High Tide? Populism in Power, 1990-2020

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Contents

Summary

- The *Populism in Power* database shows that there are nearly five times as many populist leaders and parties in power today than at the end of the Cold War, and three times more since the turn of the century.
- The rapid rise of populist leaders and parties in power occurred between the mid-2000s and early 2010s, and the latest evidence shows that the prevalence of populism remains near its 30-year high.
- Populism comes in many different forms across different country contexts, with implications for how to tackle it. In recent years, populism that stokes cultural divisions has overtaken other forms of populism, a trend that shows few signs of abating. Meanwhile, populism promising to revolutionize the economy has been steadily declining since its peak in the early 2010s, and populism emphasizing non-ideological issue-areas—like corruption—has remained relatively constant since 1990.
- We show these trends by updating the *Populism in Power* database and discuss newly-elected populist leaders that have assumed office in the past year as well as populist leaders and parties that have lost ground.

Introduction

Democracy works best when the political parties and factions that are in power today accept that they will one day be in the opposition, and then have the chance to regain power. It also works better when parties cannot take the loyalties of their voters for granted, when voters sometimes vote for the other side as their own ideas and priorities evolve about the issues that are important to them and as parties show differing effectiveness at addressing the key issues. If each of these things are true—that those in power today expect to lose sometime in the future (and then win again) and that voters are only conditionally loyal to parties—then all political leaders expect to be in power sometimes and in opposition sometimes. Thus, all political actors would have an incentive to protect the rights of those who are currently out of power and to keep the political playing field even.

The rise of populism around the world is throwing these most basic of liberal democratic conditions into question. The core argument of populist parties and leaders is that they embody the will of a country's "true people" anyone who opposes them, then, is betraying the people. This includes the systems of institutional checks and balances designed to prevent abuses of power.

Once one party in a political system is making the argument that they alone can represent the people, it gets easier to justify bulldozing through institutional constraints or even curtailing the rights of one's political opponents. Citizens are less likely to object to eroding democratic institutions if they believe a corrupt elite has captured them. It is difficult to

defeat populism at the ballot box: claiming to be the sole representative of the people also undermines 'loser's consent,' the willingness of voters to accept the legitimacy of an election which results in political defeat.

However, populist leaders are not solely to blame for weakening commitments to liberal democracy. In a well-functioning democracy, a message that unites as many voters as possible should carry the day, given that a large coalition of voters is needed to win elections. Populist messages of division—of "us versus them"—can prevail, however, in polarized political environments and when trust in mainstream politicians and institutions is low. In short, populism appears when there are real social and economic problems that need to be addressed and when the parties that are supposed to provide representation for citizens have failed to solve real challenges for too long.

At the end of 2018, we published a ground-breaking study on the state of populism around the world. In this study, we offered a clear definition of what populism is—and what it is not—as well as an explanation of many of the tactics that populist leaders use to support their claims. We then introduced a database of populism in power between 1990 and 2018.

When we embarked on this study, we noted that our database is not a list of "bad leaders" nor is it necessarily true that the people who support populist leaders are themselves populists. Voters can be drawn to populist parties for many reasons and have real cultural and economic grievances. Leaders and political parties that deploy populist tactics to win elections can sometimes moderate while in office (e.g. Syriza in Greece).

At the start of 2020, we wanted to revisit the state of populism around the world to inform thinking on what might be done to stem its tide. This report sets out the headline findings from our update of the TBI *Global Populism in Power* database.

We find that the rise in global populism over recent decades has been astounding, with more populist leaders and parties in power today than at almost any time in recent history. This includes in traditional populist strongholds like Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe, but also in Asia, where support for populist leaders has surged in recent years. Populism has not just risen in emerging democracies with weaker political parties and institutions but in systemically-important democracies with long institutional histories like the United States and India.

On the one hand, our focus on populism *in power* is the litmus test of the evolution of global populism. Wielding political power gives populist leaders and parties the opportunity to remake the state and to upend policies. Yet, it is not only those populists who formally achieve power who are relevant. Many populist parties around the world have wielded dramatic influence on their nations' politics without their leaders ever riding in the ministerial car. The ability of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and now its successor the Brexit Party to exert political power and influence without ever winning office is perhaps the most stunning example of how populists can reshape political landscapes far beyond

their level of support would suggest. Political scientist Cas Mudde argues that mainstream parties are increasingly moving towards the issue positions long advocated by the far right, especially on immigration, crime, and European integration, ideas once considered out of bounds in mainstream politics. We discuss many of these topics in a forthcoming piece that reflects on how populism is reshaping the political landscape in Western Europe even while falling short of winning electoral majorities.

The populist upsurge of recent years is clear from our analysis, and the self-reinforcing dynamic of polarising politics is hard to break. But when we look at its arc over the course of a decade or more, cracks are starting to appear in this narrative. One of the most important populist setbacks over the past year was the defeat of Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP)—in power since 2002—in Istanbul's mayoral election. Similarly, the Fidesz-backed incumbent mayor of Budapest lost by a 7-point margin, dealing Hungary's prime minister Viktor Orbán one of his most significant political setbacks in ten years. In the United States in 2019, candidates backed by president Donald Trump lost in three back-to-back governorship races in traditional Republican strongholds. Momentum against populists in power in local elections is an important trend that may help us to understand how populism may evolve in 2020 and what moderate leaders can do to combat its appeal. We address these themes in another forthcoming piece.

In the following sections, we offer a brief overview of what populism is (and what it is not) as well as a description of the different types of populism around the world. We then discuss the main trends in global populism, with a focus on how various populist leaders have fared over the past year.

What is populism

At the end of 2018, we published an overview of global populism. In this piece, we described what populism is, the many different forms that it comes in around the world, and how prevalent populism is around the world. We provide a quick overview of these ideas here.

Only with a clear idea of what populism is can political leaders begin to offer credible alternatives. Yet, it is often easier to define what populists are against than what they are for. They are against 'elites', they are against the centre, they are against compromise, and they are against the status quo system.

We offer a simple definition, based on an extensive scientific literature on populism as an ideology.[1] Populists are united by two claims: (1) that a country's 'true people' are locked

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[1] See Jan-Werner Müller, *What Is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Yascha Mounk, *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom is in Danger and How to Save It* (Harvard University

into a moral conflict with 'outsiders' and (2) that nothing should constrain the will of the 'true people.' Rather than seeing politics as a contest between different policy positions, populists argue that the political arena is a moral battleground between right and wrong—between a country's true people and the elites or other groups that populists deem to be outsiders, like ethnic and religious minorities, immigrants, or criminals. Anti-elitism always features highly in populist rhetoric, and the moral conflict between the 'good people' and the 'corrupt elite' is one of the most important threads through populist narratives.

To some extent, however, any politician running for office rails against the establishment. What makes populists different is that they see 'the people' as homogenous with a unitary goal, a goal which cannot be debated based on evidence but which derives from the common sense of the people. The real 'people' in this sense are, however, only a subset of the population, a subset defined by the populist leader as the only authentic source of political authority. This provides the justification for the argument that nothing should constrain the populist leader, as he embodies the will of the people. It is not conceivable, in the populist worldview, for leaders to abuse their power, as any exercise of power on their part is done in the name of the people, by definition.

It is easy to see, then, how populism comes quickly into conflict with the norms and values of liberal democracy. The idea that there is a homogenous people with a single interest conflicts with pluralism, which recognizes that society consists of multiple groups with different ideas and interests and accepts the legitimacy of all of these different societal groups to advocate for their own preferences and interests. The idea that there is only one legitimate representative of the people denies the legitimacy of other parties who seek power. This is a distortion of democracy, which is grounded in the idea that all groups are legitimate contributors to the political debate and can, conditional on receiving enough support, set policy.[2]

Beyond these two core claims, populists can vary substantially in how they define the central social conflict. In our original report, we identify three variants of populism, based on how populist leaders and parties frame the conflict between the 'true people' and outsiders:

- **Cultural populism** claims that the true people are the native members of the nation-state, and outsiders can include immigrants, criminals, ethnic and religious minorities, and cosmopolitan elites. Populists argue that these groups pose a threat to 'the people' by not sharing their values. Cultural populists tend to emphasize

Press, 2018); Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Brief Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

[2] For more on how populism distorts democratic principles, see Nadia Urbinati, "Political theory of populism," *Annual Review of Political Science* 22 (2019): 111-127.

religious traditionalism, law and order, anti-immigration positions, and national sovereignty.

- **Socio-economic populism** claims that the true people are the honest, hard-working members of the working class, and outsiders are the big businesses, capital owners, and international financial institutions benefitting unjustly from the working class's difficult economic circumstances. This form of populism is almost always accompanied by a left-wing economic ideology, though the specific policy agenda varies across contexts.
- **Anti-establishment populism** claims that the true people are hard-working victims of a state run by special interests. Often, these special interests are the elites empowered by a former regime (such as former communists in Central and Eastern Europe). Although all forms of populism are anti-establishment, this form distinguishes itself by focusing on establishment elites as the primary enemy of the people and does not sow as many intra-society divisions. Anti-establishment populists tend to compete on issue areas outside the typical left-right political divide, such as corruption, democratic reform, and transparency.

Populists can combine elements of these narratives: cultural populists, for example, may also rail about how big businesses are hurting the working class. However, populist leaders and parties typically have a primary lens through which they see the moral conflict of politics and a predominate way of stoking insider-outsider divisions.

A key element of the 'populist playbook' is elevating the moral conflict between the 'true people' and their 'opponents' to the level of national crisis.[3] Populists blame the crisis on the elites and the political class who failed to protect the interests of the 'true people,' while claiming that outsiders are benefitting from the crisis and profiting unfairly from the hard work of the 'true people.' For example, populist anti-immigrant parties decry mainstream parties for allowing open immigration and blame immigrant communities for benefitting too much from living in their countries. In seeking to classify and understanding different variants of populism, we look not just for the predominate narrative in populist rhetoric but for how populists define their countries' true crises.

The state of global populism

Employing the above definition of populism, we have developed the TBI *Global Populism in Power* database, tracking the evolution of this phenomenon from 1990 through today. The dataset focuses only on those populist parties and leaders that attained executive office within democratic countries, so this includes those who reached the presidency or prime ministership (or the equivalent executive office) and not those who governed as minority

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[3] See Benjamin Moffitt, "How to Perform Crisis: A Model for Understanding the Key Role of Crisis in Contemporary Populism," *Government and Opposition* 50, no. 2 (2015): 189-217.

partners in a coalition government.[4] We only consider those countries where the leader or party in question was initially elected within a democratic setting.[5] This restriction omits many instances of populism that have risen within semi-democratic and authoritarian settings; however, it also ensures that the cases are more comparable to each other.

Our analysis and the categorization of different leaders are based on the systematic review of the academic literature. We developed an evidence file for each potential populist leader and party,[6] where we reflected on three aspects of populist style. In order to be included in the database, we required that a leader or party scored highly on at least two of the three dimensions: (1) a high degree of anti-elite rhetoric, (2) evidence of efforts to delegitimize political opposition, and (3) evidence that the leader cultivated a 'cult of personality' or emphasized that they alone could serve as the voice of the people.[7] While many leaders scored highly on all three dimensions—e.g., Venezuela's Hugo Chávez—some scored highly on only two dimensions—e.g., Italy's Silvio Berlusconi (both anti-elitist and personalistic, but lower on delegitimizing the opposition).

It is important to note that populists do not necessarily erode democratic institutions, diminish civil and political liberties, or restrain free media. Nor do populists necessarily double down on short-sighted economic largesse. And, elected leaders who do not hold populist ideology can corrode democratic norms and institutions in order to enact their preferred policies. We treat these as potential outcomes of populist rule, and they do not enter our coding criteria. Rather, populism is a distinct political ideology and style which can moderate when confronted with the realities of governing or be checked by a powerful opposition.

To verify our assessments, our categorisations were also cross-checked with political scientists with expertise in the relevant country. In the end, we only include cases in the data for which we could locate strong scholarly and primary source evidence and erred on the side of excluding cases where this type of evidence wasn't available. As global attention to the populist phenomenon rises, we expect that more and more evidence will be

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[4] We used the Archigos database of global leaders to identify the effective leader of every country in every year. See H.E. Goemans, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Giacomo Chiozza. "Introducing Archigos: A Data Set of Political Leaders," *Journal of Peace Research* 46, no. 2 (2009): 269-283.

[5] We include only those countries that have a Polity IV score of at least 6—a commonly-used threshold for coding democracy within political science.

[6] For more information on how we developed this potential list, see the Appendix of our *Populism in Power* report.

[7] Part of what makes populism unique is the coexistence of each of these components at the same time—the anti-elitism, the delegitimizing the political participation of the opposition, and the argument that the populist himself embodies the will of the people. So, when coding, the existence of one component alone is not sufficient to count in the database. This approach is in line with a recent review on how to measure populist attitudes, see Alexander Wuttke, Christian Schimpf, and Harald Schoen, "When the whole is greater than the sum of its parts: On the conceptualization and measurement of populist attitudes and other multidimensional constructs," *American Political Science Review,* forthcoming.

collected, and we plan to continue to update the data based on new and emerging cases of populism as well as based on newly-available evidence on historical cases.

Here, we provide an update of this dataset that reflects both new developments through the end of 2019 as well as refinements that we've made to the methodology over the past year (spelled out below). For this update, we reviewed over 50 leadership elections around the world from 2018 and 2019. Figure 1 charts the rise of populism since 1990, which increases around fivefold during the period. The sharp increase in populists in power actually occurred from the mid-2000s to the early 2010s, since which their number has been broadly stable. This is particularly revealing given that among advanced democracies concerns about rising populism have been a more recent phenomenon.

While the total number of populist leaders and parties in power has held relatively steady in recent years, the specific countries where populism is prevailing have changed dramatically. During the mid-2010s peak, populism prevailed primarily in Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe. This period saw Latin America's 'left turn,' a resurgence of left-wing politics across the region that began with the election of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela in 1998 and is only recently waning. Not all of the left-wing politicians that rose in Latin America during this time period were populist, but many were.

By contrast, today's near-peak reflects the rise of populism within countries that could significantly remake the global international order, like the United States and India. If the primary concern about populists rising to power before was how they may damage a country's domestic political institutions and may enact unsustainable economic policies, today policymakers must also consider how populist leaders in systemically-important countries can influence global financial markets, trading relationships, and alliances. For example, political scientists Allyson Benton and Andrew Philips find that Donald Trump's Mexico-related tweets raise Mexican peso volatility.[8] More generally, foreign policy is often collateral damage of populists' divisive approach to domestic politics, sewing international uncertainty and undermining international collective action.

Figure 1: Populism in power, 1990-2019

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[8] Benton, Allyson and Andrew Q. Philips, "Does the @realDonaldTrump Really Matter to Financial Markets?" *American Journal of Political Science* 64, no. 1 (2020): 169-190.
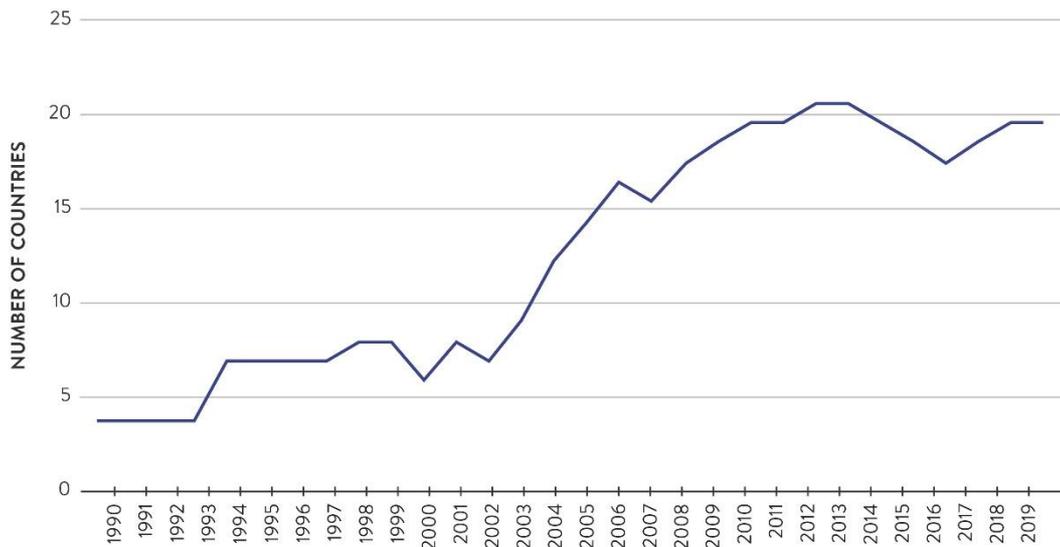
The types of populism in power have also really shifted over time. Anti-establishment populists are no more prevalent today than they were 30 years ago. Meanwhile, the early 2010s reflects the peak of Latin American left-wing populism – what we classify as socio-economic populism – but this trend has been waning in recent years, with the number of socio-economic populists in power almost half its peak.

Figure 2: Type of populism in power, 1990-2019

Anti-establishment populism Socio-economic populism Cultural populism
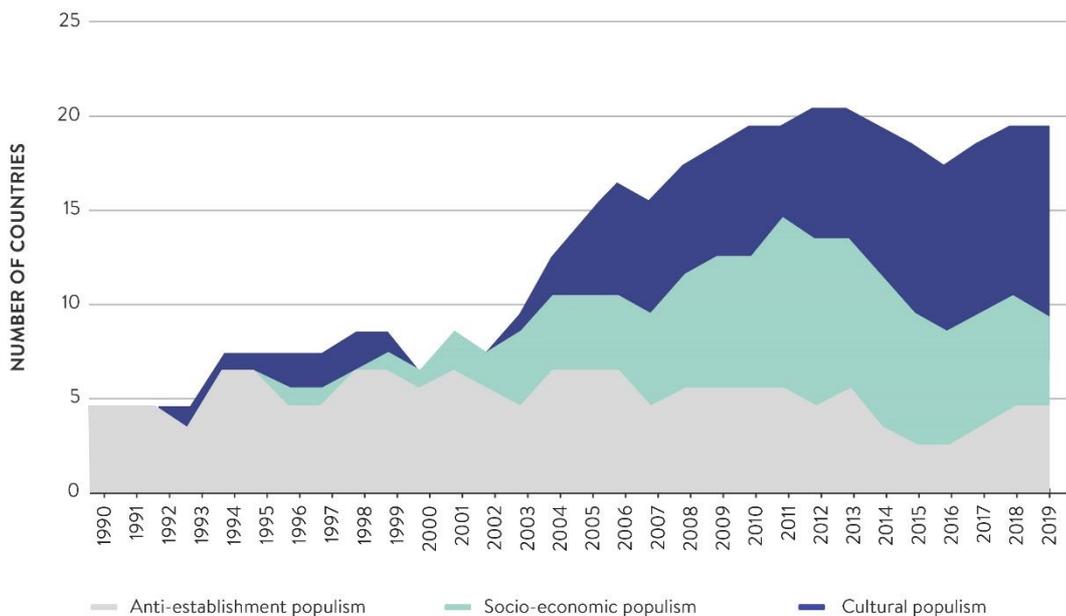
The growth story, however, has been in cultural populism, which has risen to become the dominant variant in power today (see Figure 2). Cultural populism has been rising steadily since the late 1990s and early 2000s. At first blush, the rise of cultural populism would seem to be primarily about the rise of anti-immigration, nativist parties across Europe. Although the rise of the far right is reshaping political dynamics and coalition building across Europe, few of these parties are actually *in power*.

Instead, the rise of cultural populism in power is mostly attributable to its success in Central and Eastern Europe, where immigration levels are low but where leaders like Orbán have been adept at stoking cultural anxieties, and in Asia, where a worrying form of ethnic majoritarianism is on the rise.

Ethnic majoritarianism insists that a nation's majority religious or ethnic group are the nation's true citizens, and that the rest are second-class citizens, essentially living in the nation at the courtesy of the majority. Majoritarian politics argues that the nation's majority has been long-aggrieved and silently suffering within a multi-ethnic democracy that privileges minority rights. Populist leaders and parties cultivate this sense of grievance at great peril: it can pave the way for erosions of minority protections and even violence. These types of ethnic majoritarian arguments run through the populism of Modi in India, Rajapaksa in Sri Lanka, Erdoğan in Turkey, and more.

It is this potential for harm to minority populations which is particularly worrying about today's rise of cultural populism. Even if socio-economic and cultural populists can be equally damaging to a country's system of institutional checks and balances—as we find in our report on populism and democracy—cultural populism is more likely to threaten minority protections.

Central and Eastern Europe and Asia are no strangers to populism. In 1998, Joseph Estrada, a former actor, won the presidency in the Philippines promising to be the hero of the lower classes. Thaksin Shinawatra, a prominent telecoms billionaire, became Thailand's prime minister in 2001, divided Thai society between the grassroots, nonprivileged rural population and the elite aristocracy, royalists, and urban middle classes. Meanwhile, Lech Walesa in Poland rose by combining populism with economic liberalism, declaring anyone against Poland's liberal economic transformation as one of the enemy. Unlike today's populism in the region, these earlier forms were not driven by cultural grievances.

The evolution and global spread of populism across regions can be seen clearly in Figure 3, which shows the countries where populist leaders or parties are in power over every year from 1990 to today. At the end of the Cold War, populism is concentrated in Latin America and Central Europe. Over time, it spreads to Asia, Western Europe, Africa, and to North America.

1990

Legend:
- Populist leaders or parties in power[1]
- Populist leaders or parties not in power[2]
- Non-democracies/no data

1 We include populists *initially* elected in democracies. Some autocratise over time

2 Our database is coded based on scholarly evidence of populism. It may not reflect all existing populists in power

Populism in Power 1990-2020

To some extent, populism is spreading globally along with the spread of liberal democracy itself during the same time period. This spread of liberal democracy can be seen in light gray on Figure 3. We visualize countries as 'democratic' if the incumbent leader attained power within a democratic political setting. Countries in blue on the map are those where the current leader in power was initially elected to executive office under democratic institutions. Meanwhile, countries in dark gray are those where the current leader in power assumed executive office within a semi-democratic, semi-authoritarian, or fully authoritarian setting (even if they later democratized), along with those countries for which we lacked data on democracy scores.[9]

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[9] Setting the data up in this way—looking at democracy levels when a leader initially takes office—enables us to evaluate what happens when populist leaders are elected to office.

If the rise of global populism has been concurrent with the third wave of democratization, it has also spurred democratic decline in many of the countries where it has risen. Political institutions in countries like Belarus and Venezuela now bear little resemblance to those in place when populist leaders initially rose to power in those countries, in 1994 and 1999, respectively.

In the following section, we discuss how specific populist leaders have fared over the past year and more detailed updates to our *Populism in Power* project.

New populist leaders on the scene

For this update, we reviewed over 50 leadership elections around the world from mid-2018 through the end of 2019. Populist leaders and parties fared well across many elections during this period, and we identify three new populist leaders that have gained executive office globally: Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico, and Gotabaya Rajapaksa in Sri Lanka We briefly discuss these cases, along with the database on populists in power since 1990.

These leaders are all quite different from each other, both in how they see the defining moral conflict within politics and in the effects that they are having on their countries' political institutions. Their differences illustrate why populism is a political style that should be separated from questions about its effects on liberal democratic institutions, and why it's important to consider the type of populism as well.

In other words, by discussing the changes that we see in global populism, we are not implying that these leaders are equivalent to each other or that they are 'bad' leaders. Populism is a political style predicated on sowing divisions but deploying it does not always lead to democratic decline, and leaders can moderate in office or be checked by powerful opposition parties.

Jair Bolsonaro was elected president of Brazil in October 2018, commanding 55 per cent of the vote. He rose amid profound political and economic crisis, including a prolonged recession, rising crime rates, and corruption scandals at the highest levels of the Brazilian government. Bolsonaro capitalized on these crises by promising to eradicate crime and corruption, often in brutal ways. On the campaign trail, he frequently praised Brazil's military dictatorship and promised to vanquish his political enemies.

Emphasizing law-and-order issues and the threat that criminals pose to Brazil's 'ordinary people,' Bolsonaro is a classic cultural populist. He proposed legislation, for example, to protect police officers and citizens from being prosecuted for shooting alleged criminals, saying that criminals should "die in the streets like cockroaches."

Bolsonaro has already moved to dismantle Brazil's participatory institutions, signing a decree that eliminated policy councils, one of the key mechanisms for citizens to participate in politics. To more devastating effect, Bolsonaro, like many other far right party leaders, has rejected environmentalism and adopted climate-sceptic positions. In his first year in office, he has already eviscerated funding for the government agencies protecting the Amazon rainforest, giving implicit approval for illegal loggers to clear trees and for ranchers to use fire to clear more land for ranching. The more trees that are cut down, the further the fires spread, and fires were up 84 per cent in 2019 compared to the year before.

Mexico's Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) swept into power in a landslide victory, promising a 'fourth transformation' for Mexico, an end to neoliberalism, and the eradication of corruption. The differences between the world's two newest populist leaders would, at first blush, seem greater than their similarities. Where Bolsonaro has called his opposition "bandits," and threatened that they will have to "leave the country" or "go to jail" and accelerated deforestation, AMLO promises a pro-poor social revolution. AMLO is therefore a socio-economic, rather than a cultural, populist.

Yet, populism is not about the virtuousness of the policy proposals put forward by its leaders. Populism is about the claim that only a single person or party can represent the will of the people, and that neither legislatures nor independent agencies should get in the way of the implementation of this will.

In this sense, AMLO has shown key features of populist style. He holds frequent rallies and "has railed against the Mexican media, disparaged Mexican NGOs and civil society, and decried the Mexican supreme court." He has also tried to create avenues to bypass the legislature, taking policy proposal directly to the people in the form of referenda. AMLO promised to allow citizens to organize a recall vote of his own presidency half through his term. Though framed as a check on presidential power, opposition parties are concerned that this would be used as the lead-up to eliminating Mexico's one-term limit for presidents. It also enables AMLO to put himself on the ballot during the midterm elections, a potential way of increasing turnout and his party's vote share.

The most concerning addition to the populist scene is no doubt Sri Lanka's Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who has ushered in the return of ethnic majoritarianism to Sri Lanka, long besieged by ethnic conflict. Gotabaya, the brother of Sri Lanka's former prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa (in office from 2005 to 2015), oversaw security forces within Sri Lanka accused of human rights abuses and war crimes during the brutal final phases of Sri Lanka's civil war, which formally ended in 2009. Gotabaya's campaign capitalized on fear Sri Lanka's Muslim minority—heightened in light of the Easter bombings last April—as well as deep ethnic polarization between Tamil Hindus and Sinhalese Buddhists. Within days of assuming office, Mahinda Rajapaksa, who Gotabaya has already appointed as prime minister, issued a media release stating that the country's 19th amendment—which

provides checks and balances on the presidency—will be subject to examination and possible reform.

In addition to these three new populist leaders entering power in late 2018 and 2019, several populist leaders were re-elected during this time. The two most notable are the re-election of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) led by Narendra Modi in India in May 2019 and the Law and Justice party in Poland in October 2019. Neither was unexpected, although there had been questions about Modi's re-election prospects because the economy had been slowing before the election.

In Argentina, the Peronist party took office again on December 10, 2019, having defeated centrist president Mauricio Macri's bid for a second term. Alberto Fernández, Argentina's new president, has strong alliances with many of the country's past populist leaders. He was Nestor Kirchner's chief of staff, and he chose Cristina Fernández de Kirchner as his running mate. Yet, under our methodology Mr. Fernández is not classified as a populist. He has put some distance between himself and the Kirchners, criticizing Cristina Kirchner's second term and promising that he won't return to the policies of the populist past. By choosing Kirchner as his running mate while still remaining critical of her regime, he united a broad coalition to win the election on a non-populist platform. More campaigns of this type—which rely on the emotional attachments that citizens often hold with populist leaders yet which rely on alliances between populists and non-populists—may prevail going forward as countries grapple with populist legacies.

The fall of populist governments

While some new populist leaders entered the global political landscape, some populist leaders fell from power over the past year as well. Most notably, populist shake-ups occurred in Italy and Greece, and Bolivia's Evo Morales fled the country amid protests.

Syriza lost Greece's May 2019 elections, which Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras called after Syriza's defeat in the 2019 European Parliament elections. The party lost 59 of its 145 seats, and the centre-right New Democracy formed a new government. The uneasy coalition between the League and the Five Star Movement in Italy collapsed when the League leader Matteo Salvini called for a vote of no confidence against Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte in an attempt to force early elections and become the prime minister himself. Instead of agreeing to new elections, the Five Star Movement started coalition talks with the centre-left Democratic Party. In January 2020, Five Star Movement's leader, Luigi Di Maio stepped down in the face of Five Star Movement's declining popularity. It remains uncertain who will prevail in Italy's upcoming elections.

After holding power for 13 years, Bolivian president Evo Morales fell from power amid protests in November 2019. In 2014, Morales broke a long-standing pledge not to seek a third term, per constitutional rules. He argued that his first term didn't count, as it took

place under Bolivia's old constitution. After winning the presidency in 2014, he announced his intentions of seeking a fourth term. Since this wasn't allowed under the constitution that his own party drafted and promulgated in 2009, he asked voters to decide on whether to allow an additional term in a national referendum in 2016. By a 51-49 margin, voters rejected the proposal. In defiance of the referendum result, the Supreme Court (already filled with loyalists), declared that constitutional term limits violated the "human right" to run for the presidency, opening the gates to indefinite presidential terms.

When the presidential election of October 2019 came around, it was marred by illegitimacy. A vote margin of at least ten per cent is required to avoid a runoff. As the vote tally seemed headed toward a runoff, vote-reporting suddenly stopped for 24 hours. When news coverage resumed, Morales claimed victory by just over ten percentage points, avoiding a runoff. Bolivia was engulfed in protests and violence within days, and Morales resigned—fleeing to Mexico—after losing support from the military. The second vice president of the senate, and the leader of the main opposition party, Jeanine Áñez assumed the presidency. Although both Mr Morales's party and Ms Áñez's party have agreed to the terms of a new presidential election to be held in May 2020, it is by no means guaranteed that political stability will prevail.

Bolivia's dilemma highlights the difficult political conditions for any country after the fall of a prominent populist leader. Populist leaders are adept at staging unlikely political comebacks. Charismatic populist leaders also hold sway over the public imagination long after their fall, and future politicians profit by tapping into this emotional connection, as political scientist Caitlin Andrews-Lee has shown.[10] Former populist leaders often continually insert themselves into politics, reinforcing the idea that the country is divided between their supporters and their opponents, even when they are out of office.

Reformist leaders coming in after populism may only get one term to solve deep social and political challenges in a deeply polarized country and may face legislatures and bureaucracies still filled with loyalists to the former populist leader. For example, South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa and Ecuador's Lenín Moreno face intractable social and economic challenges, yet reform is difficult in the wake of their countries' former populist leaders. If moderate politicians ruling after populists are unable to overcome these challenges, new populist leaders promising easy solutions can regain popularity. What comes after populism, therefore, may not be a return to liberal democracy, but a new set of political challenges.

Populists in power, 1990-2019

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[10] Andrews-Lee, Caitlin, "The Revival of Charisma: Experimental Evidence from Argentina and Venezuela," *Comparative Political Studies* 52, no. 5 (2019): 687-719.

After assessing the rise and fall of populist leaders and parties over the course of the past year, we provide an update of our *Populism in Power* database below. In addition to reviewing recent elections and classifying new populist leaders, we refined and updated the database from our previous report. Any such effort is bound to be imperfect, dependent on judgement and resulting in debatable cases at the margins. However, we believe that the refined methodology adds to the value of the TBI *Global Populism in Power* database as a contribution to a greater systematic and comparative understanding of this important phenomenon.

We make two refinements to the data from our first report. The first is that our initial report relied heavily on reflecting the scientific consensus on how to classify populist leaders and parties. While we still do this—as described fully in our first report—we re-vetted our cases to ensure that every case more strongly meets the ideological definition of populism that we use. Because the literature uses different definitions of populism, there are borderline cases that may meet one definition but not another (many end up meeting both). For example, we removed Indonesia's Joko Widodo from the database. While he is a charismatic leader who rose to power outside the normal political establishment by relying on mass mobilization—a definition of populism used by some of the literature—his explicit commitment to pluralism means that he doesn't meet the ideological definition of populism that we use.

The second refinement was to look more closely for evidence that a leader or party ran for office as a populist, rather than developed a populist style once in office. This is important if we want to study populism's effects and be able to separate a populist style from what a populist does in office. This led us to exclude Vladimir Putin, for example, who clearly uses cultural populism but has done so more as a tool of legitimising an already autocratic regime in his second term rather than as a means of rising to power. This led us to exclude Putin from our database, as Russian democracy had already eroded by the time of Putin's re-election in 2012, and we require that a country meets a minimum threshold of democracy at the time that a leader initially rises to office.[11]

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[11] Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro is an exception. We include the Maduro regime in the database as he assumed power after the death of Chávez in 2013, so it can be seen as one long spell of populism in the country.

We believe these refinements will help moderate politicians and commentators to understand what populism is and how it has risen to power, as well as to move toward a global, systematic understanding of one of the most important political phenomena of the contemporary age.

NEW DATASETS ON GLOBAL POPULISM

When we started on this project two years ago, there were no other datasets of its kind that were both global and historical in scope. Now, at least two more datasets that we know of have been released by prominent populism scholars. The Global Populism Database is the culmination of years of research by Kirk Hawkins and others at the Team Populism project. This project code leaders' speeches for evidence of anti-elitism and a Manichean view of politics. A nice feature of this method is that it provides a kind of populism scale, with some leaders scoring high and others lower, that can vary over time as leaders adopt and shed populist rhetoric.

Political scientist Paul Kenny also released a database on global populist leaders, though using a different definition of populism, based on the extent to which authority within a movement is concentrated within a single leader and to which the masses are mobilized by their direct ties to the leader (rather than by party loyalty, etc.). For him, populism is either present or not, and he does not differentiate populists by type (e.g. left, right).

Each of the datasets can be used to answer slightly different questions. The Global Populism Database can be used to understand the effects of different degrees of anti-elite rhetoric, while the Kenny data can be used to understand the effects of mass mobilizations under charismatic leaders. Our data is best suited to understanding the effects of electing a leader or party espousing a populist ideology to office. In practice, however, there is substantial overlap across all three projects in the leaders and parties ultimately considered to be populist, providing reassurance that despite different definitions, scholars are still picking up a similar underlying concept.

Conclusions

Global populism is holding steady near its all-time high, and cultural populism has become its most prevalent form. While it may seem encouraging that the total number of populists in power has not increased since the early 2010s, beneath the surface of populists *in power* other trends are less encouraging. Where populism was once a phenomenon confined to developing democracies, it is now gaining power in some of the world's most established democracies and most systemically-important countries. This means that whereas the effects of populism in power were once confined to a country's local political institutions, the effects of today's populism promise to be global, reshaping global financial flows, trade relations, and foreign policy for years to come. The database will continue to monitor whether the upward march of global populism has peaked and is set to decline, or whether it has merely paused for breath.

TABLE 1: Populism in Power, 1990-2019

Country	Leader or Party	Years in Office	Type of Populism
Argentina	Carlos Menem	1989-1999	Anti-establishment
Argentina	Néstor Kirchner	2003-2007	Socio-economic
Argentina	Cristina Fernández de Kirchner	2007-2015	Socio-economic
Belarus	Alexander Lukashenko	1994-	Anti-establishment
Bolivia	Evo Morales	2006-2019	Socio-economic
Brazil	Fernando Collor de Mello	1990-1992	Anti-establishment
Brazil	Jair Bolsonaro	2019-	Cultural
Bulgaria	Boyko Borisov	2009-2013, 2014-2017, 2017-	Anti-establishment
Czech Republic	Miloš Zeman	1998-2002	Anti-establishment
Czech Republic	Andrej Babiš	2017-	Anti-establishment
Ecuador	Abdalá Bucaram	1996-1997	Socio-economic
Ecuador	Lucio Gutiérrez	2003-2005	Socio-economic
Ecuador	Rafael Correa	2007-2017	Socio-economic
Georgia	Mikheil Saakashvili	2004-2013	Anti-establishment

Greece	Syriza	2015-2019	Socio-economic
Hungary	Viktor Orbán / Fidesz	2010-	Cultural
India	Narendra Modi	2014-	Cultural
Israel	Benjamin Netanyahu	1996-1999, 2009-	Cultural
Italy	Silvio Berlusconi	1994-1995, 2001-2006, 2008-2011, 2013	Anti-establishment
Italy	Five Star Movement / League coalition	2018-2019	Anti-establishment
Italy	Five Star Movement	2019-	Anti-establishment
Japan	Junichiro Koizumi	2001-2006	Anti-establishment
Macedonia	Nikola Gruevski	2006-2016	Cultural
Mexico	Andrés Manuel López Obrador	2018-	Socio-economic
Nicaragua	Daniel Ortega	2007-	Socio-economic
Paraguay	Fernando Lugo	2008-2012	Socio-economic
Peru	Alberto Fujimori	1990-2000	Anti-establishment
Philippines	Joseph Estrada	1998-2001	Anti-establishment

Philippines	Rodrigo Duterte	2016-	Cultural
Poland	Lech Wałeşa	1990-1995	Anti-establishment
Poland	Law and Justice Party	2005-2010, 2015-	Cultural
Romania	Traian Băsescu	2004-2014	Anti-establishment
Serbia	Aleksandar Vučić	2014-2017, 2017-	Cultural
Slovakia	Vladimír Mečiar	1993-1994, 1994-1998	Cultural
Slovakia	Robert Fico	2006-2010, 2012-2018	Cultural
Slovenia	Janez Janša	2004-2008, 2012-2013	Cultural
South Africa	Jacob Zuma	2009-2018	Socio-economic
Sri Lanka	Mahinda Rajapaksa	2005-2015	Cultural
Sri Lanka	Gotabaya Rajapaksa	2019-	Cultural
Taiwan	Chen Shui-bian	2000-2008	Anti-establishment
Thailand	Thaksin Shinawatra	2001-2006	Socio-economic
Thailand	Yingluck Shinawatra	2011-2014	Socio-economic

Turkey	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	2003-	Cultural
United States	Donald Trump	2017-	Cultural
Venezuela	Rafael Caldera	1994-1999	Anti-establishment
Venezuela	Hugo Chávez	1999-2013	Socio-economic
Venezuela	Nicolás Maduro	2013-	Socio-economic
Zambia	Michael Sata	2011-2014	Socio-economic

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