Right-Wing Populism and the Rise of Internationalism in Europe

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October 23, 2021
Right-wing populism is surging on both sides of the Atlantic – here's why

The Conversation, November 25, 2015
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In Spain, Far-Right Populists Rise On Anti-Separatist Sentiment

NPR, February 19, 2019
Right-wing populism is surging on both sides of the Atlantic – here's why

The Conversation, November 25, 2015

In Spain, Far-Right Populists Rise On Anti-Separatist Sentiment

NPR, February 19, 2019

'Italian first': how the populist right became Italy's dominant force

The Guardian, December 1, 2018

Rise of Populist Radical Right (PRR)
Right-wing populism is surging on both sides of the Atlantic – here’s why

The Conversation, November 25, 2015

Far-right populist Jair Bolsonaro wins divisive Brazil presidential election

Wall Street Journal, October 28, 2018

In Spain, Far-Right Populists Rise On Anti-Separatist Sentiment

NPR, February 19, 2019

'Italian first': how the populist right became Italy's dominant force

The Guardian, December 1, 2018
Backlash against Globalization?

Why There's a Globalization Backlash

Economic inequalities, political uncertainties and cultural anxiety are side effects of globalization: what does its future hold?

The Conversation, November 29, 2016
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Brexit was a backlash against globalisation - the poorest are being left behind everywhere

Deborah Doane
Neoliberal and free-market economics have left the poor behind. We need to spend less time worrying about development and more about politics and power.

The Guardian, June 26, 2016
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Neoliberal and free market economics have left the poor behind. We need to spend less time worrying about development and more about politics and power.

The Guardian, June 26, 2016

Rising Euroscepticism 'poses existential threat to EU'

Maastricht for European constitution president says Brexit has shown political leaders the risks of heading anti-EU sentiment.

The Guardian, March 3, 2017
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The Conversation, November 29, 2016

Immigration backlash is on the rise in Europe

The Guardian, June 26, 2016

Brexit was a backlash against globalisation - the poorest are being left behind everywhere

The Guardian, March 3, 2017

Rising Euroscepticism 'poses existential threat to EU'

The Guardian, March 3, 2017
Countries included: Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, UK
Research Question

What explains the increase in public support for international economic integration alongside the growing vote share for populist radical right parties?
Existing Explanations for Internationalism

- Education (Gabel 1998; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2006)
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**Limitations:**

- These accounts focus on explaining **anti-internationalism**, not **internationalism**
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Limitations:

- These accounts focus on explaining anti-internationalism, not internationalism
- Assumption that anti-internationalism and support for PRR go hand in hand
Argument: PRR Parties in Public Discourse

- Depoliticization of international economic integration by mainstream parties
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- PRR parties as dominant actors in public discourse on international economic integration
Argument: Increasing Prominence of PRR Parties Affects Discourse

- Crises bring PRR parties to greater prominence
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  - Greater public awareness of PRR parties’ anti-internationalism and their right-wing extremism
Argument: Anti-Internationalism as Extremism

Anti-internationalism linked to right-wing extremism → change in attitudes
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- Social psychological mechanism: individuals change attitudes and behavior to avoid being perceived as violating social norms (Crandall et al. 2002; Zitek and Hebl 2007; Walker et al. 2015)
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- Strong social norms exist against right-wing extremism
- Social psychological mechanism: individuals change attitudes and behavior to avoid being perceived as violating social norms (Crandall et al. 2002; Zitek and Hebl 2007; Walker et al. 2015)

- Individuals who care more about adherence to social norms than anti-internationalism become more internationalist as a rejection of right-wing extremism
Hypotheses

H1: Support for international economic integration will increase as anti-internationalism is linked more closely to right-wing extremism in public discourse.

H2: This effect will be larger in countries where PRR parties are the primary political actors promoting anti-internationalism.
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H2: This effect will be larger in countries where PRR parties are the primary political actors promoting anti-internationalism.
Research Design

- Unexpected event during survey design: murder of UK MP Jo Cox in June 2016
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- Unexpected shock that concentrated association between anti-internationalism and right-wing extremism in public discourse
Jo Cox 'died for her views', her widower tells BBC
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'Death to traitors, freedom for Britain': For a nation utterly sickened by the death of Jo Cox, a revolting new low as suspect utters chilling words in court
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Nazi regalia discovered at house of Jo Cox killing suspect
Research Design

- Event study: murder of UK MP Jo Cox in June 2016
- Unexpected shock that concentrated association between anti-internationalism and right-wing extremism in public discourse
- Timing of British Election Study (BES) allows me to compare responses collected immediately prior to the murder to those collected immediately afterwards
Research Design

• BES Internet Panel waves 7-8 (14 April - 4 May 2016 and 6 May - 22 June 2016)
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- Can compare both the difference in attitudes between respondents interviewed just before and just after the murder and the difference in the wave-on-wave change in attitudes
Results

Estimated effect on wave-on-wave change in support for EU and immigration
Testing Assumptions

- Estimated effect on support for EU and immigration
- Google trends analysis
- Balance tests
- Trends in support over time
- Placebo-in-time analysis
- Placebo outcome analysis
- Non-response analysis
- Placebo-in-time analysis for change
Cross-National Analysis of Media and Survey Data

- Created a measure of association between Euroskepticism and right-wing extremism in media discourse in 8 Western European countries (Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, UK) from 2000 to 2019
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- Hand-coded over 5,000 articles drawn from country-specific corpora of newspaper articles about EU
- Machine learning to classify remaining articles (> 1 million)
- Euroskepticism-extremism link: % of articles classified as linking Euroskepticism to right-wing extremism
Cross-National Analysis of Media and Survey Data

- Merged media analysis data with Eurobarometer survey data to explore whether higher levels of association between Euroskepticism and right-wing extremism linked to greater support for EU
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→ Stronger Euroskepticism-extremism link associated with higher support for EU
Conclusion

- Pattern of growing internationalism in Western Europe can be explained by tighter links between anti-internationalism and extremism in discourse
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• Findings from study of Jo Cox’s murder suggest changes in discourse have causal effect on internationalism
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- Pattern of growing internationalism in Western Europe can be explained by tighter links between anti-internationalism and extremism in discourse.
- Findings from study of Jo Cox’s murder suggest changes in discourse have causal effect on internationalism.
- Findings from cross-national analysis suggest generalizable correlation between discourse and internationalism over time.
Conclusion: Implications

- Findings suggest the existence of a stabilizing mechanism → resilience of the liberal international economic order in the face of backlash
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- Caveat: stabilizing mechanism is dependent on public discourse
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- Caveat: stabilizing mechanism is dependent on public discourse

- Mainstream parties’ accommodation of PRR parties could break the link between anti-internationalism and right-wing extremism
Thank you!

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