifically, the extent of illiberal support for democracy in a country is a first-rate indicator of severe *deficiencies* in democracy, including its outright absence. By

contrast, the prevalence of liberal support is tightly linked to high performance levels on literally every major criterion of democracy. Without further qualifications for the values in which it is rooted, support for democracy is hiding more than it reveals.

Finally, defining the right-wing populist electorate as those voter segments who combine a pronounced disaffection from representative institutions with illiberal moral values, we demonstrate that this electorate has been visibly shrinking over recent decades, at the same time as its members have become socially more distinct and ideologically more distant from an increasingly liberal mainstream in their societies.

In conclusion, the recent success of right-wing populist parties neither indicates an increased voter base for these parties, nor does it signal fading civic qualities among the younger generations of mature democracies. To the contrary, the right-wing populist electorate is increasingly concentrated among older generations and within marginalized social classes. This electorate is now easier to address and to mobilize precisely because it has become smaller, more distinct and more distant. The greater visibility of right-wing populism does not revert or disprove the massively rising liberalism of recent decades but illustrates a growing class divide over illiberal-vs.-liberal moral values—as a consequence of the progressive cultural shift.

We are not downplaying the dangers of right-wing populism. These dangers are real and should by no means be taken lightly. However, we need to understand the nature of the threat before we can prescribe a cure that works. The source of the problem is certainly not the younger generation and its alleged loss of support for democracy. Instead, it is the growing marginalization of the lower social classes, their resulting ideological divergence from the increasingly progressive mainstream and the failure of the established parties, as well as the media, to adequately address the legitimate concerns of the "left behinds."

The remainder of this essay follows a sequence of five sections, which provide the evidence for the points just stated. Our findings derive mostly from the European Values Study (EVS) and the World Values Survey (WVS). Because of limitations in coverage from the mid 1990s until recently, we focus on seven key democracies from around the globe, including Western Europe (Germany, Spain and Sweden), North America (USA), East Asia (Japan, South Korea) and Latin America (Argentina). Supplementary analyses documented elsewhere[9] show that the patterns found among these seven countries are typical for mature post-industrial democracies more generally.

Negligible Decline

We start with Foa and Mounk's point of departure: public support for democracy.[10] Replicating their analyses for our seven democracies[11], we find a pattern that seems to provide an impressive confirmation of the major point: over time and across birth cohorts, support for democracy is in decline.

However, our replication also underlines Pippa Norris's[12] criticism: levels of democratic support are astoundingly high even for the least supportive cohorts and only vary within a narrow corridor. Indeed, from the third round of the WVS in 1995-98 (i.e. the first round in which the respective items were fielded) to the sixth and most recent round in 2011-14, average support for democracy fell only from 81 to 77 percent. Age-related differences in support only vary between 79 percent in the oldest birth cohort (i.e. people born before 1930) and 74 percent in the youngest one (born after 1980). Even though these age-related differences are statistically significant, they account for a negligible 0.9 percent of the variance in support for democracy. In a nutshell, the decline in support for democracy across birth cohorts and over time is by no means as dramatic as Foa and Mounk propagate.

But even this weak evidence for a decline is misleading. The reason is that it obscures a groundbreaking transformation in the lifestyles that people pursue and, consequently, in the

notions of democracy that they support. In other words, support for democracy has massively changed its meaning over the generations. This transformation is a direct consequence of the emancipatory change in moral values that *all* mature democracies have experienced over recent decades to various degrees.[13]

Moral Progress

By far the most dynamic field of the emancipatory shift is a transition in sexuality norms from an illiberal rejection of divorce, abortion and homosexuality to a liberal tolerance of these lifestyle issues.[14] This development represents a true evolutionary novelty in humanity's moral systems. Since the dawn of civilization, moral systems coincided across cultures in emphasizing strict heterosexuality, the sacrosanctity of marriage and women's chastity outside of marriage combined with their fertility inside of it—all of which exist to enforce male control over female sexuality.[15] As long as religion and other conservative forces have propped up these patriarchal norms, democracy's emancipatory spirit has been kept out from the cellular unit of society: the family household.[16] With the emergence of liberal sexuality norms, patriarchy's last stance is falling. The direct consequence of this evolutionary leap in moral systems is a thorough and truly unprecedented strengthening of democracy's social foundation. Accordingly, rising liberalism in sexuality norms is highly indicative of how true to democracy's liberal principles the outspoken supporters of democracy actually define democracy. For this reason, liberal sexuality norms are also indicative of the objective democratic qualities that a regime's institutions embody.

Liberal values in other domains—including racial tolerance—show the same linkages, but these are not quite as strong. Among the various domains of liberal values, those in sexuality show exceptionally strong linkages with prevalent notions and actual qualities of democracy. The evidence follows suit.

Figure 1 illustrates the massive rise of liberal values in the domain of sexuality norms over time and across generations.[17] From 1995-98 to 2011-14, the average support of liberal values increased from 45 to 53 percent. If we choose 1981-83 as the reference point (i.e. the first time the respective items were fielded), liberal values rose from 32 to 53 percent. The age-related differences in liberal values range from a support level of 46 percent in the oldest cohort (people born before 1930) to 61 percent in the youngest one (people born after 1990).

Recent research shows that the rise of liberal values is mostly—but by no means exclusively—a Western phenomenon.[18] South Korea, Taiwan, Japan as well as Chile and Uruguay are cases in point. In fact, the mere passage of time explains very well the amount of increase in these values among countries in which improving existential conditions—from better living standards to longer life expectancies, to broader access to education and information—have significantly widened the life opportunities of large population segments over the generations.[19] In terms of historic drivers, fallen mortalities in around 1900 and universal schooling at this time explain liberal values today much better than do either an early presence of liberal democracy or an early emergence of economic wealth.[20] Not surprisingly in light of these powerful path dependencies, there are still many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and the post-Soviet space where liberal values remain weak or are pushed back by resurgent illiberal forces—most notably religious fundamentalism and authoritarian nationalism. By no coincidence, these are also the places where democracy does not take root or is in trouble. Prominent examples include Russia, Turkey, Nigeria, the Philippines and Venezuela, among many others.[21]

Figure 1. The Rise of Liberal Values
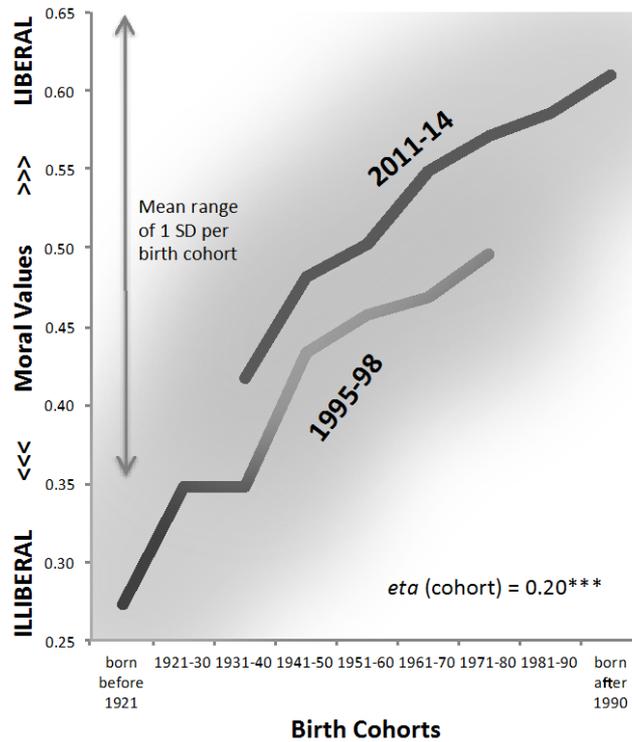
Note: Vertical axis measures for respondents of the same birth cohort their average endorsement of homosexulaity, abortion and divorce as tolerable choices on a scale ranging from a theoretical minimum of 0 to a maximum of 1, as explained in endnote 17. Data source is EVS/WVS rounds 3 and 6, pooling samples from Argentina, Germany, Japan, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, the US, weighting each sample to an equal *N* of 1,000 per round (pooled *N* ≈ 14,000).

The cleavage over sexuality norms divides supporters of democracy into two separate "moral tribes"[22]: illiberal and liberal supporters of democracy. The left-hand diagram in Figure 2 illustrates how the prevalence of these two moral tribes varies across birth cohorts.[23] In the oldest cohort, we find 36 percent illiberal supporters of democracy and 25 percent liberal supporters.[24] In the youngest cohort, there are 15 percent illiberal and 45 percent liberal supporters.

As the right-hand diagram in Figure 2 documents, these cohort differences map onto a corresponding temporal shift in the ratio of liberal to illiberal supporters of democracy: in 1995-98, liberal supporters constitute less than three quarters of the illiberal supporters; in 2011-14, by contrast, we find double as many liberal as illiberal supporters of democracy. These numbers demonstrate in striking clarity that the predominant stability in overall support for democracy masks a dramatic reshuffling in the moral kinds of supporters. The negligible decrease in overall support to which Foa and Mounk refer is entirely driven by the drastic shrinkage of illiberal supporters of democracy. But—as we will see—the loss of precisely these supporters is actually beneficial to democracy's liberal qualities.

Consequences

The cultural shift from illiberal to liberal support for democracy is consequential. Above all, this is true for the normative model of democracy that the outspoken supporters of democracy pursue. Indeed, the prevalence of liberal supporters in a country translates into corresponding differences in how strongly people base their preferred model of democracy on a liberal notion of it. We measure such a notion by how strongly people endorse free elections, equal rights and civil liberties as meanings of democracy and, at the same time, by how strongly they reject military governments, religious dictatorship and obedience to rulers as meanings of

democracy.[25] Against this backdrop, Figure 3 shows that a larger share of liberal supporters of democracy goes hand in hand with a stronger prevalence of liberal notions of democracy.[26] This relationship is cross-culturally universal: it spans 69 countries from all corners of the globe, which represent more than ninety percent of the world population.[27]

Figure 2. The Changing Moral Composition of Supporters of Democracy
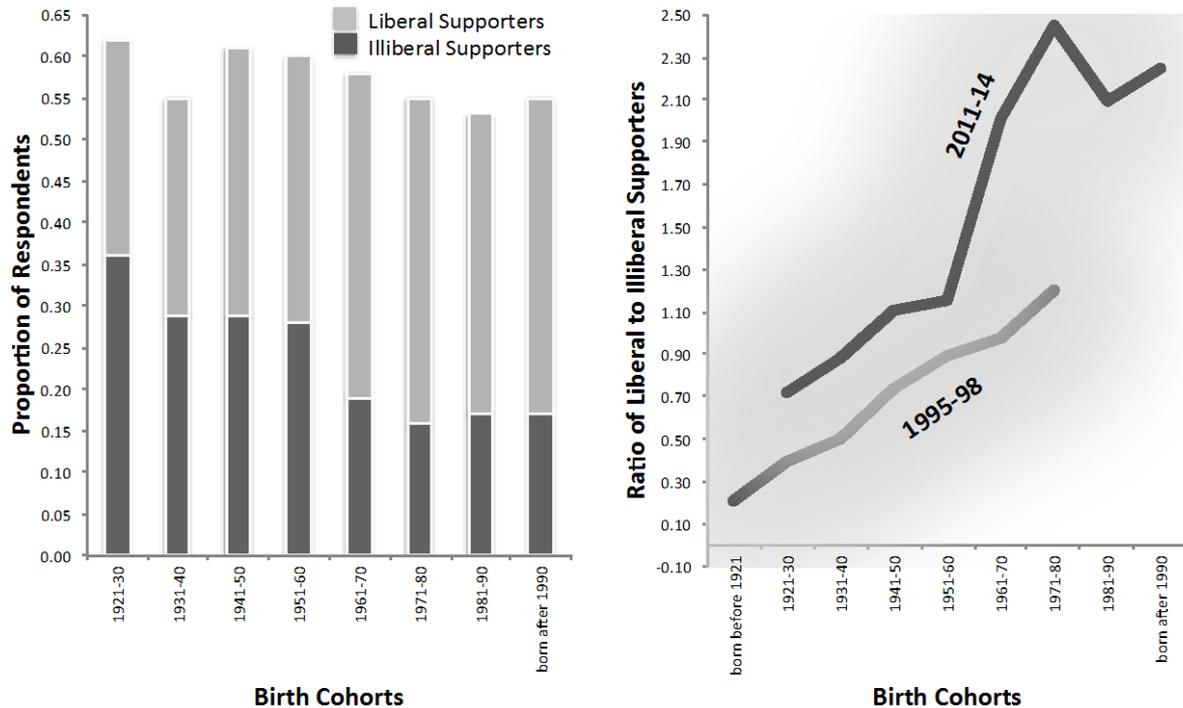
Note: Vertical axis measures liberal and illiberal support for democracy (as explaind in endnote 22): illiberal supporters support democracy and emphasize illiberal sexual values; liberal supporters support democracy and emphasize liberal sexual values. Data source is EVS/WVS rounds 3 and 6, pooling samples from Argentina, Germany, Japan, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, the US, weighting each sample to an equal *N* of 1,000 per round (pooled *N* ≈ 14,000).

The link between the moral type of democratic support and the favored notion of democracy is *natural* but by no means *tautological*. It is natural because there is a connecting element of liberal thought on both sides of the equation. But the link is not tautological because its existence requires that people translate liberal *sexuality* values into liberal *regime* notions. Given that sexuality values and regime notions are conceptually distinct domains, it cannot be taken for granted that people cross this bridge, until convincing evidence proves the point. And this is precisely what our evidence does.

Is the degree of liberal democracy among the countries' institutions linked with the prevalence of liberal supporters among the respective publics? Advocates of "congruence theory"[28] would certainly expect such an association, following the assumption that regime institutions need to fit public preferences in order to persist. Skeptics, however, might stress that regime institutions and public preferences are strictly separate phenomena with no direct link between them.[29] Indeed, scholars have pointed out repeatedly that the cross-national correlation between democratic regime institutions and democratic mass preferences is at best modest, if not entirely insignificant (after proper controls).[30]

In light of our previous finding, the missing link between democratic institutions and democratic preferences is no longer surprising. When only a particular sub-group of outspoken supporters of democracy—namely those with liberal sexuality values—actually embraces democracy's liberal meaning, pressures to realize this meaning in a country's institutional set-up can only be expected to arise from a public in which precisely this liberal sub-group dominates. By contrast, authoritarian regimes are not confronted with such expectation

pressures, even under widespread support for democracy, when the dominant type of supporters is of the illiberal kind.

Figure 3. The Link of Liberal Support for Democracy with Opposing Notions of Democracy
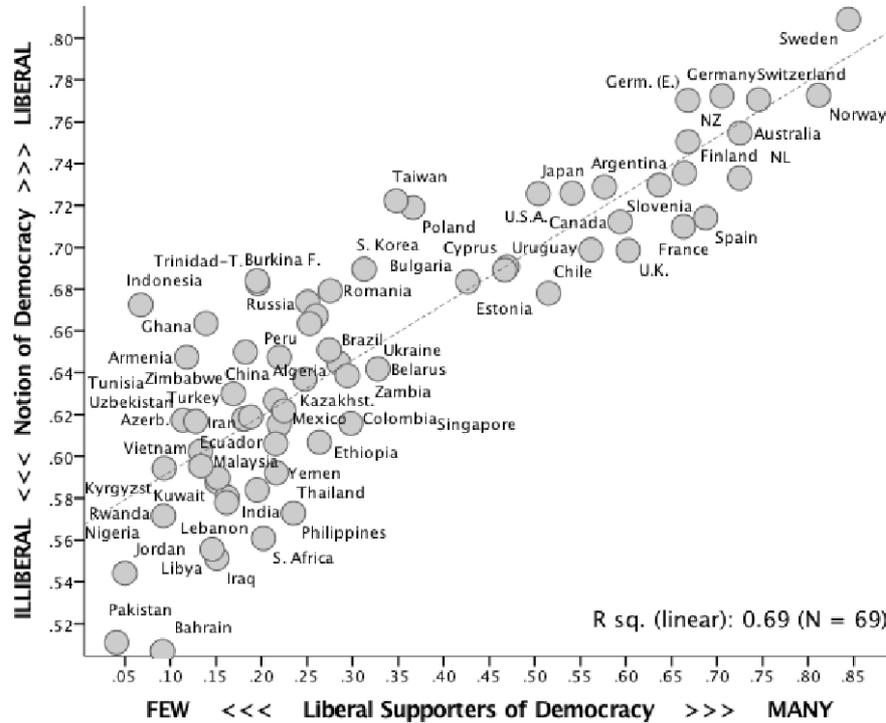
Note: Horizontal axis measures proportions of liberal supporters of democracy (as defined in endnote 22) for every country surveyed at least once by the EVS/WVS, using the data from the latest survey (we display square-rooted scores to correct a skewed distribution of the original proportions). Notions of democracy on the vertical axis are measured as explained in endnote 25, using the latest available survey.

The evidence in Figure 4 supports this rationale. Across 90 countries worldwide, the extent to which liberal supporters of democracy prevail in a public explains more than fifty percent of the variation in liberal democracy itself. Our diagram shows this for a summary measure of liberal democracy, taken from the widely acclaimed "varieties of democracy" (V-Dem) project.[31] If we replace this measure with Norris' "electoral integrity" index[32], the share of liberal supporters of democracy in a country explains a similar amount of institutional variation. Likewise, using instead the "effective democracy" index by Alexander and Welzel[33], the share of liberal supporters of democracy explains almost 70 percent of the institutional variation across more than a hundred countries.

Scholars have wondered since long why the extent of democratic mass support in a public tells us so little about the respective country's actual democraticness.[34] The evidence presented here resolves this puzzle: support for democracy needs to be divided into distinct versions, depending on the values that motivate it. Without recognizing such distinctions, one confuses support variants that actually operate *against* each other as concerns regime outcomes.

Democratic preferences are significantly and meaningfully associated with democratic institutions. But even though this link is reasonably strong, it is nevertheless somewhat loose. There are good reasons for this looseness: any link between regime preferences and regime institutions is mediated by an important filter: what the "institution builders" of a country—the elites—are doing. Apparently, what they do is far from being completely determined by public preferences. But it is also not totally detached from them. Quite the contrary, below a 15 percent share of liberal supporters (i.e. the level of Ghana), *not a single* country reaches a higher than 30 percent level of liberal democracy. Vice versa, above a 60 percent share of liberal supporters (i.e. the level of Argentina), *every* country achieves a higher than 50 percent level of liberal

democracy. In-between these thresholds, the degree of liberal democracy is less easily predicted. Accordingly, elites seem to have more leeway in designing institutions the way they like in countries where the public's values are more undecided in matters of liberty.[35]

Figure 4. The Link of Liberal Support for Democracy with the Level of Liberal Democracy among Regime Institutions
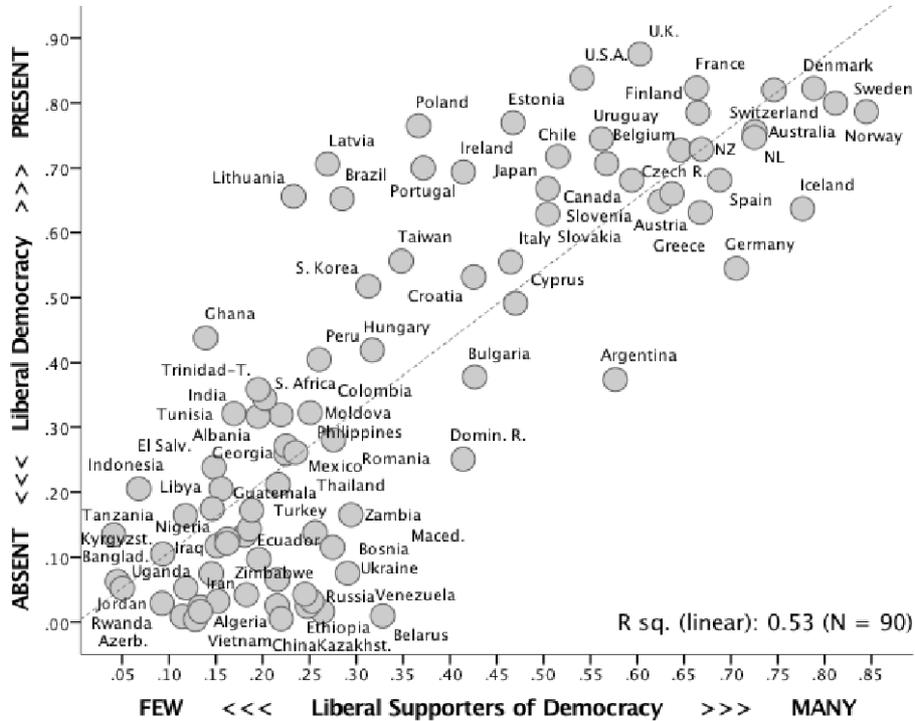
Note: Horizontal axis measures proportions of liberal supporters of democracy (as defined in endnote 22) for every country surveyed at least once by the EVS/WVS, using the data from the latest survey (we display square-rooted scores to correct a skewed distribution of the original proportions). Liberal democracy on the vertical axis is the V-Dem measure of liberal democracy from the latest year (i.e., 2012) at the time of this writing (we display squared scores to correct a skewed distribution in the original scores).

It is not immediately obvious what causal mechanism is behind the evident link between democratic preferences and democratic institutions. But let us emphasize in the first place that there really is a significant preference-institution link. Its mere existence is already in and by itself noteworthy because an influential literature continues to dispute its presence.[36] Contradicting this literature, recent contributions offer both plausibility and evidence suggesting that how democratically institutions are structured and how democratically they operate is at least in part an elite response to expectation pressures deriving from firmly encultured values at the grassroots of society.[37]

Understanding Populism

How can we reconcile rising liberalism with the recent success of right-wing populism in the same mature democracies we have just examined? This question is all the more burning, given that part of what defines right-wing populism is a decidedly illiberal stance toward key moral questions.[38] Besides a rejection of cultural pluralism and cosmopolitanism, resistance against liberal sexuality norms is at the heart of illiberalism. Traditional sexuality norms idealize women's chastity outside of marriage and their fertility inside of it, as well as the sacrosanctity of marriage itself and strict heterosexuality.[39] The purpose of these norms is to solidify male control over female sexuality. In spite of liberalism's triumphs in other areas, conservative forces have hitherto been able to block its expansion into the society's cellular units within which male control over female sexuality is most fundamentally embedded: the family

household. Rising tolerance of divorce, abortion and homosexuality is now challen-ging illiberalism's last stance. Hence, defending illiberal sexuality norms is a key defining element of the cultural backlash that inspires right-wing populism.[40]

Figure 5. Locating Populism in a Two-dimensional Cleavage Space
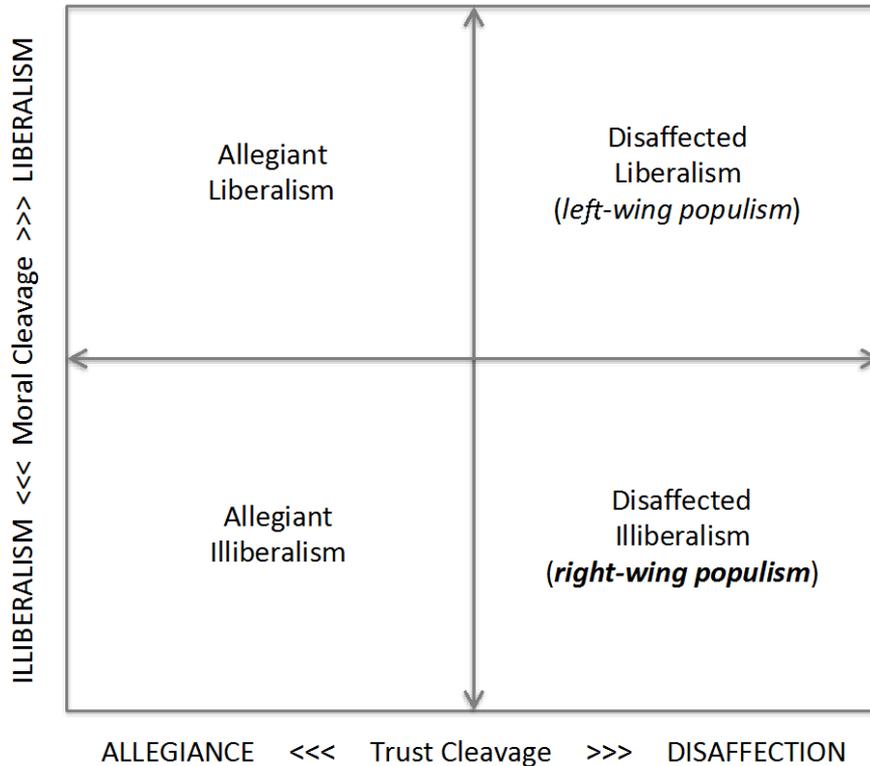
Another feature of populism is a *diffuse* form of political dissatisfaction. It is a normal part of democratic life that people are dissatisfied with certain policies and politicians. But when democratic representation works, people's dissatisfaction remains limited to what the actors *outside* their own party allegiance do. Such specific dissatisfaction does not turn into a generalized disaffection from political institutions as such, if party-voter alignments operate properly. But populism's "anti-establishment" rhetoric mobilizes precisely these diffuse fee-lings of disaffection.[41] Political disaffection is also the common denominator of right-wing and left-wing populism, both of which appeal to anti-establishment sentiments. Where they depart is on moral liberalism versus illiberalism: while right-wing populism adheres to illiberal moral values, left-wing populism does the opposite.

Accordingly, populism takes shape by the combination of two cleavages: (1) the *moral* cleavage over illiberal versus liberal norms of living together; and (2) the *trust* cleavage over allegiance versus disaffection with respect to representative institutions.

Figure 5 visualizes this idea, showing four quadrants: (a) on the *lower left*, the two cleavages combine into *allegiant illiberalism*; (b) on the *upper left*, they create *allegiant liberalism*; (c) on the *upper right*, we obtain *disaffected liberalism*; (d) on the *lower right*, we find *disaffected illiberalism*. Due to our logic, disaffected liberalism constitutes the support base of left-wing populism and disaffected illiberalism that of right-wing populism.

To measure people's position on the illiberalism-vs.-liberalism dimension, we continue to use the three questions about the toleration of (a) divorce, (b) abortion and (c) homo-sexuality. To measure positions on the allegiance-vs.-disaffection dimension, we use another three questions addressing people's confidence in their (a) national government, (b) parlia-ment and (c) political parties.[42] Because our typology characterizes right-wing populism as the

combination of illiberalism and disaffection, we also create a single measure of each respondent's disaffected illiberalism by averaging positions over the two components.[43]

We believe that our typology provides a reasonable reference point to evaluate Foa and Mounk's claims. Again, their major point is an alleged generational decline in support for democracy, combined with the assumption that this decline is paralleled by a rise of populism among the younger generations. Foa and Mounk are not always specific about whether they are concerned with left-wing or right-wing populism. But their reference to Brexit, Trump and the Front National suggests that, for the most part, they have right-wing populism in mind.

Since our typology characterizes right-wing populism as "disaffected illiberalism," it offers a straightforward testing ground for Foa and Mounk's claims.[44] If these claims are correct, we must see a rise of disaffected illiberalism (a) over time and (b) across generations.

The Contraction of the Populist Electorate

The left-hand diagram in Figure 6 demonstrates that disaffected illiberalism is in a pretty sharp *decline* (a) over time and (b) across generations. This pattern repeats itself when we break down the evidence separately for each country. Countries show differences in the base levels of disaffected illiberalism but we always see a decline over time and across gene-rations. At any rate, the evidence not only contradicts Foa and Mounk's claims; it literally turns them upside down.

Since it has become fashionable among the publics of mature democracies to express distrust in representative institutions, we might overestimate the size of the right-wing popu-list electorates, unless additional qualifications are taken into account. Perhaps the most obvious qualification is a form of national parochialism that rejects immigrants. We look at questions revealing whether respondents point out "people of a different race" or "immi-grants/foreign workers" as unliked neighbors or whether they think that native-born people should be favored over immigrants in getting jobs.[45] Then we re-estimate disaffected illiberalism on the condition that it includes this form of national parochialism.[46] The result is shown in the right-hand diagram of Figure 6. We see the same drop as in the left-hand diagram, again over time and across generations, except for the fact that the base level is now about fifteen percentage points lower. A reason why this pattern repeats itself, even under the inclusion of national parochialism, is that national parochialism itself shows the same recess trend over time and across generations—and very clearly so.[47]

Besides, the cohort pattern in Figure 6 closely resembles that from exit polls for supporters of Trump, Brexit and right-wing populist parties throughout Western Europe: monotonically declining support rates from older to younger voters.

Left Behind

The ideological support base of right-wing populism is *shrinking* in mature democracies. Liberal values in matters of sexual self-determination and foreigner tolerance are rising and political disaffection is stable.[48] The apparent age pattern in political disaffection has little generational to it but is mostly a lifecycle effect: younger people have been more disaffected already in earlier times but turn more allegiant as they age.[49]

Figure 6. The Shrinking Support Base of Right-wing Populism
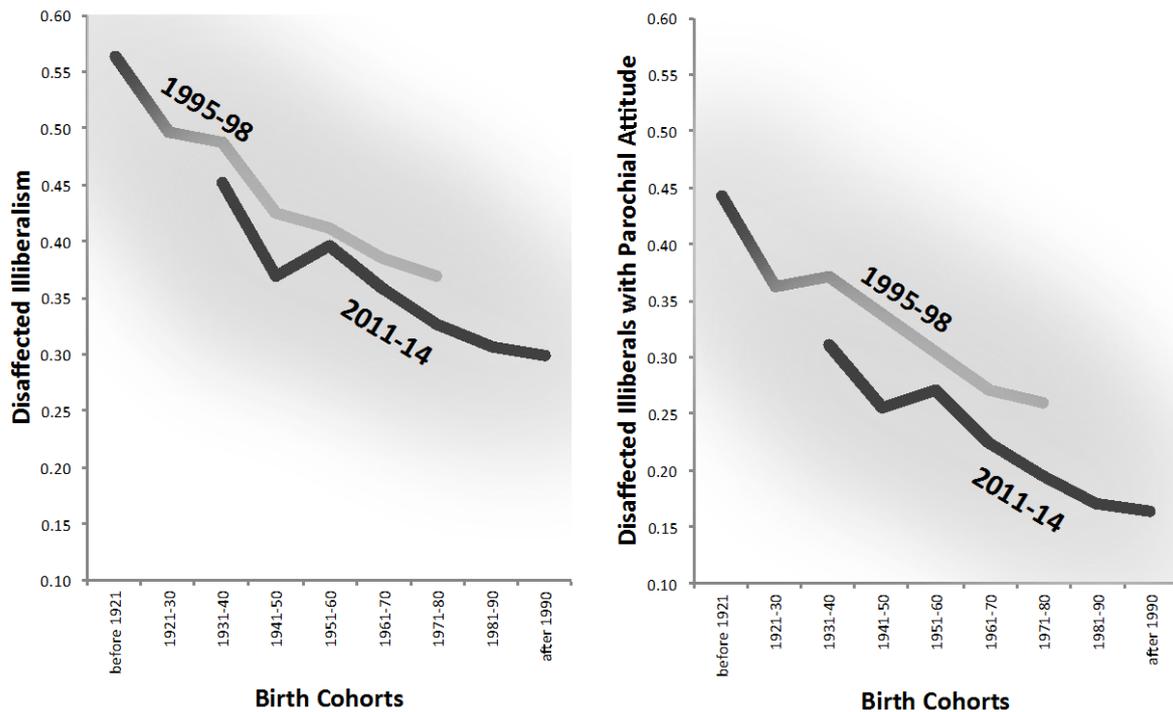
Note: Vertical axis in the left-hand diagram measures disaffected illiberalism as explained in endnote 43. Vertical axis on the right-hand diagram measures diaffected illiberals with a nationalist parochial attitude, as explained in endnote 45. Data source is EVS/WVS rounds 3 and 6, pooling samples from Argentina, Germany, Japan, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, the US, weighting each sample to an equal *N* of 1,000 per round (pooled *N* ≈ 14,000).

Nevertheless, right-wing populist forces have recently been alarmingly successful in referenda and elections. If this success is not the result of a growing support base, it must be the consequence of a more effective mobilization of this base. The shrinking of the base might itself be part of the reason why the base is more effectively mobilized: smaller groups are easier to address. Groups are also easier to address when their social profile is sharper. Perhaps, then, the electoral base of right-wing populism is better mobilized because its social profile sharpened.

The data support this conclusion. Using again disaffected illiberalism as the indicator of right-wing populism, we explain 13.9 percent of the variation in this attitude by the respondents' gender, age, residence, income, education, parochialism and religiosity—in 1995-98. In 2011-14, the same set of characteristics explains almost double as much of the variation in disaffected illiberalism, namely 25.5 percent. Accordingly, disaffected illibe-ralism has become a socially more distinct attitude. Not necessarily in absolute terms, but relative to the mainstream of society, the shrinking segment of disaffected illiberals is now more masculine, older, more rural, poorer, less educated, as well as more parochial and religious in its orientation than it used to be.

Furthermore, there are good reasons to assume that the rising emancipatory spirit has not only lifted the overall level of liberal values but has also increased the polarization over these values—especially between the social classes. Indeed, a major commonality among post-industrial democracies is the increasing concentration of wealth in the top social stratum, stagnant real wages and declining job security, above all in low-skill occupations.[50] These trends, observable sine the 1980s, might have made social class more salient again.

Once more, the data confirm this expectation. Overwhelming majorities of respondents in mature democracies show no hesitation in indicating their class membership when asked about whether they belong to the "lower," "working," "lower middle," "upper middle" or "upper class."[51] In fact, less than three percent of the respondents in our seven mature

democracies are unable or unwilling to indicate their class membership. Non-response rates to this question actually fell from 1995-98 to 2011-14.

Moreover, the association of people's *subjective* class membership with *objective* indicators of socioeconomic status—including education and income—is remarkably strong, albeit shifting from education to income.[52]

Figure 7 pools people into their subjective social class and shows each class's mean position on our cleavage map. As before, the lower-right quadrant on this map demarcates disaffected illiberalism—the ideological area most predisposed to right-wing populism.[53] The social classes are depicted by pie pieces whose size reflects the share of the respective class among the residential population. The arrows show from where to where the social classes have been moving over the period from 1995-98 to 2011-14.

Figure 7. Growing Class Polarization in the Cleavage Space
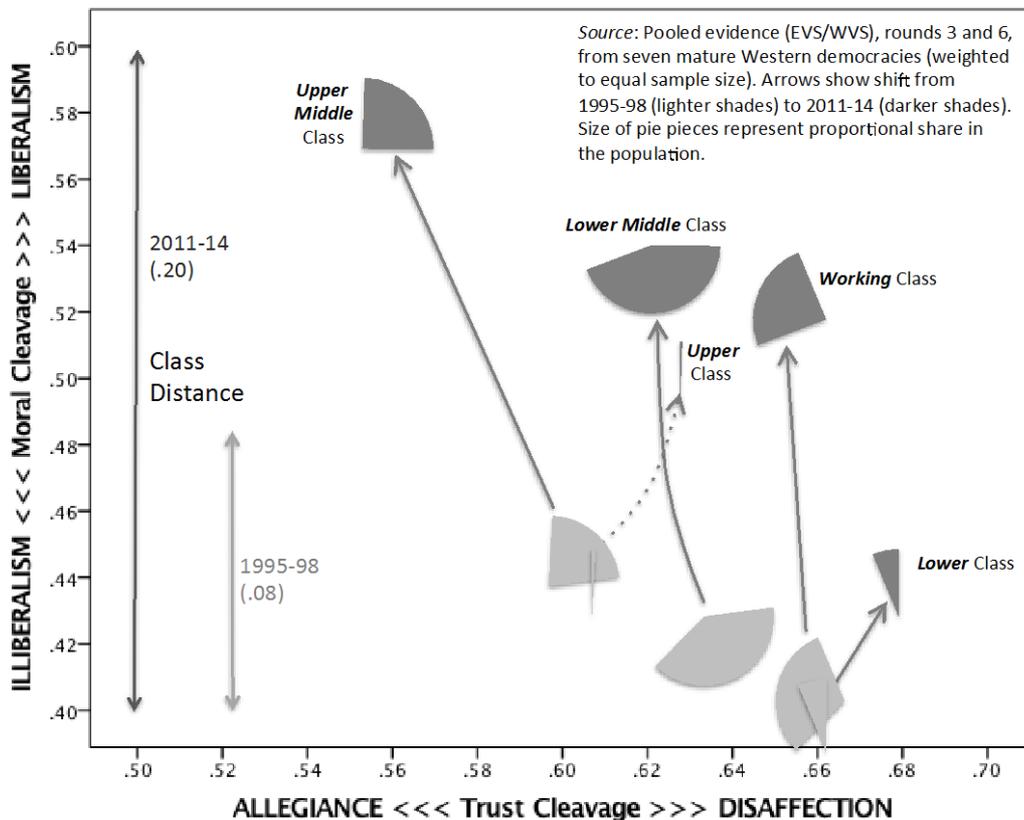
Apparently, the predominant shift across all social classes is from illiberal to liberal values, reflecting the general emancipatory trend typical of all post-industrial societies. But even though the direction of the shift is the same for all social classes, the speed with which they move varies significantly—indeed so significantly that the ideological distance between the upper middle class, on the one hand, and the working and lower classes, on the other hand, has more than doubled.

No question, even members of the lower class have turned more liberal over time, yet by far not as pronouncedly as the other social classes. This pattern highlights the difference between absolute and relative ideological positions. In absolute terms, the lower class has turned more liberal. Relative to the other social classes, however, the lower class is now considerably more illiberal. The pattern looks basically the same for all our seven democracies; only its strength shows some variation.

Conclusion

In light of our evidence, it is mistaken to interpret the recent success of right-wing populist parties as the consequence of a reversal of the emancipatory dynamic of recent decades. Instead, the success of right-wing populist parties is a counter-reaction to the emancipatory dynamic among those electoral segments that have been "left behind" by the mainstream's emancipatory speed.

It would be a mistake to bash the "left behind" class segments as a "basket of deplorables." There have also been failures among the established parties in adequately addressing the legitimate concerns of these voter groups. Indeed, prominent center-left parties, like New Labor in the UK, ceased to advocate economic policies that meet the lower class's interest in decent wages and job security. Likewise, major center-right parties, like the Christian Democrats in Germany, gave up a distinctively conservative stance in lifestyle matters that would appeal to the lower class's traditional values. In other words, by switching their historically evolved sides in the cleavage space, established parties left the lower class in an ideological vacuum that populist parties are now eager to fill.

Let us not be mistaken. The dangers of this situation for democracy are real—but not for the reasons proposed by Foa and Mounk. This is an important insight because the prescription of a healthy cure requires a correct diagnosis in the first place. The real source of our current problems is the increased class polarization and the marginalization of the lower classes. It resonates easily with these people's feelings when populists declare immigration and globalization as the cause of their problems. For the established parties it is no longer enough to sweep away such concerns as groundless or to disqualify their proponents as morally inferior. But democracy is a learning system, which is reason for hope that the liberal forces wake up and become more active in meeting the populist challenge.

[4]   R.S. Foa and Y. Mounk. 2016. "The Danger of Deconsolidation: The Democratic Disconnect" *Journal of Democracy* 27: 5-17. R.S. Foa and Y. Mounk. 2017. "The Signs of Deconsolidation." *Journal of Democracy* 28: 5-15.

[5]   M.J. Crozier, S.P. Huntington and J. Watanuki. 1975. *The Crisis of Democracy*. New York: New York University Press.

[6]   R.D. Putnam. 2000. *Bowling Alone*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

[7]   L. Diamond, M.F. Plattner and C. Walker (eds.). 2016. *Authoritarianism Goes Global*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

[8]   P. Norris. 2017. "Is Western Democracy Backsliding?" *Journal of Democracy* Web Exchange.

[9]   A.C. Alexander, R. Inglehart and C. Welzel. 2015. "Emancipating Sexuality." *Social Indicators Research* 102: 1-27. F. Deutsch and C. Welzel. 2016. "Value Diffusion among Autocracies and Democracies." *Global Policy* 7: 563-570. C. Welzel and R.J. Dalton. 2016. "Cultural Change in Asia and Beyond." *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics* 1: 1-25.

[10]   The WVS asks people about their regime preferences (v127-v130 in the round six questionnaire), on four-point scales from strong support to strong rejection, using such items as "having a democratic political system," "having the army rule," and "having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliaments and elections." We rescale these variables such that *support* for having a democratic system and *rejection* of having the army rule as well as rejecting strong leaders are scored on the high end. Then we average

[10] each respondent's position over the three items and standardize the scale into a range from 0 (strongly rejecting democracy and strongly supporting the army rule/strong leaders) to 1 (the exact opposite position), with decimal fractions of 1 indicating intermediate positions. Country-level scores are population averages on this 0-to-1 scale.

[11] Here and throughout all subsequent analyses, we pool the samples of the seven democracies and weight each national sample to equal size ($N = 1,000$), using the weight variable "S019" of the WVS.

[12] Norris, op. cit.

[13] P. Norris. 2011. *Democratic Deficit*. New York: Cambridge University Press. C. Welzel. 2013. *Freedom Rising*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Alexander, Inglehart and Welzel, op. cit.; Welzel and Dalton, op. cit..

[14] Alexander, Inglehart and Welzel, op. cit.

[15] Ibid.

[16] M. Sunder. 2003. "Piercing the Veil." *Yale Law Journal* 112: 1399-1472.

[17] The WVS asks people about the acceptability of a list of lifestyle issues (v203-v205 of the round six questionnaire), including "homosexuality," "abortion" and "divorce," using a ten-point scale from "never" to "always justifiable." We recode these scales into a range from 0 (never justifiable) to 1 (always justifiable), with decimal fractions of 1 indicating intermediate positions. Then we average each respondent's position over the three items. Country-level scores are population averages on this 0-to-1 scale. Alexander, Inglehart and Welzel (op. cit.) demonstrate in detail the cross-cultural reliability and validity of this measure.

[18] Welzel and Dalton, op. cit.

[19] Alexander, Inglehart and Welzel, op. cit.

[20] Using variables from the Gender-Governance-Link (GGL-) database at Goettingen University (www.ggl.org), we regress liberal sexuality values today ($N = 30$ countries) on infant mortality estimates in 1900 as well as average schooling rates, the per capita Gross Domestic Product (logged) and the V-Dem measure of liberal democracy (all also for the year 1900), as well as a dummy variable indicating whether or not a country is historically Protestant. Among these determinants, only the historic infant mortality, with the strongest effect, and historic Protestantism turn out to be significant, explaining 70 percent of the cross-national variation in liberal sexuality values today.

[21] Alexander, Inglehart and Welzel, op. cit.

[22] J. Greene. 2013. *Moral Tribes*. New York: Penguin.

[23] Illiberal supporters of democracy score above 0.70 on our index of support for democracy (as explained in endnote 10) and at or below 0.50 on our index of liberal sexuality values (explained in endnote 17). Liberal supporters of democracy score above 0.70 on support for democracy and above 0.50 in liberal sexuality values. To determine these thresholds we looked at the median of both scales.

[24] These proportions do not add up to 100 percent because there are also non-supporters of democracy in each cohort.

[25] The WVS asks people to indicate how strongly they agree with various alternative meanings of democracy, using ten-point scales from 1 for full disagreement to 10 for full agreement (v131-v139 in the round six questionnaire). The relevant items on the liberal end include "people choose their leaders in free elections" (free elections), "civil rights protect people from state oppression" (civil rights) and "women have the same rights as men" (equal rights). The relevant items on the illiberal end include "the army takes over when government is incompetent" (military government), "religious authorities ultimately interpret the laws" (theocratic government) and "people obey their rulers" (obedient citizens). We rescale the liberal items into a range from 0 (full disagreement) to 1 (full agreement), with decimal fractions of 1 indicating intermediate positions. The illiberal items are rescaled from 0 to 1 as well but in reverse polarity, with higher scores indicating stronger rejection. Then we average each respondent's position over all six items, obtaining an index of liberal-vs.-illiberal notions of democracy. Country-level scores are population averages on this 0-to-1 scale.

[26] The underlying individual-level relationship between (a) being a liberal supporter of democracy and (b) holding a liberal notion of democracy is, of course, statistically significant and positive at $R = 0.40$ (seven country-pooled data: $N = 7,000$).

[27] The left-hand diagram in Figure 3 shows the relationship for all countries in which the respective items have been fielded. Since these countries include the largest national populations in each global region, they represent more than ninety percent of the world population.

[28] G.A. Almond and S. Verba. 1963. *The Civic Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. H. Eckstein. 1966. *A Theory of Stable Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

[29] A. Hadenius and J. Teorell. 2005. "Cultural and Economic Prerequisites of Democracy." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 39: 87-106. S. Dahlum and C.H. Knutsen. 2015. "Democracy by Demand?" *British Journal of Political Science* 46: 1-20.

[30] M.D. Fails and H.N. Pierce. 2008. "Changing Mass Attitudes and Democratic Deepening." *Political Research Quarterly* 63: 174-87.

[31]   M. Coppedge, J. Gerring, S.I. Lindberg, S.-E. Skaaning, J. Teorell and V. Ciobanu. 2016. "V-Dem Country Coding Units v6." Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project.

[32]   P. Norris. 2014. *Why Electoral Integrity Matters*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

[33]   A.C. Alexander and C. Welzel. 2011. "Measuring Effective Democracy." *Comparative Politics* 43: 271-289.

[34]   Hadenius and Teorell, op. cit.; Fails and Pierce, op. cit.

[35]   Plenty of evidence for this claim is documented in Welzel, *Freedom Rising*, op. cit.

[36]   See Hadenius and Teorell, op. cit., as well as Dahlum and Knutsen, op. cit.

[37]   See the rebuttals by C. Welzel and R. Inglehart. 2006. "Emancipative Values and Democracy." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 41: 74-94. C. Welzel, R. Inglehart and S. Kruse. 2015. "Pitfalls in the Study of Democratization." *British Journal of Political Science* 46: 1-10.

[38]   T. Akkerman, S.L. de Lange and M. Rooduijn (eds.). 2016. *Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe*. London: Routledge. C. de la Torre (ed.). 2014. *The Promise and Perils of Populism*. Lousiville: University of Kentucky Press.

[39]   Alexander, Inglehart and Welzel, op. cit.

[40]   P. Norris and R. Inglehart. 2016. "Cultural Backlash and the Rise of Populism." Harvard Kennedy School Research Paper. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University (https://research.hks.harvard.edu/publications/workingpapers/citation.aspx?PubId=11325).

[41]   Norris and Inglehart, "Cultural Backlash ...," op cit.; Norris, "Is Western Democracy Backsliding," op. cit.

[42]   The WVS (v115-v117 in the round six questionnaire) asks people to indicate their confidence in a list of institutions on four-point scales from 1 ("a great deal") to 4 ("none at all"). The relevant representative institutions include "the government," "political parties" and "parliament." We average each respondent's confidence level over these three institutions, with higher scores indicating stronger disaffection. We standardize scores in a range from minimum 0 (full confidence) to 1 (no confidence at all), with decimal fractions of 1 indicating intermediate positions. Country-level scores are population averages on this 0-to-1 scale.

[43]   To measure each respondent's disaffected illiberalism we average their position (a) on disaffection and on (b) the inverse of liberalism (i.e. liberal sexuality values, as explained in endnote 17). Since both component measures range from 0 to 1, disaffected illiberalism also has a theoretical range from 0 (when liberalism is at the maximum and disaffection at the minimum) to 1 (when liberalism is at the minimum and disaffection a the maximum). Such an additive procedure is adequate when the constituent components are dimensionally independent. A factor analysis with "varimax" rotation under the "Kaiser criterion" over the country-pooled individual-level data shows indeed that the three items representing liberal sexuality values and the three items representing political disaffection load on two separate dimensions. Detailed results are available upon request from the authors.

[44]   The sixth round WVS surveys in Sweden (2011) and the Netherlands (2012) are the only ones where a sufficient proportion of respondents indicates a voting preference for one of the prominent right-wing populist parties: the Swedish Democrats in Sweden and Geert Wilder's Freedom Party in the Netherlands. In both countries, the voters of these parties differ significantly from the remainder of the electorate on disaffected illiberalism. In Sweden, the 155 supporters of the Swedish Democrats score at 57 percent on disaffected illiberalism, compared to 44 percent among the remainder of the respondents. In the Netherlands, the 36 Freedom Party supporters score at 43 percent on disaffected illiberalism, compared to 32 percent among the remainder of the respondents. These findings suggest that disaffected illiberalism is a reasonable representation of the ideological posture generating an affinity to the offerings of right-wing populist parties.

[45]   The WVS asks respondents to indicate whether or not they would like to have "people of a different race" (v37 in the round six questionnaire) as well as "immigrants/foreign workers" (v39) as neighbors. The survey also asks respondents whether they agree or disagree with the statement: "when jobs are scarce, employers should give priority to people of this country over immigrants" (v46). To measure national parochialism, we code respondents 1 when they indicate these groups as unliked neighbors or express agreement with a job priority for native-born citizens. To be coded 0 on national parochialism, respondents must abstain from both positions. Country-level scores indicate the proportion (in decimal fractions) of people classified as parochial nationals in this sense.

[46]   Here we measure the proportion of people (in decimal fractions) who score (a) higher in disaffected illiberalism than in the other three orientations of Figure 4 (allegiant liberalism, disaffected liberalism, allegiant illiberalism) and who are (b) at the same time classified as parochial nationals, due to the description in the previous endnote.

[47]   National parochialism itself fell. In 1995-98, the overall proportion of parochials was 72 percent, ranging from 82 percent in the oldest to 69 percent in the youngest cohort, with a linear decline in between (*eta* = 0.06). In 2011-14, the overall proportion is 58 percent, ranging from 65 percent in the oldest to 45 percent in the youngest cohort, now with an even more pronounced linear decline in between (*eta* = 0.11).

[48]   To this point, see also Norris, "Is Western Democracy Backsliding," op. cit.

[49] The overall level of political disaffection is 64 percent in 1995-98 and 63 percent in 2011-14, despite a stable age pattern due to which younger cohorts show more disaffection than older ones. Whenever stable age differences do *not* translate into a corresponding temporal trend, *lifecycle* instead of *cohort* effects are at work. Norris, "Is Western Democracy Backsliding" (op. cit.), reaches a similar conclusion.

[50] J. Stiglitz. 2015. *The Price of Inequality*. New York: W.W. Norton.

[51] The WVS (v238 in the round six questionnaire) asks people to indicate their membership with respect to this five-fold scheme.

[52] In 1995-98, class membership explains some 20 percent of the variation in education as well as in income. In 2011-14, class membership explains 30 percent of the variation in income and 10 percent in education. Thus, class membership has become more income-based. This reflects a de-coupling of income and education: in 1995-98, income and education correlate at $R = 0.49$; in 2011-14, this correlation is down to $R = 0.26$ (seven country-pooled, individual-level data: $N = 14,000$).

[53] The position of the lower class and the working class in the lower-right quadrant of Figure 6 suggests that they are most inclined to vote for right-wing populist parties. For the round six WVS surveys in Sweden (fielded 2011) and the Netherlands (fielded 2012) we can test this because here we have enough respondents indicating a voting preference for the Swedish Democrats and the Freedom Party, respectively. Of the 155 Swedish respondents indicating a voting preference for the Swedish Democrats, 48 percent say that they belong to the lower or working class, which compares to 24 percent among the non-voters of this party. Of the 36 Dutch respondents indicating to vote for the Freedom Party (Geert Wilders), 43 percent say that they belong to the lower or working class, which compares to 19 percent among the non-voters of this party.