TRUMPING
THE MAINSTREAM

THE CONQUEST OF DEMOCRATIC POLITICS
BY THE POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT

EDITED BY
LISE ESTHER HERMAN
AND JAMES MULDOON

TRUMPING THE MAINSTREAM

In 2016, the striking electoral success of the UK Vote Leave campaign and Donald Trump's presidential bid defied conventional expectations and transformed the political landscape. Considered together, these two largely unpredicted events constitute a defining moment in the process of the incorporation of far-right populist discourse in mainstream politics.

This timely book argues that there has been a change in the fundamental dynamic of the mainstreaming of far-right populist discourse. In recent elections, anti-establishment actors have rewritten the playbook, defeated the establishment and redefined political norms. They have effectively outplayed, overtaken and trumped mainstream parties and policies.

As fringe discourse becomes mainstream, how we conceive of the political landscape and indeed the very distinction between a political centre and periphery has been challenged. This book provides new theoretical tools and empirical analyses to understand the ongoing mainstreaming of far-right populism. Offering case studies and comparative research, it analyses recent political events in the US, UK, France and Belgium. This book is essential reading for scholars and students of populism and far-right politics who seek to make sense of recent world-altering events.

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TRUMPING THE MAINSTREAM

The Conquest of Democratic Politics by the Populist Radical Right

Edited by Lise Esther Herman and James Muldoon

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INTRODUCTION

Populism in the twenty-first century: from the fringe to the mainstream

Lise Esther Herman and James Muldoon

Introduction

In the past two years, the striking electoral success of the UK Vote Leave campaign, Donald Trump's presidential bid and the 10.6 million votes gathered by Front National (FN) candidate, Marine Le Pen, in the second round of the French presidential elections defied conventional expectations and transformed the political landscape of the three major first wave democracies. Considered together, these largely unpredicted events constitute a defining moment in the process of the incorporation of Populist Radical Right (PRR) discourse in mainstream politics. Following the emerging academic consensus on populism, we understand it as a form of political discourse that opposes the people, conceived as a homogeneous and well defined whole, and its enemies, embodied both by a self-serving liberal elite and corrupting minorities (Canovan, 1999; Panizza, 2005; Stanley, 2008). Populist Radical Right Parties (PRRPs) combine a populist discourse with two core ideological pillars: a nativist form of nationalism that strives towards the congruence of state and nation, and a brand of authoritarianism that aspires towards an orderly and hierarchical society (for an overview, see Mudde, 2007, pp. 16–23). The term political *mainstream*, in turn, is not understood in terms of ideological content but in terms of location on a given political spectrum: the share of established parties and public opinion that can be considered as dominant in a given system, and have thus the means to access government and directly influence policy-making.

This edited volume interrogates the changing relationship between PRR and mainstream politics in light of these major elections and referenda of 2016–2017 in the UK, US and France. First, to say that mainstream politics has been "trumped" in this context is to draw attention to the fact that radical right populists are more able than in the past to win majorities in national elections and referenda, and therefore have gained more direct control over the political agenda. Second, these

events cast a new light on the role of mainstream political parties in the electoral success of PRRPs. In the case of the UK and US in particular, the Conservatives and the Republican Party have contributed to political processes that have ultimately divided and compromised them. Third, these events have altered our political imagination in relation to the threats and opportunities posed by far-right populist discourse. The defeat of mainstream candidates and policies in the US and the UK has transformed the nature of political contestation elsewhere, opening up new horizons of possibility and raising the hopes of populist candidates.

This introduction proceeds as follows. We first review previous research that has focused on the evolving relation of PRR and mainstream politics in the past decades, and in particular the strategic response of mainstream parties to the rise of far-right parties on the fringe of the political spectrum. We then provide an overview of the events that have motivated the publication of this volume. We argue that they represent a new stage in the mainstreaming of PRR discourse, with a change in the fundamental dynamic of what has been called the "normalisation of the right" (Berezin, 2013). The last section of this introduction emphasises the contribution of this volume to the current literature, and provides a detailed outline of its different chapters.

The evolving relationship between the PRR and the political mainstream

Recent spectacular electoral advances of the PRR fall within a longer history of political success. Starting in the mid-1980s, what is commonly understood as the third wave of post-war PRR politics (Von Beyme, 1988) has since then expanded rather than receded. Notwithstanding temporary setbacks and some geographical exceptions, this political family has steadily increased its vote share and agenda-setting capacity in mostly all advanced democracies over the past three decades. Meanwhile, the relationship between fringe and mainstream politics has fundamentally changed. From their emergence in the 1980s up to the late 1990s, far-right parties were still conceived by mainstream politicians as fringe actors rather than as key players. Their growing success has since altered mainstream party responses, from the initial *dismissal* of far-right parties, issues and positions to their progressive *accommodation* in governmental discourse and practice, without this necessarily halting the success of PRRPs or leading to a moderation of their claims. This process has generated extensive academic interest, with publications on populist far-right parties outnumbering those on all other party families taken together since the early 1990s (Bale, 2012, pp. 256–257; Mudde, 2013; 2016b, pp. 2–3).

The rise of PRRPs at the fringe of mainstream politics

After decades of marginalisation following the Second World War, PRRPs started gaining ground in the mid-1980s in Western Europe. The relatively isolated electoral victories of the French FN or Austrian FPÖ have since then become

common in the European political landscape. Between 1980 and 2004, the mean share of votes in lower house elections for the seven most important far-right parties in Western Europe shifted from 5.4% to 14% (Norris, 2005, p. 8). Despite these electoral successes, the far right nevertheless remained at the margin of mainstream politics up until the early 2000s. The dominant response of the mainstream centre-right and left has initially been to either *dismiss* far-right parties by ignoring them, or to adopt *adversarial* strategies to forcefully oppose and exclude them (Meguid, 2005, p. 256). The issues far-right parties raised were therefore often ignored by parties in government. Their presence in the political landscape was generally pictured as a remnant of the past, bound to eventually recede in advanced democratic societies.

The "normal pathology thesis" (Mudde, 2016a, p. 3) is especially significant during this period. Scholars often picture the PRRPs as an anomaly produced by economic, social and political crises rather than as a novel but permanent feature of changing European party systems. The larger share of this first wave of literature thus adopts the lens of modernisation theory to elucidate the determinants of the populist surge (Betz, 1994; Inglehart, 1997; Kriesi et al., 2006; Swank & Betz, 2003). PRR success is mostly considered as dependent on a larger process of attitudinal change caused by the socio-economic disruptions of globalisation. As a result, electoral studies that focus on the attitudinal and socio-demographic characteristic of far-right voters dominate the field, as scholars rely on the quantitative analysis of secondary data to analyse "demand-side" factors for the success of PRRPs (see, for example, Arzheimer, 2009; Golder, 2003; Lubbers, Gijsberts, & Scheepers, 2002; for an overview see Mudde, 2007). A smaller share of the vast literature documenting this first stage is concerned with terminological debates. These works engage with the conceptualisation of right-wing populism, the categorisation of PRRPs and the theorisation of the relationship between democracy and populism (Canovan, 1999; Mudde, 1996, 2004; Panizza, 2005).

Far-right parties have continued their electoral ascendancy in the new millennium. Notable electoral records include the Swiss SVP gaining 28.9% of the popular vote in the 2007 general election, the Front National and UKIP receiving the most votes of any single party in the UK and France in the 2014 European elections (Mounk, 2014), and the FPÖ candidate Norbert Hofer nearly winning the 2016 Austrian presidential elections with 46.7% of the vote. The Tea Party also arose in the US in 2009 as a response to Obama's victory and fears of reform on healthcare, taxation, government spending and gun control. In parallel, we have witnessed a shift of mainstream parties' attitudes towards these outside contenders in a bid to conquer part of the growing PRR electorate and to preserve the integrity of their own voter base.

The accommodation of the PRR by mainstream politics

Abandoning dismissive and adversarial positions, mainstream parties have increasingly adopted strategies of *accommodation* from the late 1990s onwards (Meguid, 2005).

In other words, they attempted to limit the attractiveness of PRR platforms by aligning with their voters' political preferences and contesting PRR ownership of immigration, minority integration and law and order issues. Centre-right and, to a lesser extent, centre-left parties, have thus promoted more restrictive policies and placed a greater emphasis on these key questions, while more generally shifting rightward on the liberal–authoritarian axis to the point of defending strikingly similar views to the PRR (Abou-Chadi, 2014; Bale, Green-Pedersen, Krouwel, Luther, & Sitter, 2010; Han, 2015; Meguid, 2008; van Spanje, 2010; Wagner & Meyer, 2017).[1] This tendency is especially clear in France, for instance, where the centre-right Les Républicains has gradually sidelined its Gaullist heritage and radicalised its positions on cultural issues under the influence of the Front National (Godin, 2013; Haegel, 2012). Conservatives are also less likely to shy away from forming government coalitions with PRR parties than in the past, a scenario that has occurred in Italy, Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland since the late 1990s (de Lange, 2012). In the United States, the Republican Party has undergone a similar process of radicalisation in the wake of the 11 September 2001 attacks and under the growing influence of the Tea Party, with anti-establishment conservatism becoming the party's main line (Horwitz, 2013).

Whereas the success of PRRPs was mainly considered as a dependent variable in the previous wave of publications, resulting from structural changes in public opinion, the mainstreaming of PRR ideas has led to a shift in focus. The literature of the 2000s and 2010s increasingly considers the radical right as an independent variable: PRRPs are now studied as political actors that exercise agency within a political system. A large share of the scholarship thus focuses on the *effects* of PRRPs on the political mainstream. Studies have, for instance, measured and categorised the strategies that centre-right and centre-left parties deploy to counter these radical contenders, contrasting dismissive, adversarial and accommodative strategies (Bale et al., 2010; Downs, 2001, 2002; Meguid, 2005, 2008). Scholars also distinguish between the influence of the PRR on policy decisions (policy effects), and effects on the salience of issues that are key to PRR platforms in public debate (agenda-setting effects) (on this distinction, see Minkenberg, 2001). Finally, the literature differentiates the *direct* effects that PRR parties in public office may have on policy and issue salience, and the *indirect* effects on the policy decisions and political agenda of mainstream political parties (on this distinction, see Schain, 2006).

While overall the literature has indeed identified a "contagion effect" (van Spanje, 2010) of PRR politics on the political mainstream, a number of elements nuance this broad conclusion. First, a disproportionate share of empirical studies base these assessments on an analysis of the immigration policy of mainstream parties, and of the salience of immigration and integration issues in mainstream party programs (see for instance Abou-Chadi, 2014; Akkerman, 2012; Bale, 2008b; Bale & Partos, 2014; Duncan, 2010; Duncan & Van Hecke, 2008; Minkenberg, 2001; Schain, 2006; van Spanje, 2010; Wagner & Meyer, 2017). While these studies provide a large amount of empirical evidence that a right-turn on these issues has indeed occurred in European party systems, far fewer publications have focused on

the impact of the PRR on policies that are not core to its agenda (Mudde, 2016b, p. 13). The available evidence, nevertheless, suggests that the PRR has a much more uncertain impact beyond issues of immigration, minority integration and law and order. On economic decision-making effects are more limited and vary significantly from one country to another (Schumacher & van Kersbergen, 2014; Wagner & Meyer, 2017). There is also no clear consensus on the systemic impact of PRR politics on the institutional foundations of liberal democracy (for contrasting views, see Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013; Mudde, 2013, pp. 10–11; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013), or on party system dynamics of polarisation and coalition-formation (for contrasting views, see Mudde, 2014; Pellikaan, de Lange, & van der Meer, 2016; Wolinetz & Zaslove, 2017). The extent to which populist rhetoric itself has contaminated mainstream political discourse is also a topic of controversy (Mudde, 2004; Rooduijn, de Lange, & van der Brug, 2014).

A second point qualifying the impact of PRRPs is the uncertain link between the emergence of these political forces and the right-wing radicalisation of the political mainstream. The impulse to counter PRR electoral success by contesting its ownership of immigration and integration issues has certainly played a role in mainstream programmatic shifts.[2] But party elites have also responded to long-term trends such as the rightward shift in public opinion due to the experience of globalisation as a (real or supposed) threat to cultural, economic and political security (Kriesi et al., 2008). In recent decades, mainstream radicalisation has also come as an answer to more circumscribed events, such as Islamist terrorist attacks, the 2008 financial crisis, as well as the refugee crisis that began in the early 2010s (Berezin, 2013; Kriesi & Pappas, 2015).

The role of other factors is evidenced by the fact that, as outlined by Mudde (2013, pp. 8–10), centre-right parties have adopted tougher immigration and integration policies across Europe regardless of the electoral strength of PRRPs. A number of studies indeed show that conservative governments have shifted to the right on these issues even in countries without PRR government participation or parliamentary presence (Bale, 2008a, pp. 458–459; Boswell & Hough, 2008; Smith, 2008). Scholars have also found that centre-right parties that form coalitions with the PRR are no more susceptible to right-wing radicalisation than those who do not (Akkerman, 2012; van Spanje, 2010, pp. 577–578). This supports the conclusion that such coalitions are primarily the consequence, rather than the cause, of a (previous) process of mainstream radicalisation (de Lange, 2012, pp. 913–914). Finally, Williams has found that the policy shifts of PRRPs on immigration and integration policy do not necessarily result in similar shifts by mainstream political parties (Williams, 2006, ch. 4, 8). Overall, these studies suggest that, while PRRPs certainly have an agenda-setting role in advanced democracies, there is also an autonomous logic to mainstream radicalisation (for a more extensive defence of this argument, see Mudde, 2016c). Centre-right and centre-left elites exercise political agency in shaping the ideological line of their party, and PRR electoral success is only one variable among others which they take into account in this process.

The impact of mainstream accommodation on PRR politics

In addition to studying the effect of PRR politics on the political mainstream, the wave of scholarship starting in the 2000s has also reversed the gaze, and considered the influence of mainstream radicalisation on PRRPs. In a number of countries, PRRPs appear to have initially pursued a strategy of "normalisation", abandoning the most extreme features of their commitments and appropriating liberal values to become more accepted political actors (Berezin, 2009, 2013; Copsey, 2007; Halikiopoulo, Mock, & Vasilopoulo, 2013; Halikiopoulou & Vasilopoulou, 2010). At least up to the mid-2000s, while continued ostracisation by mainstream parties in certain countries maintained the fringe profile of PRRPs, accommodation strategies appear to have had a moderating effect where they were adopted (van Spanje & Van Der Brug, 2007). Much of the recent literature on this question, nevertheless, points to a new turn of the far right towards greater radicality. As demonstrated by Wagner and Meyer, PRRPs have adopted more extreme policy positions in the 2000s than in any other preceding decade (Wagner & Meyer, 2017). Over time, it also appears that this radicalisation has occurred in countries where PRRPs have been accommodated, and that non-ostracised parties have become just as extreme as their ostracised counterparts (Akkerman & Rooduijn, 2015). PRRPs have thus recovered their fringe status and continue to provide a fundamentally different political offer to the now radicalised political mainstream (Akkerman, de Lange, & Rooduijn, 2016; Odmalm & Hepburn, 2017). As a result, we have not witnessed a convergence of PRR and mainstream parties, but rather a rightward radicalisation of the whole political spectrum.

The literature also considers the role of mainstream party strategies in the electoral success of PRRPs. In this regard, mainstream strategies are considered as external supply-side factors contributing to PRRPs political opportunity structure and affecting their electoral fortunes (for an overview, see Mudde, 2007, pp. 232–255). The initial assumption of a number of scholars was that mainstream radicalisation would curb PRRP success. Early applications of spatial analysis to the rise of populism suggested that ideological convergence among mainstream parties and the sidelining of issues central to the PRRP created an unanswered political demand and thus a vacant policy space for these extreme contenders (Kitschelt & McGann, 1995). It was considered that in moving further to the right mainstream parties would answer these demands and thus reduce the need for such radical alternatives. In the mid-2000s, for instance, Meguid found evidence for her modified spatial theory according to which strategies of accommodation reduce the electoral weight of PRRPs by depriving them of the ownership of immigration and integration issues and providing voters with right-wing preferences a more serious government alternative (Meguid, 2005). In line with this reasoning, temporary electoral setbacks of the PRRPs in France, the Netherlands, Hungary or the UK have often been attributed to the successful cooptation of their political platform by mainstream centre-right parties (for an overview of these accounts, see Mudde, 2007, p. 241). As past experiences of mainstream coalitions with the Austrian FPÖ and the Dutch LPF show, governing with the PRR may also serve

to compromise its credibility as a populist outsider, and thus undermine its electoral success in the short run (Heinisch, 2003).

The past decade has, nevertheless, witnessed a continued expansion of the PRR voter base, despite widespread mainstream radicalisation and the formation of a number of coalitions with the PRRP. An alternative hypothesis on the relation between mainstream strategies and PRR success helps explain this trend. Policy co-optation increases the salience of immigration and integration issues in public debate, thereby serving to legitimise PRR concerns and policies (Arzheimer & Carter, 2006; Grubera & Bale, 2014; Minkenberg, 2013). In parallel, while mainstream radicalisation may serve to slow down the PRR in certain countries in the short run, it does not deprive PRRPs of the ownership of these increasingly salient issues in any lasting way. PRRPs are still perceived as the agenda-setters for these issues and, in the famous words of Jean-Marie Le Pen, voters will tend to prefer "the original to the copy" (Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, 1991). PRRPs also retain an anti-elitist populist quality that mainstream parties lack (Rooduijn et al., 2014), and which will appeal to the protest voter. Finally, and as seen above, by further radicalising in reaction to accommodation strategies, PRRPs have also maintained themselves as an alternative to the comparatively more moderate centre right (Akkerman et al., 2016; Odmalm & Hepburn, 2017; Wagner & Meyer, 2017).

Outsiders no longer: populist politics beyond the fringe

The history of the relationship between the PRR and the political mainstream is therefore one of a gradual conquest of democratic politics by right-wing radicalism. Mainstream accommodation has not produced a convergence of the PRR and mainstream that would have compromised the political relevance of the PRRPs. Rather, the whole political spectrum has experienced a rightward radicalisation, which only further legitimises the far right as a key player. This edited volume explores key successes of the PRR over the past few years in light of this general evolution. In the following sections, we first provide an overview of the three main events that provided the impetus for this volume: the successful June 2016 Brexit referendum in the UK, the election of Donald Trump to the American presidency in November 2016, and the ascendency of the FN to the rank of a credible alternative in the 2017 French presidential campaign. We then discuss the significance of these events considering the evolving link between PRR and mainstream politics over the past decades, arguing that a qualitative shift has occurred in these instances whereby PRR actors and ideas have "trumped" the mainstream. In other words, they have gone beyond the mere influence of government parties to find their own independent place within the mainstream political system.

An overview of recent developments

The first major populist shock of 2016 was the dramatic success of the Leave campaign in the referendum on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the

European Union. While British public opinion had long been more Eurosceptic than the EU average, only the populist UKIP and BNP explicitly campaigned against continued membership within the British political spectrum. Prior to the referendum, the Leave camp of UKIP members and dissident conservatives campaigned primarily on the issues of national sovereignty and immigration against establishment political actors on the Left and Right. Exit polls revealed that these were the most pressing issues for Leave voters, while Remain voters were more likely to be motivated by economic considerations and feelings of European identity (Ashcroft, 2016). It would have been difficult to predict Brexit a decade ago, even though many of these processes were already well under way. PRR actors were able to tap into longstanding feelings of vulnerability and loss of control following rapid changes from globalisation, austerity politics and the growth of supranational organisations. The significance of these issues increased through concerted campaigning efforts by UKIP and other Eurosceptic groups throughout the 2000s and early 2010s. Brexit was also enabled by the significantly greater turnout of older votes, particularly those Ford and Goodwin have labelled "The Left Behind", referring to older white voters who lived primarily in rural and economically disadvantaged areas of the UK (Ford & Goodwin, 2014). These held different values to the London elite on questions of national identity and immigration, issues traditionally associated with the PRR and politicised by the Leave campaign. As final polls predicted a close victory of the Remain camp, the results of the Brexit vote came as a shock to many commentators in Europe and the rest of the world. What used to be a dream of the British PRR has since become the official foreign policy line of mainstream conservative actors in Westminster.

A couple of months later, Trump's success over his Democrat rival, Hillary Clinton led to significant transformations of American politics. This victory of a Republican candidate who displays all of the attributes of a PRR actor – a populist discourse, nativist form of nationalism, and authoritarian tendencies – fits within a longer history of Republican radicalisation. The US has experienced a well-documented polarisation of politics over the past two decades (Baumer, 2010; Lefebvre & Sawicki, 2006; Sinclair, 2006). Republicans and Democrats are now more likely to hold consistently strong conservative or liberal views on key issues with a rise in partisan antipathy and a decline in mixed or undecided voters. This growth in ideological polarisation has been accompanied by declining rates of trust in politicians, political opponents, the media and political institutions. Such transformations have been particularly acute in the Republican Party, which over the past decade has shifted much further to the Right than the Democratic Party to the Left. Particularly during the years of Obama's presidency, the far right was able to mobilise conservatives, which led to the rise of the Tea Party and the ousting of moderate members of the Republican Party in favour of more conservative ideologues. The rise of the Tea Party represents a dissatisfaction with establishment political actors and a desire for significant change from politics as usual. By 2011, the Tea Party had chapters in every state of the US and had succeeded in electing 45 Tea Party affiliated representatives in the 2010 midterm elections. They were

able to advance a number of PRR issues and changed the nature of the debate, paving the way for the victory of Trump against mainstream candidates in the Republican primaries of spring 2016, and his election as President of the United States in November of the same year.

Trump's administration has catapulted fringe political actors such as PRR political ideologue, Steve Bannon, and Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, into the centre of power. He also appointed a number of arch-conservative figures to his new cabinet including Jeff Sessions, Betsy DeVos and Rick Perry. One of the more lasting legacies of Trump's presidency could be his ultra-conservative judicial appointments, following an unusually large number of vacancies due to obstruction by the Republican Party in the final years of the Obama presidency. He began his presidency by rewarding his PRR supporter base through a number of controversial executive orders on issues such as healthcare, immigration, military service, agriculture and the environment. Trump's success has also resulted in the rise of far-right media outlets such as Infowars and Breitbart, which have supported Trump's attacks on mainstream media and have gained large numbers of viewers. The proximity of the American President to radical groups was also made clear by his declarations following violence erupting at a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville in August 2017. Trump refused to condemn the neo-Nazi groups, declaring that there were "some very fine people on both sides" and expressing sympathy for protesters demonstrating against the removal of a statue of Confederate, General Robert E. Lee (Gray, 2017).

European populists were among the first to celebrate Trump's victory as they predicted this could trigger similar insurgencies across Europe. In the 2017 French presidential elections, the archetypal PRR Front National faced the centrist party En Marche!. Marine Le Pen won 21.3% of the vote in the first round of voting to be the second most popular candidate. While convincingly defeated 66.1% to 33.9% by Emmanuel Macron in the second round, the FN, nevertheless, acquired over 10 million votes, thereby achieving their highest yet score in national level elections and doubling the FN's voter base compared with Jean-Marie Le Pen's result 15 years earlier. These results have also resulted in the marginalisation of centre-right and centre-left parties Les Républicains (LR) and the Parti Socialiste (PS), which failed to enter the second round and, taken together, did not even obtain the number of votes gathered by the FN in the second round. The strong position of Marine Le Pen and the weakness of traditional parties may thus signal a deeper re-structuring of the political mainstream in France, which may, in line with the 2017 election, continue to oppose a centrist pole with the FN's radical alternative.

Beyond these three striking examples, the PRR has its ascendency elsewhere. The PRR in Germany, Alternative for Germany (*AfD*), achieved a historic breakthrough in 2017 by winning 12.6% of the vote, securing 94 seats to be the third largest party and becoming the most overtly nationalist force to hold seats in the Bundestag since the end of the Second World War (for some background, see Arzheimer, 2015). In Austria, populist candidate, Norbert Hofer of the Freedom

Party of Austria (FPÖ), was defeated in a revote for the second round of the presidential election in December 2016 by the Greens' candidate, Alexander Van der Bellen, with 53.8% to 46.2%, thereby also appearing as a mainstream political alternative. This was confirmed in the October 2017 legislative elections, as the FPÖ won 25.97% of the vote in a campaign dominated by issues of immigration and border control (*The Guardian*, 2017). This paved the way for the third coalition government between the centre-right ÖVP and the FPÖ, with the PRRP obtaining key positions such as the Ministries for Interior Affairs, Defence, Social Affairs and Health, as well as the vice-chancellorship. The PRR thereby looks set to continue to exert a considerable degree of influence over mainstream European politics.

Towards a paradigm shift

Taken together, these different events signal not only the intensification of the dynamics of incorporation of PRR discourse, but also a more fundamental qualitative shift in the relationship between PRR and mainstream politics. As emphasised above, we define PRR as a type of political discourse that combines the populist opposition of "elites" and "the people", with two core ideological pillars: nationalism and authoritarianism (for an overview, see Mudde, 2007, pp. 16–23). The term political *mainstream*, in turn, is understood not as a form of ideological moderation but as a dominant position within the political spectrum that allows particular parties and shares of public opinion to access government and directly influence policy-making.

   We understand the significance of recent events for the relationship between the PRR and the political mainstream in three main ways. First, by "trumping" we mean that PRR actors and ideas not only influence government parties, but have found their own independent place within the political mainstream. With their electoral success in national elections and referendum in the three main cases discussed above, they have become a credible alternative, increased their agenda-setting capacity and, in certain case, achieved direct impact on policy-making. Mainstream actors in the US and the UK have now been defeated by the very same rhetoric and policies adopted from the PRR. In other countries, it seems only a matter of time before mainstream elites suffer the same fate.

   Second, these events shed new light on the responsibility of mainstream parties for the rise of PRRPs, particularly in the UK and US where the mainstream conservative parties helped to create the political conditions that later divided them. Both the Brexit referendum initiative and the candidacy of Donald Trump came from within the political mainstream rather than from outside. Arguably, the mainstream has been only further radicalised as a result of these steps, to the extent that it has become a "functional equivalent" of the PRR (Mudde, 2016b, p. 16) posing comparable threats to democratic values, minority rights and international cooperation. While in France the populist challenge of 2017 has come from outside the political mainstream rather than from within, it constitutes a textbook example of

a mainstream strategy of PRR accommodation gone wrong: the radicalisation of the centre-right all through the 2000s has not stopped the ascendancy of the FN, and arguably has exacerbated it.

Third, recent political transformations have led to new opportunities for PRRPs and have altered their position within the popular imaginary. Following the recent success of the far right, the mainstream now holds a different view of the possibilities and opportunities now currently open to these contenders. As fringe discourse becomes mainstream, how we conceive of the political landscape is under challenge. While it is unlikely that traditional rivalries between liberal and conservative parties will be completely displaced by emerging paradigms, political events in 2016–2017 have led to a radical shake up of party competition. These electoral episodes, for instance, raise questions concerning the significance of traditional paradigms of Left/Right, and the extent to which this dichotomy retains its explanatory power in contemporary politics. More fundamentally, what we traditionally consider the political centre and periphery has been challenged, and our shared understanding of acceptable forms of political discourse and contestation altered.

Contribution of the edited volume and outline of chapters

This book offers conceptual tools and empirical analyses to examine the implications of this qualitative shift in politics. Exploring the above-mentioned events, the chapters in this edited volume contribute in a number of ways to the existing literature on the relationship between mainstream and PRR politics. First, they seek to contribute to the "paradigmatic shift" in PRR studies that Mudde has called for by considering PRR parties no longer "as new outsider challenger parties, but also as institutionalized and integrated members of the political system" (Mudde, 2016b, p. 16). Rather than a pathological occurrence at the fringe of established democracy, PRR politics needs to be seen as a core part of the current political system.

Second, a large share of the PRR literature is centred on a small number of usual suspects in Western Europe. It also centres attention on the effects of PRR politics on the immigration policy of mainstream parties (Mudde, 2016b). But such a narrow focus limits our understanding of the evolving relationship between the PRR and the political mainstream. The chapters in this volume contribute to the literature by going beyond traditional case studies, subject matter and methodological choices to analyse the most significant events in PRR politics over the past few years. For instance, we provide key insights by purposefully drawing comparisons beyond the traditional geographical perimeter. The volume thus includes studies of American populism under Donald Trump as well as a contribution that adopts a comparative perspective on developments in the UK, the US and contemporary France. Other chapters provide unusual comparative insights, such as parallels between the territorial populism of the UK Independence Party and the New-Flemish Alliance, or between developments in post-communist Central Eastern Europe and Western Europe.

We also examine a range of issues beyond the impact of the PRR on main-stream immigration positions, including the online strategies of PRR groups to spread their ideas, the way in which mainstream party elites portray the populist right in their political discourse, the impact of PRR on foreign policy deci-sions, as well as the systemic impact of PRR on democratic institutions. Finally, along some more traditional methodologies that rely on public opinion surveys and secondary data on political parties, most contributions in this edited volume adopt more innovative approaches such as surveys in electoral psychology, elite surveys, the textual analysis of political discourse, party member interviews and participant observation.

The book is divided into two main sections that each interrogate a distinct dimension of the evolving nature of fringe and mainstream politics in recent years. The first five chapters focus on the PRR itself, and the ways in which the ideolo-gies and strategies within this political family have evolved in recent years. To this extent, we consider the role of the PRR itself in the radicalisation of the political mainstream, starting with three comparative chapters. Jacob Davey, Erin Marie Saltman and Jonathan Birdwell undertake a comparative analysis of the online strategies of the PRR in recent elections. The chapter more specifically focuses on the scale and nature of online "information operations" – coordinated attempts to influence domestic or foreign political sentiment – by far-right and extreme-right online activists in the 2016 UK Referendum on EU Membership, the 2016 US national elections and the 2017 French national elections. The authors use a range of online social listening tools to map how key hashtags, slogans and memes were deployed and trended around each election. This chapter thus questions to what extent information operations were intensified or scaled up across these three elections; the extent to which information operations were coordinated inter-nationally; and maps the tactics used to mainstream specific far-right ideologies targeted at more average voters. The findings suggest that, while there was limited observed coordination among far-right groups or activists to influence the Brexit vote, the surprising result motivated more coordinated efforts by far-right and extreme-right activists to influence mainstream public opinion in the US national elections through a range of online tactics. These tactics were then developed and deployed further in the French election, revealing sophisticated information operations in action. The chapter concludes that tackling this challenge adequately will require close, international cooperation between governments, social media companies and civil society organisations.

Next, we shift from the comparative analysis of online strategies to that of PRR ideologies. Zsolt Enyedi and Martin Mölder offer an overview of the ideo-logical landscape of PRR politics in both Western and Central Eastern Europe. They start from the premise that the literature most often establishes a clear-cut contrast between besieged mainstream liberal elites and the increasingly powerful populist challengers, while disregarding the ideological diversity of the PRR fam-ily itself. Relying on data from the Manifesto Project on Political Representation (MARPOR) and from the Chapel Hill expert surveys of party positions (CH), they

nuance this common understanding by showing that parties customarily labelled "populist" differ significantly from each other in their demands and that the validity of a dichotomous approach varies across historical periods and geographical regions. They identify four types of PRR parties: centrist populists most common in Eastern-Central Europe, leftist populists in Southern Europe, neoliberal populists in North–Western Europe and paternalist–nationalist populists that are more evenly distributed but conspicuously missing from Southern Europe. The analysis confirms that populist parties have recently embraced many of the leftist economic values, but does not show any clear liberal–progressive turn in recent years: most PRR parties continue to represent the authoritarian pole of the European party systems. The article concludes that the way in which mainstream parties should handle the populist challenge depends, to a large extent, on which type of populist they face.

In the next chapter, Joseph Lacey examines the relationship between populism, nationalism and questions of ontological security. The chapter adopts an ideational definition of populism and explores its relationship to broader political–strategic and socio-cultural issues. For this purpose,it examines the British United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), Switzerland's Schweizerische Volkspartei/Swiss People's Party (SVP), and Belgium's Vlams Belang/Flemish Interest (VB) and Nieuw–Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA). Because each party has had a significant impact on their respective countries, the analysis assists in better understanding the effect of rising populist parties on mainstream politics. The chapter claims that populist nationalism is able to embed itself in mainstream politics due to an underlying ontological uncertainty about the continued existence and prosperity of the nation-state when faced with perceived threats of immigration, economic openness and changing cultural values. Populists are able to exploit such feelings of vulnerability by putting forward a discourse of fear and insecurity, which plays on citizens' concerns of open borders and a declining quality of life.

We conclude the first section with three case studies. Christopher Sebastian Parker, Sebastian Mayer and Nicole Buckley analyse the specific nature of American populism in the context of the election of Donald Trump. They place this success in the context of a long history of American reactionary politics by emphasising the importance of the increasing polarisation of American politics that has led to a "post-factualist" phase of political contestation. In this context, they nuance the role of economic anxiety, central to certain European analyses of populism, in the rise of PRR politics in the US, and point instead to the phenomenon of "status anxiety". According to them, the main driver of Donald Trump's victory is the feeling of many reactionaries that certain entitlements and prestige to which they feel accustomed are currently being eroded by impersonal forces and taken away by elites and outsiders.

The following contribution by Kristin Haltinner analyses the instrumental role of the Tea Party in laying the conditions that enabled Trump's election. She draws on interviews, ethnographic data and an analysis of public opinion polls to investigate the contribution of the Tea Party to the mainstreaming of far-right populist discourse, the radicalisation of conservatives, and ultimately the rise of Trump.

While Haltinner recognises that Trump's electoral victory was the result of a combination of factors, the Tea Party initiated a significant shift in public discourse that provided a key opportunity structure for the surge in Trump's popularity. More specifically, the Tea Party strengthened three narratives that benefited Trump's campaign. First, they reinforced many conservatives' beliefs in America's loss of status as a hegemonic power, which enhanced the appeal of the slogan "Make America Great Again". Second, the Tea Party adopted an aggressive anti-intellectual stance, rejecting what they deemed to be political correctness and the falsification of climate change science by national and international organisations. Trump profited from his image as a straight-talker and his attacks on Leftist intellectuals, the mainstream media and the scientific community. Finally, the Tea Party rejected establishment politics, even within the Republican Party, and looked for political outsiders rather than experienced Washington politicians. The Tea Party was thus one major contributing factor to the political conditions leading to Trump's success.

Finally, Marta Lorimer provides an in-depth analysis of the evolution of the French Front National discourse, and the way in which it has attempted to redefine the traditional Left/Right cleavages and anchor a new division between "globalists" and "patriots". Lorimer traces the history of the political distinction between Left and Right as a heritage of the French Revolution and demonstrates that the distinction has continually been challenged. The Front National has attempted to avoid the negative connotations of the term "far right" by rejecting the Left/Right distinction. The chapter traces the ideological development within the Front National, from the "*ni droite, ni gauche*" doctrine adopted in the 1990s up until the 2017 election and Le Pen's characterisation of the opposition between "patriots" and "globalists". Lorimer argues that while emerging political divisions promoted by the FN are likely to have an ongoing significance and continue to reshape politics, they will not completely displace the Left/Right division. Rather, the two will likely co-exist leading to an increasingly complex politics with multiple divisions and competing frameworks of interpretation.

The second part of the edited volume focuses on the strategies that mainstream political actors have deployed to handle PRR success, and more generally on the impact of PRR politics on the political mainstream. Bartek Pytlas first outlines the impact of PRR politics on the institutions of liberal democracy, taking recent developments in Central Eastern Europe as his main focus. The cases of Hungary and Poland showcase how PRR politics can enter the mainstream and challenge the values and legitimacy of liberal democracy, thereby providing important lessons that go beyond the contextual specificities of this region. Indeed, democratic erosion in these two countries took place despite their performance as role models of democratic consolidation, suggesting that consolidated democracies in Western Europe are by no means immune to similar developments. By exploring the processes of PRR mainstreaming and the related challenges to liberal democracy in CEE, this chapter thus aims to contribute to a better conceptual understanding of mechanisms and consequences of PRR politics in a broader

European context. The analysis demonstrates that the ability of PRR political agency to gain mainstream legitimacy and impact liberal democracy results not only from mainstreaming strategies by PRR parties, but is galvanized through the mainstreaming of PRR politics by established parties themselves.

The following two chapters analyse the impact of PRR ideas on the political mainstream in the context of Brexit. Sarah Harrison illustrates the influence of PRR discourse on the Leave campaign and public opinion during the 2016 Referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union. First, she deploys a conceptual model previously developed with Bruter (Harrison & Bruter, 2011), which mapped far-right discourse along the dimensions of identity (cultural xenophobic and civic populist) and authoritarianism (reactionary and repressive). The first half of her analysis reveals a presence of all four pillars of extreme right ideology, particularly amongst the discourse of the Leave campaign. During the divisive campaign populist discourse cut across the Left/Right divide and one of the most decisive factors was the mobilisation of an exclusive conception of identity, which targeted immigrants as a major social problem. Second, she draws on data from a panel study conducted by the ECREP initiative in electoral psychology at the LSE to analyse the effect of populist discourse on the minds of voters leading up to and after the referendum on 23 June 2016. She shows that the Leave campaign was especially successful in persuading voters at an emotional level that leaving the EU would reduce immigration.

In a second analysis of Brexit, Agnès Alexandre-Collier examines the impact of UKIP's radical (Eurosceptic, anti-immigration and anti-political establishment) views on Conservative MPs. More specifically, she qualifies the actual extent of UKIP's influence on the Conservative shift from soft to hard Brexit since the referendum of June 2016 by taking a closer look at constituencies won by the Conservatives and where UKIP came second at the May 2015 general election. She relies on different databases spanning from May 2015 to the June 2017 general elections, including Conservative MPs' full electoral results in these local constituencies, their avowed stances on Brexit, and their Brexit vote estimates. The results of this analysis exposes a paradox at the heart of the Conservative party's current strategy towards Brexit: whereas the radicalisation of Conservative MPs was actually limited in the run-up to the Brexit referendum, the Conservative leadership continued to radicalise after the referendum by embarking on the road to a hard Brexit, though UKIP had ceased to be an actual threat at the local level. This suggests a strong endogenous logic of mainstream radicalisation in the UK.

Florence Haegel and Nonna Mayer proceed with an analysis of the French case, adopting a longer-term perspective on the interactions between the FN and the dominant right-wing party, Les Républicains (LR), (previously called UMP),[3] from the presidential election of 2007 to the one of 2017. Relying on the secondary analysis of surveys conducted among party sympathisers, members and voters, aggregate data and the results of qualitative studies on both parties, they question the degree of ideological convergence of the two parties both on the level of elite discourse and voter attitudes. They also interrogate the effects of this ideological

convergence on party divisions, taking into account that parties are not only internally split into factions but are torn between the strategic expectations and ideological stances of elites, party members and voters. They show that the FN's strategy of normalisation and LR's strategy of accommodation face significant challenges, as they have intensified internal divisions in both organisations. While such strategies did occur at the level of party elites, they have not been met by ideological convergence among voters. The discrepancy between party level and voters' preferences appears to be especially true in the case of LR where internal party dynamics led to more radicalised party members.

The final contribution is by the editors of this volume, Lise Esther Herman and James Muldoon, who focus on the discursive strategies of mainstream party elites in the 2017 French presidential campaign to counter the Front National (FN). The unprecedented success of this PRR party in the 2017 French presidential elections posed a significant challenge for how competitors against the far right could counter its appeal. This chapter develops a novel approach to uncovering mainstream party strategies with regard to the PRR. It draws on the insights of positioning theory to analyse a total of 108 speeches and interviews in which the four main candidates to the French presidency in the 2017 campaign discuss the PRR. The authors find significant variation in candidates' patterns of discourse, but also establish that these distinct strategies are better understood as complex hybrids of categories in the existing literature. The data offers preliminary evidence that innovation in party strategy may offer one possible opportunity to overcome the weaknesses of traditional approaches of accommodation or dismissal to counter the PRR.

The various contributions to this edited volume suggest that we need new conceptual tools and empirical insights to examine the ongoing challenge of the mainstreaming of the PRR. While the contributors to this volume offer innovative interpretive frameworks and interesting case studies, the rapid pace of contemporary politics demands constant attention to properly understand emerging trends in the relationship between mainstream politics and the PRR.

Notes

1 European social-democratic parties have also adjusted their positions on the issues owned by the PPR, albeit less systematically and extensively than centre–right parties given their more limited exposure to radical right electoral pressure (Bale et al., 2010; Han, 2015, p. 432; Meguid, 2008). PRR parties are also more likely to influence the centre-left on immigration control than on issues of integration, while both policy issues are affected in centre–right platforms (Duncan & Van Hecke, 2008).

2 Given that the vast majority of studies in this field rely on the quantitative analysis of secondary data, little is known about the motivations of mainstream elites in initiating programmatic shifts. Indeed, the strategic calculations of mainstream elites are generally inferred through the lens of rational choice theoretical assumptions from their behaviour, rather than studied directly with, for example, in-depth party members interviews (for an exception, see Downs, 2001).

3 The change of name was voted in May 2015.

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