

What Conditions Trigger Authoritarian and Populist Expressions?

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Abstract

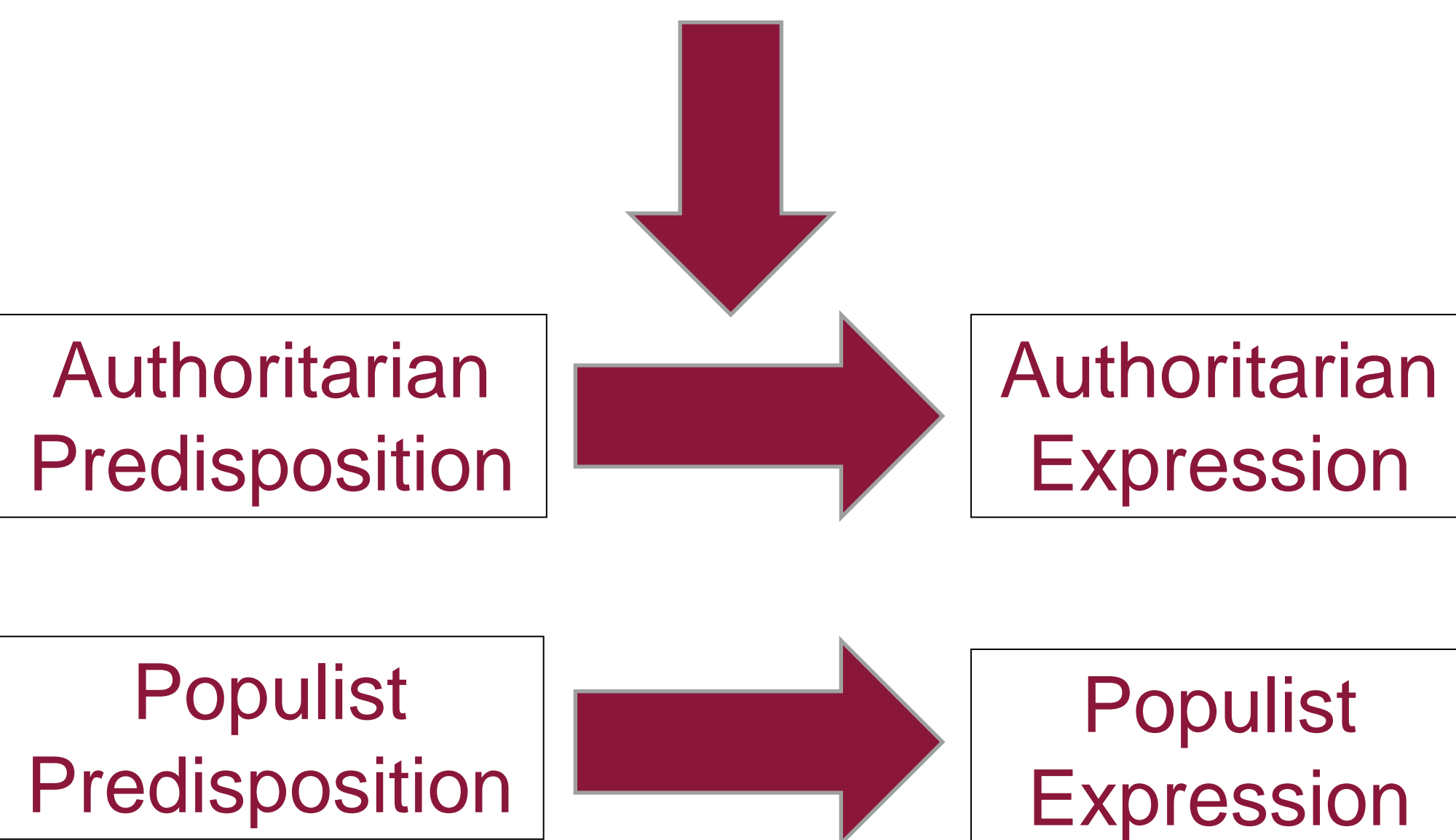
This research explores the conditions associated with demand for authoritarian populist politicians and parties in liberal democracies. It applies a conditional-process model to demand for authoritarianism and populism within electorates. A review of the literature identifies cultural, economic, and political threats as commonly theorized triggers of authoritarian and populist expressions. This research hypothesizes that the perception of immigration as harmful to national culture activates these expressions among those who are predisposed. It tests these hypotheses with a multiple regression model of 10th wave ESS data from 7 European countries. The results indicate that authoritarian predispositions, perceptions of cultural threat, and the interaction between these variables are strong predictors of authoritarian expressions across all countries. For populism, the results are less consistent. Populist predispositions predict populist expressions in 3 of the countries, perceptions of cultural threat predict populist expressions in 4 of the countries, and the interaction term predicts populist expressions in 4 of the countries.

Model & Hypotheses

H1. Comparing individuals, the perception of cultural threat is more likely to trigger authoritarian expressions in those with a strong authoritarian predisposition than in those with a weak authoritarian predisposition.

H2. Comparing individuals, the perception of cultural threat is more likely to trigger populist expressions among those with a strong populist predisposition than in those with a weak populist predisposition.

Cultural Threat



Measurements

Sample Size (n): 19,280 respondents

Authoritarian Predisposition: Important to follow rules
Tradition is important
Important to be free
Important to try new things

Populist Predisposition: Trust in country's parliament
Trust in politicians

Cultural Threat: Immigrants undermine country's culture

Economic Threat: Satisfaction with country's economy
Unemployed in last 7 days

Political Threat: Satisfaction with democracy in country
Feel close to a particular political party

Auth. Expression: # of immigrants of ethnic minority allowed in
Gay and lesbian people should be able to live free

Populist Expression: Voted for RWP party in last national election

Results

Authoritarianism

	France	Portugal	Italy	Ireland	Hungary	Greece	Great Britain
ZAuth Pre	.224***	.239***	.241***	.239***	.240***	.240***	.232***
Gender	-.132***	-.137***	-.135***	-.138***	-.140***	-.138***	-.142***
Age	.011***	.011***	.011***	.011***	.011***	.011***	.011***
Edu Level	-.462***	-.066	-.265	-.212*	1.353***	.623***	-.513***
Nat Econ	-.004	-.001	-6.7E-5	-.001	.001	-.001	.006
Unemployed	.055	.062	.063	.061	.068	.062	.067
Pol Threat	.010	.015**	.015**	.015**	.017**	.014**	.009
ZCult Threat	.802***	.809***	.808***	.809***	.805***	.808***	.776***
AuthPre*Cult Threat	.041***	.039***	.038***	.039***	.039***	.039***	.045***
n=	5570	892	5160	401	831	917	5509
R-sq	.356	.348	.349	.349	.353	.349	.356
*p<.10	**p<.05	***p<.01					

Populism

	France	Portugal	Italy	Ireland	Hungary	Greece	Great Britain
ZPop Pre	.001	.000	-.001	.001**	-.006***	.000	.001**
Gender	.001	.000	-.004**	.000	.001	.000	-.001**
Age	.000***	-1.62E-5**	.000***	-1.42E-5	5.27E-5	3.25E-6	2.7E-5*
Edu Leve	.029***	.012***	.071***	.139***	.352***	.021***	.000
Nat Econ	.000	-6.68E-5	.002***	.000	-.002***	.000**	.000**
Unemployed	-.008**	.000	-.005	.001	.004	.000	-.001
Pol Threat	-.006***	.000**	-.003***	.000	-.001**	.000	.001***
ZCult Threat	.010***	.000	.011***	.000	.009***	.000**	.001***
PopP*Cul Threat	.005***	7.59E-5	.000	-.001**	-.006***	-1.14E-5	.001***
n=	2266	391	2080	247	455	567	3746
R-sq=	.029	.003	.016	.039	.101	.005	.007

Conclusion

Authoritarianism

H1. Authoritarian predispositions and cultural threat are consistently the greatest predictors of authoritarian expressions across all 7 European countries. The interaction between authoritarian predispositions and cultural threat also consistently predicts authoritarian expressions.

Age, gender, and education level are generally consistent predictors of authoritarian expressions across all countries. Men, older individuals, and those with a lower level of education are more likely to express authoritarianism than women, younger individuals, and those with a higher level of education.

Populism

H2. Populist predispositions predict populist expressions in 3 out of 7 countries and cultural threat predicts populist expressions in 4 out of 7 countries. In 4 countries, the interaction between populist predispositions and cultural threat predicts populist expressions.

Education level predicts populist expressions in 6 out of 7 countries. This is likely related to the classification of right-wing populist parties.