

# ELECTORAL SYSTEMS, TRUST IN PARLIAMENT, AND VULNERABILITY TO POPULISM

Casey Mazzarella

## ABSTRACT

This preliminary study considers the link between proportional electoral systems, trust in parliament, and vulnerability to populism. It draws on data for 17 countries from waves one to six of the World Values Survey and waves one to four of the European Values Study to determine whether trust in parliament is higher, more stable over time, and declining by less over time in the selected countries with proportional electoral systems compared to those with non-proportional systems. The data supports past findings that countries with proportional electoral systems enjoy higher levels of trust in parliament and suggests that, while trust in parliament had decreased over the long term in most countries, those countries that utilise proportional electoral systems appear to be faring better overall than those that do not. However, more research is required to confirm whether trust in parliament is a definitive indicator of vulnerability to populism.

## INTRODUCTION

The rise of populism and the recent electoral success of populist leaders and parties have caused considerable anxiety around the world, giving rise to thousands of articles, books, and commentaries. However, the definition of populism remains a contested concept.<sup>1</sup> This paper uses Mudde's definition of populism as a thin-centred ideology that argues that 'politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people'.<sup>2</sup> In particular, this paper focuses on populism's propensity to thrive on and encourage public dissatisfaction and disaffection with democratic institutions, and the negative impacts on liberal democracy that result from populists in power. It considers whether the risk of populism is increased in countries where there is low trust in parliament and whether very low or decreasing trust in parliament may serve as an indicator of a country's vulnerability to populism.

## Populism

Populists typically portray society as separated into two antagonistic groups: 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite', and argue that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people.<sup>3</sup> Right-wing populism also commonly includes a third group: 'others', which exist within society and do not share the identity and/or values of the people and who are often seen to be favoured by the elite, for example immigrants or religious minorities.<sup>4</sup> The designation of these two (or three) groups is moral rather than empirical.<sup>5</sup> The people are depicted as a homogenous and virtuous community;

---

<sup>1</sup> Cas Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *Government and Opposition*, 2004 30(4), 543; Cas Mudde and Christóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, 'Exclusionary vs Inclusionary Populism: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin America', *Government and Opposition*, 2013 48(2), 147-174; Kurt Weyland, 'Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics', *Comparative Politics*, 2001 34(1), 1-22; Kenneth M. Roberts, 'Populism, Political Conflict, and Grass-Roots Organisations in Latin America', *Comparative Politics*, 2006, 38(2), 127-148; Kirk A. Hawkins and Christóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, 'The Ideational Approach to Populism', *Latin American Research Review*, 2017 52(4), 513-528.

<sup>2</sup> Albertazzi and McDonnell, *Populists in Power*, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', 543.

<sup>4</sup> Albertazzi and McDonnell, *Populists in Power*, 4-6.

<sup>5</sup> Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', 544.

the elite are portrayed as corrupt and immoral; and the others are portrayed as different and dangerous. These designations are often used by populists as a framework to demonstrate or highlight their alignment with the 'silent majority' of 'ordinary, decent people' whose interests and opinions are being ignored or overridden by the elite.<sup>6</sup>

Populists claim that they alone represent the people. Populist logic implies a dichotomy in which anyone who does not support the leader or party must not be a proper part of the true people and therefore must, by definition, be part of the corrupt and immoral elite. This allows populists, particularly when campaigning, to portray their competitors as part of the elite and, when in power, to refuse to recognise any opposition or criticism as legitimate.<sup>7</sup> For example, at a campaign rally on 22 June 2016, Donald Trump utilised this dichotomy, positioning himself as the representative of the people:

The insiders wrote the rules of the game to keep themselves in power and in the money...Because it's not just the political system that's rigged. It's the whole economy...It's rigged against you, the American people...*This election will decide whether we are ruled by the people, or by the politicians* [emphasis added].<sup>8</sup>

Trump also sought to portray his opponent, Hillary Clinton, as a member of and controlled by the corrupt elite, stating that she:

...has perfected the politics of personal profit and theft...They [the elite] totally own her, and that will never change. The choice in this election is a choice between taking our government back from the special interests, or surrendering our last scrap of independence to their total and complete control.<sup>9</sup>

Following his election, Trump, has refused to recognise the legitimacy of the investigation into his presidential campaign and potential foreign interference in the election, calling on 'real Americans' to '[get] tough on this scam [investigation]'.<sup>10</sup>

### **Populists in power: a danger to democracy?**

Populism is democratic in a majoritarian sense. It embodies a vision of 'true' democracy (that is, a direct expression of the will of the people) that is not dependant on constitutionalism or liberalism and in which the constraints of liberal democracies do not apply. However, restraints on executive power are essential for guaranteeing the liberty and rights of citizens and maintaining the rule of law. The erosion of such restrains increases the risk of tyranny and despotism.

When in power, populists seek to weaken restrictions and restraints on executive power<sup>11</sup> often asserting that any restrictions upon their power undermine the will of the people, as manifested in

---

<sup>6</sup> Margaret Canovan, 'Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy', *Political Studies*, 1999 47(1), 5.

<sup>7</sup> Jan-Werner Müller, *What is Populism?*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Donald Trump, 'Remarks at Trump SoHo in New York City', 22 June 2016, *The American Presidency Project*. Emphasis added.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Donald Trump, Twitter, @realDonaldTrump, Tweets at 11:04pm, 11:11pm, 11:19pm on 20 May 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Albertazzi and McDonnell, *Populists in Power*, 7; Christian Houle and Paul D. Kenny, 'The Political and Economic Consequences of Populist Rule in Latin America', *Government and Opposition*, 2016 53(2), 256-287; Takis S. Pappas, 'The Spectre Haunting Europe: Distinguishing Liberal Democracy's Challengers', *Journal of Democracy*, 2016 27(4), 22-35.

the populist leader or party.<sup>12</sup> Populist logic dictates that the populist leader or party represents or embodies the people's will, thus the granting of more power for the leader or party is giving more power to the people.<sup>13</sup>

Recent events in Poland provide a poignant example of populist parties weakening the restrictions and restraints on their power. The Law and Justice Party, since winning a majority in 2015, has significantly increased the powers of the ruling party by weakening the Constitutional Tribunal (Poland's constitutional court) and the entire judicial system, as well as tightening media controls.<sup>14</sup> In December 2017, the First Vice President of the European Commission, Frans Timmerman, asserted that 'today in Poland the constitutionality of legislation can no longer be guaranteed' and that 'there is now a clear risk of a serious breach of the rule of law' explaining that:

The common pattern of all these legislative changes is that the executive or the legislative power are now set up in such a way that the ruling majority can systematically, politically interfere with the composition, the powers, the administration and the functioning of these authorities, thereby rendering the independence of the judiciary completely moot.<sup>15</sup>

The events in Poland demonstrate the significant damage can be inflicted on liberal democracy by populism as well as the speed with which it can occur. However, the Law and Justice Party was legitimately elected by the people of Poland. So what can be done to guard against the negative impacts of populism, within a democratic system?

## **CONFIDENCE IN PARLIAMENT**

As outlined above, populism thrives on and encourages public dissatisfaction and disaffection with democratic institutions, exploiting the gap between the ideal of democracy and how liberal democracies actually function.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, the level of public confidence in democratic institutions, especially those that serve to scrutinise and check the power of the executive, such as the parliament, may provide one indicator of a country's vulnerability to populism. It also follows that attempts to mitigate the negative impacts of populism, should seek to minimise public dissatisfaction and disaffection with such institutions.

Decreasing public confidence in parliament was raised as a constraint against effective oversight of the executive at the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, which warned that 'a lack of public confidence can undermine parliament's legitimacy to carry out its basic functions'.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, a comparative study of parliaments conducted in 2006 by the Knesset Information Commission found that 'there is a worldwide problem of low levels of trust in government institutions in general, and parliaments in particular'.<sup>18</sup> The study found that many of the attempts

---

<sup>12</sup> Marc F. Plattner, 'Populism, Pluralism, and Liberal Democracy', *Journal of Democracy*, 2010 21(1), 88.

<sup>13</sup> Robert A. Huber and Christian Schimpf, 'On the Distinct Effects of Left-Wing and Right Wing Populism on Democratic Quality' *Politics and Governance*, 2017 5(4), 152.

<sup>14</sup> Pappas, 'The Spectre Haunting Europe: Distinguishing Liberal Democracy's Challengers', 30.

<sup>15</sup> European Commission, 'Opening Remarks of First Vice-President Frans Timmerman, Readout of the European Commission discussion on the Rule of Law in Poland', *Press Release*, Brussels, 20 December 2017.

<sup>16</sup> Albertazzi and McDonnell, *Populists in Power*, 4-7.

<sup>17</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union, Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, Report, (New York, 2015), 15.

<sup>18</sup> Susan Hattis Rolef, *Public Trust in Parliament: A comparative study*, (Knesset Information Division, 2006).

made by parliaments to improve the connection between themselves and the public—primarily in the sphere of information, education, and communications—have had little effect on public trust.<sup>19</sup> So, what can be done to increase or stabilise trust in parliament?

Van der Meer explains that trust in democratic institutions, such as the parliament, is relational. There are four aspects by which parliaments are judged worthy of trust: competence, intrinsic commitment (caring for or sharing the same goals as the population), extrinsic commitment (being able to be held to account by the population by denying future support), and predictability. However, these aspects are not necessarily equal in their influence over public trust in parliament, with intrinsic commitment (care) aspects being found to be more important than extrinsic commitment (accountability) aspects.<sup>20</sup>

### **Proportional representation**

The more the parliament of a country reflects the views of its constituents, the more it is perceived as intrinsically committed or ‘caring’ for its citizens, at least in the perception of the citizens.<sup>21</sup> Electoral systems that use proportional representation aim to ‘reduce the disparity between a party’s share of the national vote and its share of the parliamentary seats’.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, it may reasonably be assumed that a proportional electoral system will result in increased levels of public trust in parliamentary institutions. This appears to have been borne out in New Zealand, where the shift from a majoritarian to proportional system resulted in significant aggregate shifts toward more positive attitudes about and greater confidence in parliamentary institutions. More voters reported feeling that their votes ‘really mattered’; fewer thought that their elected representatives did not care or were out of touch; and fewer thought that the government was run by a few big interests.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, as populists claim that the people have been left behind or excluded by the elite and promise to reclaim power for the people, it follows that the more a country reflects the electorate, and by doing so, engages populists and their supporters, the less effective such claims will be. Müller argues that in past cases, ‘some of the damage done to democracy might have been averted had existing elites been willing to take steps toward both practical and symbolic inclusion’ of populists.<sup>24</sup>

As populism thrives on and encourages public dissatisfaction and disaffection with democratic institutions, it can reasonably be assumed that the risk of populism is increased in countries where there is low trust in parliament. Furthermore, very low or decreasing trust in parliament may serve as an indicator of a country’s vulnerability to populism. Assuming that proportional representation is one way in which trust in parliament is built and maintained over time, it may also be one avenue for parliaments to build and maintain resilience against the negative effects of populists coming to power.

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>20</sup> Tom van der Meer, ‘In what we trust? A multi-level study into trust in parliament as an evaluation of state characteristics’, *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 2010 76(6), 520-528.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> ACE: The Electoral Knowledge Network, *Electoral Systems: Proportional Representation*, [http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/es/annex/esy/esy\\_pl](http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/es/annex/esy/esy_pl), accessed 6 June 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Susan A Banducci, Todd Donovan, and Jeffrey A. Karp, ‘Proportional representation and attitudes about politics: results from New Zealand’, *Electoral Studies*, 1999 18, 553-555.

<sup>24</sup> Müller, *What is Populism?*, 84.

## HYPOTHESES

This paper considers whether trust in parliament is higher in countries that have proportional electoral systems than those that do not, as well as whether the global phenomenon of declining of trust in parliaments is lessened or slowed in parliaments with proportional systems. Drawing on earlier work (for example by Van der Meer and Hattis Rolef<sup>25</sup>), the paper tests the following three hypotheses:

**H1: In countries with proportional electoral systems citizens will have more trust in parliament than in countries with non-proportional systems.**

**H2: Over time, the level of trust in parliament will be more stable over time in proportional electoral systems than in non-proportional systems.**

**H3: The level of trust in parliament will decline by less in proportional electoral systems than in non-proportional systems.**

## METHOD

The paper considers available data in relation to 17 countries. The data is taken from the World Values Survey (WVS) and the European Values Study (EVS).<sup>26</sup> Table 1 below identifies where data from each survey has been used, for each country. The countries considered were primarily selected based on availability of data and consistency of electoral system across the time period.

Both the WVS and EVS are large-scale, cross-national and longitudinal survey research programs that include a large number of questions, which have been replicated in the 364 surveys that the programs have conducted from 1981 to 2014. Both surveys ask the question ‘How much confidence do you have in parliament?’ to which respondents can answer ‘a great deal’, ‘quite a lot’, ‘not very much’, or ‘none at all’. In this paper, the results for ‘a great deal’ and ‘quite a lot’ are combined. These indicators are taken together to calculate the percentage of each country’s citizens who have trust and confidence in parliament and its institutions. It should be noted that the WVS waves take place across three year time periods; however, for ease of reference, only the earliest year is referred to in this paper. As such, data from the WVS W6 is referred to as ‘2010’ but actually represents 2010-2014.

**Table 1 – List of countries examined and WVS and EVS data used**

Country	1981	1990	1995	1999	2005	2008	2010
Australia	WVS W1	-	WVS W3	-	WVS W5	-	WVS W6
Canada	EVS W1	EVS W2	-	WVS W4	WVS W5	-	-
Denmark	EVS W1	EVS W2	-	EVS W3	-	EVS W4	-
France	EVS W1	EVS W2	-	EVS W3	WVS W5	EVS W4	-
Germany	-*	EVS W2	WVS W3	EVS W3	WVS W5	EVS W4	WVS W6
Great Britain	EVS W1	EVS W2	-	EVS W3	WVS W5	EVS W4	-
India	-	WVS W2	WVS W3	WVS W4	WVS W5	-	WVS W6

<sup>25</sup> Van der Meer, ‘In what we trust? A multi-level study into trust in parliament as an evaluation of state characteristics’; Hattis Rolef, *Public Trust in Parliament: A comparative study*.

<sup>26</sup> See references at end of paper for full details for all waves of the WVS and EVS.

Ireland	EVS W1	EVS W2	-	EVS W3	-	EVS W4	-
Japan	WVS W1	WVS W2	WVS W3	WVS W4	WVS W5	-	WVS W6
Mexico	WVS W1	WVS W2	WVS W3	WVS W4	WVS W5	-	WVS W6
Netherlands	EVS W1	EVS W2	-	EVS W3	WVS W5	EVS W4	WVS W6
New Zealand	-	-	WVS W3	-	WVS W5	-	WVS W6
Norway	EVS W1	EVS W2	WVS W3	-	WVS W5	EVS W4	-
Poland	-	EVS W2	WVS W3	EVS W3	WVS W5	EVS W4	WVS W6
Spain	EVS W1	EVS W2	WVS W3	EVS W3	WVS W5	EVS W4	WVS W6
Sweden	EVS W1	EVS W2	WVS W3	EVS W3	WVS W5	EVS W4	WVS W6
United States	EVS W1	EVS W2	WVS W3	WVS W4	WVS W5	-	WVS W6

\*Data prior to the reunification of Germany and the end of Soviet rule in Poland was not included.

The 17 countries selected were sorted into three categories (proportional, semi-proportional and plurality/majoritarian) reflecting in the country's electoral system for its parliament. This is set out in Table 2. Countries that use proportional systems are marked in purple, countries that have semi-proportional systems are marked in blue, and countries that use plurality or majoritarian systems are marked in orange.

Countries are considered 'semi-proportional' in this paper in two circumstances. Firstly where a country is bicameral and one chamber (both of which must have significant involvement in the legislative process) uses a proportional system and the other a plurality/majoritarian system (such as Australia and Poland). Secondly, where a country uses parallel voting, which is a type of mixed electoral system where voters participate in what is effectively two separate elections for a single chamber using different systems, but where the results in one election have little or no impact on the results of the other.

**Table 2—Electoral systems for national parliaments**

Country	Lower House	Upper House	Unicameral
<b>Australia</b> <i>Semi-proportional</i>	<b>Plurality/Majoritarian</b> Instant-runoff vote	<b>Proportional</b> Single transferrable vote	
<b>Canada</b> <i>Plurality/Majoritarian</i>	<b>Plurality/Majoritarian</b> First-past-the-post	Appointed by GG on advice of PM	
<b>Denmark</b> <i>Proportional</i>			<b>Proportional</b> Party-list proportional
<b>France</b> <i>Plurality/Majoritarian</i>	<b>Plurality/Majoritarian</b> Two round	Indirectly elected by elected officials	
<b>Germany</b> <i>Proportional</i>	<b>Proportional</b> Mixed-member proportional	Delegated by state governments	
<b>Great Britain</b> <i>Plurality/Majoritarian</i>	<b>Plurality/Majoritarian</b> First-past-the-post	Appointed and members of peerage	
<b>India</b> <i>Plurality/Majoritarian</i>	<b>Plurality/Majoritarian</b> First-past-the-post	Indirectly elected by state and territory legislatures using proportional (STV) and appointed by PM	
<b>Ireland</b> <i>Proportional</i>	<b>Proportional</b> Single transferrable vote	Indirect election	
<b>Japan</b> <i>Semi-proportional</i>	<b>Semi-proportional</b> Parallel: First-past-the-post and Party-list proportional	<b>Semi-proportional</b> Parallel: Single non-transferrable vote and Party-list proportional	

<b>Mexico</b> <i>Semi-proportional</i>	<b>Semi-proportional</b> Parallel: First-past-the-post and Largest remainder	<b>Semi-proportional</b> Parallel: Largest remainder and others	
<b>Netherlands</b> <i>Proportional</i>	<b>Proportional</b> Party-list proportional	Indirect election by members of state legislatures	
<b>New Zealand</b> <i>Proportional*</i>			<b>Proportional</b> Mixed-member proportional
<b>Norway</b> <i>Proportional</i>			<b>Proportional</b> Party-list proportional
<b>Poland</b> <i>Semi-proportional</i>	<b>Proportional</b> Party-list proportional	<b>Plurality/Majoritarian</b> First-past-the-post	
<b>Spain</b> <i>Proportional</i>	<b>Proportional</b> Party-list proportional	Limited vote and appointment by regional legislatures	
<b>Sweden</b> <i>Proportional</i>			<b>Proportional</b> Party-list proportional
<b>United States</b> <b>Plurality/Majoritarian</b>	<b>Plurality/Majoritarian</b> Primarily First-past-the-post	<b>Plurality/Majoritarian</b> Primarily First-past-the-post	

Only types of direct election were considered in the designation of a country as 'plurality/majoritarian', 'proportional' or 'semi-proportional'.

\* Proportional (MMP) introduced in New Zealand in 1993, replacing Majoritarian (FPTP). Data prior to this change was not available nor included.

## FINDINGS

### Overall levels of trust: H1

H1 appears to be supported by the available data. In most of the countries considered, overall trust was low, with only three countries enjoying trust levels above 50 per cent (see Table 3 below). However, countries with proportional systems enjoyed greater levels of trust in their parliament compared to those with majoritarian or semi-proportional systems. This supports Van der Meer and Hattis Rolef's findings that trust in parliament is higher in countries with proportional systems than non-proportional ones.<sup>27</sup>

**Table 3—Trust in Parliament: average trust (a great deal and quite a lot) percent, 1981-2010**

Country	Trust (percent)	Country	Trust (percent)
Norway	64.04	Australia	36.56
India	52.86	Great Britain	36.04
Sweden	51.77	Germany	34.67
Denmark	49.35	United States	33.87
France	46.26	Mexico	32.65
Ireland	45.80	Poland	32.65
Netherlands	43.98	New Zealand	32.65
Spain	43.40	Japan	32.65
Canada	39.25		

<sup>27</sup> Van der Meer, 'In what we trust? A multi-level study into trust in parliament as an evaluation of state characteristics', 528; Hattis Rolef, *Public Trust in Parliament: A comparative study*, 28.

The data showed that the countries with proportional systems generally had higher levels of trust than other systems, with all, apart from Germany and New Zealand, having an average of more than 40 per cent of the population trusting the parliament over the period. This supports Van Der Meer's finding that the intrinsic commitment (care) aspect of trust in parliament (how much a parliament reflects its electorate) is an important influence on trust in parliament.

However, a number of plurality/majoritarian systems also demonstrated high levels of average trust in parliament, with India and France having an average trust in parliament above 45 per cent over the period. This may be explained by the influence of the extrinsic commitment (accountability to the people) aspect of trust, in which disproportional systems could be expected to attract trust because political responsibilities are more clearly appointed as political power is held by a small number of political parties rather than large coalitions, allowing such parties to be better held to account by the electorate.<sup>28</sup>

Interestingly, semi-proportional systems all had quite low levels of trust. Japan scored the lowest of the counties considered, with an average of only 32.65 per cent over the period. Australia, despite being the most trusted of the semi-proportional systems, did not even make it into the top half of countries considered with an average of 36.56 per cent. The lower levels of trust in semi-proportional systems may be explained by such systems not being sufficiently proportional to benefit from the greater trust provided from the intrinsic commitment aspect, yet not sufficiently majoritarian to benefit from the extrinsic aspect of trust.

## Volatility of trust: H2

H2 was not supported by the data. Proportionality did not appear to significantly impact the volatility of the levels of trust in parliament, with the five countries with the most stable trust levels comprising one majoritarian, two semi-proportional and two proportional (see Table 4 below). It is interesting to note that Poland, a country which is currently experiencing damage to its liberal democracy as a result of the negative effects of populism, was the most volatile during this period. This suggests that volatility of trust in parliament may be an indicator of a country's vulnerability to populism; however, more research is required.

**Table 4—Volatility of trust in parliament: one standard deviation, 1981-2010**

Country	One standard deviation	Country	One standard deviation
Canada	3.33	Ireland	9.76
Japan	3.86	Germany	11.14
Sweden	6.44	Netherlands	11.15
Spain	6.76	New Zealand	11.43
Mexico	8.13	Australia	12.30
France	8.55	United States	13.59
Great Britain	8.55	Denmark	14.66

<sup>28</sup> Van der Meer, 'In what we trust? A multi-level study into trust in parliament as an evaluation of state characteristics', 521.



Norway	9.00	Poland	20.75
India	9.11		

### Is trust increasing or decreasing? H3

The data supports, and arguably, exceeds, the expectations of H3. Over the long term (from the earliest to latest available data points) trust in parliament decreased, with only three countries demonstrating increasing levels of trust over the period (see Table 5 below). However, the three countries in which trust in parliament *increased* over the long term (Denmark, New Zealand, and Sweden) all use proportional systems. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that many other countries with proportional systems experienced significant decreases in the level of trust over the period. In particular, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain all saw marked decreases (between 12.4 and 15.5 per cent) in trust.

**Table 5—Trust in parliament: change in percent of trust from earliest value to latest value available, 1981-2010**

Country	Change in trust (percent)	Country	Change in trust (percent)
Denmark	33.4	Japan	-8
New Zealand	21.5	Netherlands	-12.4
Sweden	12.7	Norway	-13.4
Mexico	-2.6	Spain	-15.5
Ireland	-3.2	Great Britain	-17.9
France	-4.8	Australia	-26.5
Germany	-5.1	United States	-32.3
India	-7.8	Poland	-55.5
Canada	-7.9		

However, when recent changes in trust parliament are considered, the data is, surprisingly, more optimistic, with the majority of the selected countries showing a recent increase in trust in parliament. Furthermore, not only has trust in parliament declined less in countries with proportional systems, almost all countries with proportional systems experienced a recent increase in trust, and, four of the five countries with the greatest increases in trust have proportional systems.

It is also interesting to note that, whilst some countries with pluralistic/majoritarian systems experienced increased trust, none of the countries with semi-proportional systems experienced increased trust, either over the long-term or short-term. This may be explained by Van der Meer's aspects of trust (see discussion above at H1) and presents opportunities for further research.

**Table 6—Trust in parliament: recent change in trust, 2005-2010 (unless otherwise indicated)**

Country	Change in trust (percent)	Country	Change in trust (percent)
Germany	22.4	United States	0.7
Denmark*	21.5	Mexico	0
Ireland***	17.9	Poland	-0.2

France**	16.6	Japan	-1.6
Norway	10.6	Canada****	-3.7
India	10.4	Australia	-5.1
Sweden	4.3	Great Britain*****	-11.2
Netherlands	4.2	Spain	-15.6
New Zealand	4		

\* Data from 1999 to 2008 due to availability of data.

\*\* Data from 2005 to 2008 due to availability of data.

\*\*\* Data from 1999 to 2008 due to availability of data.

\*\*\*\* Data from 1999 to 2005 due to availability of data.

\*\*\*\*\* Data from 2005 to 2008 due to availability of data.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is acknowledged that further research will be required to fully capture the link between proportional electoral systems, trust in parliament, and vulnerability to populism. In this regard, it is noted that a number of the countries considered (across all systems of government) have political actors and parties that are considered 'populist'. Moreover and as noted above, 'populist' remains a contested term, with an enormous amount of research dedicated to the definition alone. Owing to these factors, it was difficult if not impossible for this paper to define and measure levels of 'populist activity' in each country over the relevant period. This was further complicated by electoral systems that were difficult to categorise (for example Italy's many changes to its electoral law over the period, and Switzerland's semi-direct democracy).

## CONCLUSION

Populism and the way in manifests and interacts within political systems is incredibly complex, with the very definition remaining a topic of academic debate. This preliminary study considered one of many factors that may serve as an indicator of vulnerability to the negative impacts of populism. The data considered by this paper supports the hypothesis that countries with proportional electoral systems enjoy higher levels of trust in parliament.

The data also indicated that, while trust in parliament had decreased over the long term in most countries, those countries that utilise proportional electoral systems appear to be faring better overall than those that do not. Moreover, in the shorter-term and more recently, the majority of the countries with proportional systems showed an increase in trust in parliament, suggesting that they may be better protected against global declines in trust in parliament.

The recent damage to liberal democracy in Poland, following the election of the Law and Justice Party, lends support to the idea that trust in parliament may be an indicator of a country's vulnerability to the negative impacts of populism. Available data indicated that trust in parliament in Poland was low, volatile, and had decreased significantly over the period leading up to the election of the Law and Justice Party.

The indication that semi-proportional systems may engender lower trust in parliament and, as such, may be more vulnerable to the negative impacts of populism, opens up opportunities for further research. Further research might also consider incorporating a wider sample of countries and diving deeper into the manifestation and impact that populist parties and actors have had in each country.

## REFERENCES

- Albertazzi, Daniele and McDonnell, Duncan, *Populists in Power*, (Routledge, 2015)
- Banducci, Susan A., Donovan, Todd, and Karp, Jeffrey A., 'Proportional representation and attitudes about politics: results from New Zealand', *Electoral Studies*, 1999 18, 533-555.
- Canovan, Margaret, 'Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy', *Political Studies*, 1999 47(1), 2-16
- Hattis Rolef, Susan, *Public Trust in Parliament: A comparative study*, (Knesset Information Division, 2006)
- Hawkins, Kirk A. and Rovira Kaltwasser, Christóbal, 'The Ideational Approach to Populism', *Latin American Research Review*, 2017 52(4), 513-528
- Houle, Christian and Kenny, Paul D., 'The Political and Economic Consequences of Populist Rule in Latin America', *Government and Opposition*, 2016 53(2), 256-287
- Huber, Robert A. and Schimpf, Christian, 'On the Distinct Effects of Left-Wing and Right Wing Populism on Democratic Quality' *Politics and Governance*, 2017 5(4), 152.
- Inter-Parliamentary Union, Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, *Report*, (New York, 2015)
- Müller, Jan-Werner, *What is Populism?*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016)
- Mudde, Cas, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *Government and Opposition*, 2004 30(4), 541-563
- Mudde, Cas and Rovira Kaltwasser, Christóbal 'Exclusionary vs Inclusionary Populism: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin America', *Government and Opposition*, 2013 48(2), 147-174
- Pappas, Takis S., 'The Spectre Haunting Europe: Distinguishing Liberal Democracy's Challengers', *Journal of Democracy*, 2016 27(4), 22-35
- Roberts, Kenneth M., 'Populism, Political Conflict, and Grass-Roots Organisations in Latin America', *Comparative Politics*, 2006 38(2), 127-148
- Trump, Donald, 'Remarks at Trump SoHo in New York City', 22 June 2016, *The American Presidency Project*.
- Trump, Donald, Twitter, @realDonaldTrump, Tweets at 11:04pm, 11:11pm, 11:19pm on 20 May 2018
- Van der Meer, Tom 'In what we trust? A multi-level study into trust in parliament as an evaluation of state characteristics', *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 2010 76(6), 518-536.
- Weyland, Kurt, 'Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics', *Comparative Politics*, 2001 34(1), 1-22

## Data

Inglehart, R., C. Haerpfer, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Medrano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarin & B. Puranen et al. (eds.). 2014. *World Values Survey: Round One (1981-1984): Crossings by Country*, Version: 2015.04.18

Inglehart, R., C. Haerpfer, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Medrano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarin & B. Puranen et al. (eds.). 2014. *World Values Survey: Round Two (1990-1994): Crossings by Country* Version: 2015.04.18

Inglehart, R., C. Haerpfer, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Medrano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarin & B. Puranen et al. (eds.). 2014. *World Values Survey: Round Three (1995-1998): Crossings by Country*, Version: 2015.04.18.

Inglehart, R., C. Haerpfer, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Medrano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarin & B. Puranen et al. (eds.). 2014. *World Values Survey: Round Four (1999-2004): Crossings by Country*, Version: 2015.04.18

Inglehart, R., C. Haerpfer, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Medrano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarin & B. Puranen et al. (eds.). 2014. *World Values Survey: Round Five (2005-2009): Crossings by Country*, Version: 2015.04.18

Inglehart, R., C. Haerpfer, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Medrano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarin & B. Puranen et al. (eds.). 2014. *World Values Survey: Round Six (2010-2014): Crossings by Country*, Version: 2015.04.18

European Values Study, EVS 1981: Variable Report Integrated Dataset, 2013.

European Values Study, EVS 1990: Variable Report Integrated Dataset, 2013.

European Values Study, EVS 1999: Variable Report Integrated Dataset, 2013.

European Values Study, EVS 2008: Variable Report Integrated Dataset, 2016.