



GÖTEBORGS  
UNIVERSITET

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

# POPULISM AND POLITICIZATION OF THE BUREACRACY

An empirical analysis of the effect of populist rule in Europe and Latin America

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Master's Thesis:	30 higher education credits
Programme:	Master's Programme in Political Science
Date:	May 26 <sup>th</sup> 2020
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Words:	12 976

## Abstract

Do populist rule lead to more politicization? As populists have had electoral success in many countries in recent years, populism has received much attention both in the public debate and in political science. One aspect of the concept, how populists act once in power and how they relate to the state bureaucracy has however, so far, received only little attention. Populists have been suggested to increase the politicization of the public bureaucracy, i.e. the degree of political involvement in the careers of bureaucrats, as populists are untrusting of the establishment and seek to increase their control of the state. This thesis uses time-series cross-section data from Europe and Latin America to test whether populists increase politicization more than others when in power. The results show a positive relationship between populist rule and politicization and suggest that the effect is driven by populists on the fringes of the left-right spectrum. Previous research has found that systems characterized by intense politicization are less resistant to corruption and perform worse on good governance indicators. Therefore, these results indicate that the current populist wave may have hidden implications for the bureaucratic performance of the affected countries.

## Keywords

populism, bureaucracy, politicization

*“...today we are not merely transferring power from one Administration to another, or from one party to another – but we are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the American People. [...] What truly matters is not which party controls our government, but whether our government is controlled by the people”.*

Donald Trump’s inaugural address (White House, 2017)

*“I urged the new cabinet members to move quickly to replace holdover bureaucrats with people who believed in what we were trying to do. [...] [I warned that] if we don’t get rid of those people, they will either sabotage us from within, or they’ll just sit back on their well-paid asses and wait for the next election to bring back their old bosses”.*

Richard Nixon (1978)

## Table of contents

Introduction .....	4
Theory .....	6
Defining populism .....	7
Politicization .....	8
Populism and politicization of the bureaucracy.....	9
Populism and the pluralistic bureaucracy .....	10
Politicization in practice .....	12
Host ideology .....	13
Research problem .....	15
Methods and data .....	16
Operationalizations .....	16
Methods .....	19
Results .....	20
Robustness check.....	24
Discussion of the results.....	25
Conclusions .....	30
References .....	32
Appendix .....	37

## Introduction

Do populists increase the politicization of recruitment to the bureaucracy when they come into power? There are examples that suggests that they would. In Hungary, Prime Minister Orbán's populist Fidesz party has undertaken extensive reforms of the state bureaucracy. Including increasing the Prime Minister's power to make appointments to the central administration, a power the government has been accused of using to politicize the bureaucracy, filling it with politically loyal civil servants (Bauer & Becker, 2020; Hajnal & Csengodi, 2014). Similarly, in the US, President Trump has been accused of using political appointments more extensively than his predecessors and reassigning "unreliable" bureaucrats to peripheral positions (Bauer & Becker, 2020; Peters & Pierre, 2019) And in Sweden, the Sweden democrats have, at the municipal level, been accused of blurring the line between politics and the bureaucracy (Aftonbladet, 2020). A defining feature of populism is the division between the *good people* and the *corrupt elite* and the goal of populists is to empower the people by taking control of the state and substituting the influence of the elite on the state's institutions and policies with that of the people. Populists are majoritarian and believe that the will of the majority should have free rein and influence all matters of the state. Therefore, they are expected to try to increase the level of politicization when in power as they believe that even the bureaucracy should be subject to direct political control. Populists mistrust the bureaucracy whose pluralist ideals run counter to those of populism. Populists will try to change the bureaucracy by replacing its members with their own loyalists in order to increase their control and implement institutional change. The pluralistic bureaucracy's attempts to uphold its traditional ideals in the face of a populist government is likely to be regarded as resistance which may increase politicization efforts even more.

Politicization of the bureaucracy means that political criteria rather than merit becomes the norm of recruitment to the bureaucracy (Peters & Pierre, 2004:2). Political appointments can be a means of keeping the bureaucracy accountable to the public but if it becomes the norm for hiring personal in general it has been suggested to lead to loss of competence as more qualified candidates are passed over by politically loyal ones (Peters & Pierre, 2004, 2019; Lewis, 2008). This can reduce the effectiveness of the bureaucracy, hurt its legitimacy in the eyes of the public and diminish the government's ability to implement policy (Peters & Pierre, 2004:4; Moynihan & Roberts, 2010; Meyer-Sahling & Jager, 2012). Further, politicization has been said to alter the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats, which may expose bureaucrats to pressure from politicians to bend the rules or engage in

corruption (Miller, 2000). In a politicized bureaucracy the careers of politicians and bureaucrats become linked, while the opposite, a professional bureaucracy separates their careers and sets up different chains of accountability (Dahlström & Lapuente, 2017). This separation of careers has been said to deter illicit behaviour in both groups and has been associated with higher quality of government, lower levels of corruption, higher bureaucratic performance and better conditions for private business (Dahlström *et al*, 2012; Miller, 2000; Meyer-Sahling *et al*, 2018; Charron *et al*, 2016; Nistotskaya & Cingolani, 2016).

Populism has attracted increased interest in recent years, much as a result of populist parties having electoral success in Europe, governing in, Hungary, Poland, Italy and elsewhere, breaking new ground in places like Sweden and Germany as well as making the presidential run-offs in France. And in the Americas countries like Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru and more recently the US and Brazil have seen populist presidents. In political science, interest in populism has among other things been concerned with explaining populism as a political phenomenon (Mudde, 2004, Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012, 2017; Inglehart & Norris, 2017) and its effect on democratic institutions (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012; Levitsky & Loxton, 2013; Hubert & Schimpf, 2016; Houle & Kenny, 2018; Ruth, 2018, Ruth-Lovell *et al*, 2019). There has also been ample attention paid to politicization as a phenomenon as well as its potential effects (Peters & Pierre, 2004; Lewis, 2008; Dahlström *et al*, 2012; Miller, 2000; Meyer-Sahling *et al*, 2018; Charron *et al*, 2016; Nistotskaya & Cingolani, 2016).

How populists actually govern when in power and how they relate to the bureaucracy however, has largely not been addressed at all, only recently has there been contributions that have begun to examine this link (Peters & Pierre, 2019:1524; Rockman, 2019; Bauer & Becker, 2020). These works have however, largely been focused on developing theory and producing expectations about the effect populist rulers may have on the bureaucracy. Beyond observations about individual cases there has been no empirical test of populism's relationship to the bureaucracy and whether populists in power increase politicization more than others.

In this master's thesis I examine populism's effect on the bureaucracy and provide an empirical test of this relationship by combining data on populists in power and politicization using two new datasets, both of which have become available only in the last year. One covers the tenures of populists in power in Europe and Latin America between 1995 and 2018 (Ruth-Lovell *et al*, 2019) and the other consists of expert survey data on the level of politicization

from the Varieties of democracy project (Pemstein *et al*, 2020). I also examine whether different ideological strains of populism have different effects. Even though populism has a long history there has been relatively few cases of populists in office. Now however, with the developments in Latin America and Europe over the last 25 years there are, for the first-time sufficient cases and compiled data to empirically test this relationship across the two continents that has been the most affected by populism so far. By combining this new data on populists and politicization, this thesis offers a unique opportunity to empirically examine the populist effect on politicization.

My analysis shows a positive relationship between populists in power and the level of politicization. The result bares out the theoretical expectations among scholars which has previously not been tested. The analysis of the different direct effects of populists' ideological leanings suggests that effect is driven by populist actors on the fringes of the left-right spectrum and particularly by far-right populists. These results suggest that, as populist actors gain political influence in more and more countries, scholars, policy makers and citizens, need to pay attention to the developments of the norms that govern the public bureaucracy. Over time, populist rule may change the norms that has dominated most modern bureaucracies and replace them with more direct political control and put politics over merit. This could weaken the affected political systems resistance to corruption and reduce their quality of government.

The next chapter defines the thesis' central concepts and lay out the theoretical expectations. After this I elaborate my research problem and present my hypotheses. This is followed by the methods section where I describe the data and statistical techniques used. After this I present the results which are then discussed in a separate chapter. The last chapter offers some conclusions and suggestions for further research.

## Theory

Populism as a political phenomenon has a long history, one of the earliest examples are the American populist movement of the nineteenth century, which challenged the two-party system seeking to unite the interests of rural agrarian people against the economic and political elites (Rooduijn, 2014; Urbinati, 2019). A populist who was early to hold power was Argentina's personalistic president Juan Perón who have been followed by many other populist leaders in Latin America, most recent is the wave of left-wing populists that started with Hugo Chávez in Venezuela. In Europe, populism has mainly been associated with the

political right, from neo-liberals such as the early Progress party in Denmark, to nationalists such as the National Front in France. The 2016 election of President Trump in the US, the Brexit referendum and the rise of populist parties in many European countries has contributed to making populism one of the most talked about and important political concepts today (Thomson, 2017; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018; Mudde, 2019). Having often been used as a derogatory term about political policies and opponents deemed as un-serious (Mudde 2004: 542-3), today there is even a strong movement, particularly on the left, of self-identifying populists (Mouffe, 2018; Venizelos & Stavrakakis, 2020). In the following sections I present definitions of populism and politicization and lay out the arguments and theoretical expectations about why and under what circumstances populists are expected to increase politicization when in power.

### *Defining populism*

Populism can take on many different forms, in the media and every-day conversation the term has been used very broadly and about a variety of different phenomenon (see Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017:1-5). This can give the impression of a word that, while surrounded by buzz and dark skies, has little meaning. In the political science literature, there has at times been just as much inconsistency, as there has been many different attempts to define populism (Rooduijn, 2014; Canovan, 1981; Ionesco & Gellner, 1969; Laclau, 1977). The task of defining the term has even been called “defining the undefinable” (Mudde, 2004:523) and scholars have disagreed on what it is and whether to regard it as an ideology, a discourse, a movement, a style of politics or something else (Mudde, 2004; Rooduijn, 2014).

Today, one of the most widely accepted views of populism is the so-called ideational approach, that is, populism as a set of ideas (Mudde, 2017; Rooduijn *et al*, 2014). It is an attempt at a non-normative definition that does not make assumptions about populism’s relationship to democracy, can be inclusive and useful for comparisons and that can travel across contexts (Mudde, 2017; Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012; Urbinati, 2019). Here, I define populism using one of the most accepted definitions within the ideational approach, it comes from Cas Mudde and defines populism as: “*an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people*” (Mudde, 2004:543).

This minimalistic definition is useful as it allows for the inclusion of populist actors of different ideological leanings and across both time and space, united by these core characteristics. At the same time, it separates out those who are not populist. Traditional parties and others who sometimes use populist discourse but do not hold the people-elite conflict as their main concern are left out of the definition.

Being a “thin-centred ideology” populism can be combined with other full ideologies such as socialism or nationalism, but in itself, populism is neither left nor right (Mudde, 2004, 2017:30). Central to populism is the conflict between the people and the elite, populism is moralistic and regards the difference between the people and the elite as a normative one where the elite have allowed themselves to be corrupted and betrayed the pure people (Mudde, 2004, 2017:30).

Exactly who the elite and the people are can vary with different strains of populism, nativist populists may have a more exclusionary ethnic definition while socialist populists may employ a more inclusionary class-based definition. Regardless, the two groups are always defined in opposition to each other. According to Mudde (2004) populists have a majoritarian understanding of democracy as well as a Manichean outlook, meaning that to them everything is either black or white, friend or foe. Populists see themselves as the only true representatives of the popular will, therefore, political opponents may be seen as illegitimate as, in the eyes of the populists, they make false claims about representing the people and the popular will. Jaroslaw Kaczyński, leader of the Polish populist Law and Justice party (PiS) statements about his critics as traitors and “*Poles of the worst sort*” (Müller, 2016:45) can serve as a perhaps slightly extreme example of this dichotomous antagonistic view of opponents.

### *Politicization*

Guy Peters and Jon Pierre (2004) have defined politicization of the bureaucracy as “the *substitution of political criteria for merit-based criteria in the selection, retention, promotion, rewards, and disciplining of members of the public service*” (2004: 2). The “political criteria” can differ in its expression, in some cases it might mean party membership, in others it may be about loyalty to the government’s programs, its leader or ideology (Peters & Pierre, 2004:2, 2019). According to the authors the term implies attempts to assert influence and control public policy and its implementation. Politicization is part of almost all political systems today but there are large differences between countries in regard to how much



influence politicians have over appointments and the degree to which the political or merit-based criteria are employed (Kopecký *et al*, 2016; Dahlström *et al*, 2012). In some countries, politically motivated appointments are common at all levels of the bureaucracy, in others they are only used for higher level positions such as agency heads and in others they are rarer still. As politicians are held responsible by voters on all manners of political outcomes, from healthcare to the economy to education, they have strong electoral incentives to try to control as much of the public policy generation and its outcomes as possible in order to appease voters expectations (Lewis, 2011). Political appointments are a way to try to exert such control over agencies and programs and produce the outcomes that politicians want, and voters expect (Lewis, 2011; Peters & Pierre, 2004:3,7; Moynihan & Roberts 2010:579).

Appointments to the civil service bureaucracy is a legitimate part of governing a modern democracy, however, the model of the modern state has been to shield the bureaucracy from *too much* political influence in order to ensure its efficiency and impartiality (Peters & Pierre, 2004; Rouban, 2012). Peters and Pierre (2004) claim that having politicization effect the entire careers of bureaucrats, is a much larger departure from the model of protecting the bureaucracy from politics than the substitution of only very senior bureaucrats as a result of electoral turnover. If political criteria guide entire careers, this will shape the norms of the bureaucracy and its relationship to politics to a larger extent and such systems will be more politicized than systems where the political criteria is used less frequently (Peters & Pierre, 2004:3).

### *Populism and politicization of the bureaucracy*

Why would populists politicize more than others? In this section I will present the main arguments why they would. In short, populists are expected to increase politicization because they embrace majoritarian democracy and believe that the *volonté générale* should have complete influence over the state and its administration. Populists are antagonistic towards the elite and see the state and its bureaucracy as part of establishment and as a tool of the elite. The populist instinct to take full control of the state may be reinforced by their enmity towards the institutions of the elite and the bureaucracy's attempts to uphold pluralistic constraints on their power.

### *Populism and the pluralistic bureaucracy*

Populism embraces majoritarian democracy which emphasize the implementation of the will of the majority, favours direct forms of government, embraces the idea of popular sovereignty, is critical of attempts to constrain the exercise of power and finds alien the idea that the majority should be limited by the rights of the minority (Plattner, 2010; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Populism is contrasted by its opposite, pluralism (Mudde, 2004:543), which regards society as heterogenous, made up by a variety of different groups and interests. In contrast to populism, pluralism is connected to the notion of liberal democracy rather than majoritarianism. Unlike populism, pluralism regards diversity as a strength rather than a weakness and opposite to the populist idea of a unconstrained *volonté générale*, the pluralist ideal is a system of compromise and restrictions where no one group can ever impose their will on others (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017:7-8).

The modern democratic state shares the values of pluralism rather than those of populism, and it is the bureaucracy that upholds the state's pluralistic ideals. The bureaucracy is in many ways a pluralist institution, bound by institutional restraints and made to uphold pluralistic ideals like impartiality, respect for minority rights and to exercise constitutional constraints in the day-to-day running of the state (Bauer & Becker, 2020). The bureaucracy's pluralistic ideals and the idea that some parts of the state, such as the judiciary, central bank or the bureaucracy are to be kept from democratic influence and control puts the bureaucracy at odds with populism. This is because these ideals are not in line with the core populist ideology and understanding of democracy (Mudde, 2004:561; Müller, 2016:45) Populists believe that they, as the representatives of the people and the popular will, have the right to control all aspects of the state. They believe popular sovereignty to be the only legitimate source of power (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013:151). What matters to populists is that the people hold power, not the procedures or how power is exercised (Urbinati, 2019:122-3). Austrian populist leader Jörg Haider's response to why he refused to comply with a court ruling regarding minority rights illustrates this point quite clearly, “- In a democracy, it is the will of the people that matters’, not that of the courts” (Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013:351). As Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017) writes: “As [ populism] tends to distrust any unelected institution that limits the power of the *demos*, populism can develop into a form of democratic extremism or better said, of illiberal democracy”. (2017:82, italics original).

The populist focus on popular sovereignty means that populists do not share the pluralistic idea that the bureaucracy should be shielded from political control, rather they believe in

increasing the level of political control over it. Further, as populist do not agree with the pluralistic ideals that guides the bureaucracy they will try to purge it from its pluralism and encourage “democratic recruitment”, a popular takeover of positions in the bureaucracy and reforming the state to allow them to govern as they please (Peters & Pierre, 2019:1534; Bauer & Becker, 2020:21; Müller, 2016:44,67). This has been described as the populist will to occupy or capture the state (Bauer & Becker, 2020:21; Müller, 2016:44, 67).

The idea of populist state capture has been borne out in a number of countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia, Peru, Hungary and Poland where populist governments have made efforts to change their countries constitutions, politicized the judiciary, eroded horizontal accountability and changed their civil service laws in order to strengthen their own control and limit the power the perceived elite (Levitsky & Loxton, 2013; Ruth, 2018; Hubert & Schimpf, 2016; Houle & Kenny, 2018; Bánkuti *et al*, 2012; Meyer-Sahling & Jager, 2012; Bauer & Becker, 2020; Mudde, 2019:128; Müller, 2016:45; Pappas, 2019; Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013)

The populist instinct to take control of the state and politicize the administration may be reinforced by the nature and actions of the bureaucracy (Peters & Pierre, 2019:1533-6). Populists may regard a pluralistic bureaucracy as unresponsive to legitimate public demands and as an instrument to uphold the establishment status quo. Populists see themselves as the interpreters of the popular will and expect its full implementation (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013:348-9), which is why a populist government is likely to find itself frustrated when faced with a slow-moving, principal-abiding bureaucracy and expectations about swift reforms and the realization of their policies are not meet. The bureaucracy on the other hand may be resistant to comply with orders that run counter to its pluralist ideals. The opposition posed by the US administrative state to the attempts of populist state control from President Trump denotes that this is a likely response from the bureaucracy (Bauer & Becker, 2020:26-7).

Such resistance has had Trump and other populists embrace the idea of the “deep state”, a shadowy expression of unelected establishment-bureaucrats with their own agenda acting on behalf of the elites rather than the people (Peters & Pierre, 2019; Bauer & Becker, 2020; Michaels, 2017; CNN, 2019). Opposition to their ideas is likely to reinforce the populist animosity towards the bureaucracy and the populist response may be to try to increase their control over the bureaucracy by politicizing it even further.

### *Politicization in practice*

This section presents theoretical arguments as well as examples of how politicization can and has occurred. Politicization is often a means to achieve control of the state administration but can, as we will see, also be used to sabotage the influences of one's political opponents.

According to Peters and Pierre (2004) increased politicization can be expected when there are large shifts in the nature of the policies of the state. As long as parties with similar ideologies and goals control the government, there is less of a need to politicize as policies and norms are similar. But when a different kind of political actor with fundamentally different views comes to power, they may use more extensive politicization in order to change the direction of public policy and reshape the bureaucracy (Peters & Pierre, 2004:8). Ideological differences between the bureaucracy and the governing party has been used to explain increased politicization by others as well, when there are ideological differences and lack of trust between government and administration, the incentives to politicize increases (Dickinson & Rudalevige, 2004; Moynihan & Roberts 2010; Lewis, 2008; Peters & Pierre, 2019:1528). In line with Peters and Pierre's (2004) reasoning, Luc Rouban (2004, 2007) has argued that the level of politicization of the French bureaucracy increased when the Socialists won the precedence in 1981. The new Socialist government represented a large shift and saw the incumbent bureaucracy as occupied by the upper-classes and sought to transform it with party loyalist to make it more accepting towards their policies (Rouban, 2004:86, 2007:490).

As populist in general see the bureaucracy and its members as part of the establishment and as devices for maintaining the interests of the corrupt elite it can be expected that the conflict stemming from the ideological differences between populists and the bureaucracy should lead to a similar increase in politicization. Populists associate the bureaucracy with previous rulers and the societal elites as it has been implementing their policies and are assumed to support them. Who populists consider the elites can, as mentioned, vary depending on the breed of populism, but the members of the bureaucracy will often be included as they are largely made up by educated people in the national or regional capitals with proximity to political power (Bauer & Becker, 2020:22). The East-coast or Washington-elites of the US and the graduates of the Ecole Nationale d'Administration whom have occupied the higher ranks of the French civil service are examples of the bureaucracy being associated with the elite (Peters & Pierre, 2019:1529 ; Rouban, 2004). Peters & Pierre (2019) have argued that the bureaucracy's association with the elite can make populists untrusting of it, leading them to take measures to fill the bureaucracy with as many loyalists as possible (2019:1528).

Populists can be expected to represent fundamental change when they come into power, they are political outsiders, anti-establishment and their ideas of governance runs counter to the pluralistic state and the ideals bureaucrats are used to abide by (Bauer & Becker, 2020). Their policies also differ fundamentally from those of traditional parties and they will want to exert their control in order to turn the ship of government. The ascent of Prime Minister Orbán's populist Fidesz party to power in Hungary represented a remarkable shift from "business as usual" when they came into office for the second time in 2010 and their actions bare out Peter and Pierre's predictions that large shifts in the political leadership would be accompanied by increased politicization. The party have undertaken an ambitious populist reform agenda accompanied by an extensive politicization of the public bureaucracy in order to facilitate the redirection of state policy (Mudde, 2019:126-7; Bauer & Becker, 2020; Hajnal & Csengodi, 2014; Müller, 2016:44). The Hungarian populist government has been able to use politicization to increase their control, but it can also be used to reduce the influence of the perceived elite.

Bauer and Becker (2020) argue that, as US President Trump's attempts of populist reform and dismantling of the American bureaucratic state to a large degree has been resisted, he has resorted to sabotage (2020:26-7). According to the authors, the combination of strong resistance from a stable institutional and political system and Trump's anti-state, small government-ideology has had him using politicization to stop the pluralistic bureaucracy from working efficiently. Examples of this behaviour involve appointing a global warming sceptic as the head of the Environmental Protection Bureau and leaving many important positions in the government unfilled (Bauer & Becker, 2020:27). This can be seen as an attack on the pluralistic bureaucracy aimed at reducing the influence of the elite rather than directly furthering the president's own control. So, populists may also use politicization in order to diminish the influence and sabotage the agenda of their perceived enemies rather than just to further their direct interests.

### *Host ideology*

Huber and Schimpf (2017) have argued that what they call the *host ideology* of populist parties, i.e. their ideological leanings besides populism, needs to be taken in to account when trying to understand their behaviour and their actions. In this section I draw on the debate on the different properties of different kinds of populism and present my expectations about the effect host ideology may have on politicization. So far, studies that explore the effects of

populist rule on the state administration in general have been rare (Peters & Pierre, 2019:1524-5) and even less is known about potentially different effects of populist's host ideologies.

There has for some time existed a debate among students of populism who have focused on the relationship between populism and democracy. This debate has been about whether populism is primarily an inclusionary force whose goal it is to increase the level and equality of political participation or an exclusionary force aimed at safeguarding influence for the "real people" while excluding others, such as immigrants (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013; Huber & Ruth, 2017). Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2013) have argued that populism can be both, depending on their host ideology. The authors maintain that inclusionary populism has been predominant among the far-left populists of Latin America, such as Chávez in Venezuela, while the, often nativist, radical right populists of Europe, like Le Pen in France embrace an exclusionary type of populism.

Adding to this debate Ruth-Lovell *et al* (2019) have contend that the two sorts of populism may affect different aspects of democracy. Left-wing inclusionary populism was suggested to increase the equal distribution of rights, participation and resources among different segments of the population while exclusionary far-right populism would further the negative impact of populism on public discourse and increase polarization (2019:5). However, when Ruth-Lovell *et al* (2019) tested this claim, they found no difference between how far-left and far-right populists affect the quality of different models of democracy.

What does this mean for politicization? Well, there are reasons to believe that the ideological and inclusionary/exclusionary nature of the host ideology may affect how populists relate to the bureaucracy when in power. The more inclusionary left-wing populists value the participatory element of democracy even higher than other populists. Mass participation is their democratic ideal and democratic control of the entire state is incumbent in their populist-DNA. These populists will want to open all aspects of the state to previously un-represented groups and substitute the elites that has previously occupied them (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013:162). This includes not just the ministries and legislatures but also the state bureaucracy which should represent the entire people. Like the proponents of the "spoils system" in the US (Peters, 2004:123), they believe that politicization is a form of democratic control that keeps the government responsive to the people. This is true for populists in general but can be expected to be even more prevalent among left-wing populists and

particularly with the radical far-left populists of Latin America that emphasises participation and believes in “radical democracy” (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013:161).

An example of far-left populism like this is the Chávez-Maduro regime’s in Venezuela. Even though their commitment to democracy has proven unsatisfactory, their partiality towards participation has led to several large-scale initiatives aimed at setting up participatory institutions that draw on otherwise marginalised groups, tasked with administering services such as healthcare and education (Hawkins, 2010:60,35-40).

I expect that the inclusionary ideal that led to efforts to engage new people in social programs also acts to increase politicization of the bureaucracy as more emphasis is put on democratic recruitment - getting unrepresented groups into positions in the state administration. This leads to the expectation that left-wing populists will be more inclined to politicize than both centrist and right-wing populists who do not share this inclusionary streak.

## **Research problem**

The previous sections have shown that populism is one of the most important political concepts today and that despite a lot of scholarly attention there is still not much known about how populists govern, particularly their relationship to the bureaucracy. I have argued why populists in power are likely to increase politicization more than non-populists and why far-left populists are even more likely than other populists to increase politicization. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to the research on populism by exploring its relationship to the bureaucracy in a quantitative study. Given the global rise of populist actors and what is known about the negative relationship between intense politicization and the quality of government, it is important to examine whether populists in power increase politicisation more than others.

## *Hypotheses*

Based on the theoretical argument in the previous section I expect that:

- *Hypothesis 1:* Populist governments increase the level of politicization more than non-populist ones.
- *Hypothesis 2:* Far-left populist governments increase politicization more than other populists.

## Methods and data

The empirical analysis takes a quantitative time-series cross-sectional approach in order to go beyond what has already been done in the field. In the past, studies on populism, which has to a large degree focused the emergence of populist actors and their effects on aspects of democracy, have often been limited to individual countries or groups of countries (Levitsky & Loxton, 2013; Houle & Kenny, 2018; Ruth, 2018; Pappas, 2019). This includes the few efforts made to detangle populism's relationship to the bureaucracy (Bauer & Becker, 2020). Here, the aim is to go beyond these intra-regional approaches and bridge the gap that has existed in much of the previous studies of populism between students of Latin America and Europe, two regions where quite different manifestations of populism has been prevalent (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018; Rooduijn, 2014). This is done by conducting a cross-regional large-N analysis studying the effect of populist rule over time in both regions. Next, I will present the data used before describing the statistical techniques used in the analysis. Summary statistics of all variables can be found in Table A1 in the appendix.

### *Operationalizations*

#### *Politicization – Merit criteria*

The dependent variable politicization is operationalized using expert survey data from the Varieties of democracy (V-Dem) project (Coppedge *et al*, 2020). V-Dem uses country experts to produce data on a range of topics relating to democracy and governance, their data is held in high regard and is widely used. The indicator used here is the variable “Criteria for appointment decisions in the state administration<sup>1</sup>” (Pemstein *et al*, 2020) which measures to what extent appointment decisions in the state administration are based on personal and political connections, as opposed to skills and merit. Lower values of the variable indicate more politicization and higher values indicate less, i.e. that merit is more prevalent as a

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<sup>1</sup>The variable was first included in V-Dem version 9 (2019). There are some differences in the scores of some countries between this first version and version 10 (2020) which is used here. For instance, in v.9 Hungary has a score of 1.68 for the year 2018, in v.10 the nations score for 2018 is -0.15 and Peru's 2018 score changes from 0.3 in v.9 to 0.013 in v.10. For most countries, the differences are negligible. According to V-Dem, differences between versions can be due to them having included additional coders and/or coders may have changed their ratings based on new information. Here I use the latest version (v.10) of the dataset as this presumably is the best version according to the creators of the dataset. Re-running the analysis using v.9 shows similar results for my main analysis.



criterion for appointments. The indicator captures the de facto level of politicization as assessed by country experts rather than formal rules or policies. This is an advantageous way of measuring politicization as enforcement of formal rules may vary between countries as well as in countries across time. The meaning of politicization captured by this variable very closely matches Peters and Pierre's (2004) definition of the concept which I use here. The variable describes the use of political criteria across the entire state bureaucracy rather than just the top level, which, as discussed in the methods section, is a better indicator of the level of politicization of the bureaucracy than the methods by which very senior officials are selected.

### *Populism – Populist rule*

Previously, the study of populism across regions have been difficult due to the lack of consensus about which political actors should be considered populist and the lack of systematic data collection. Here I am able to move beyond these difficulties by utilizing a newly developed dataset on populists in power in Europe and Latin America. It was developed by Saskia P. Ruth-Lovel, Anna Lührmann and Sandra Grahn (2019) and combines data from three different datasets and identifies when populists have been in power. The data for Latin America comes from Ruth (2018) and identifies presidents that came to power using a populist discourse by using literary review and expert opinion methods. The European coding uses The PopuList (Rooduijn *et al*, 2019) which identifies populist parties in a number of European countries, this is then combined with data on when representatives of these parties were in power (Huber & Schimpf, 2016, 2017; Hubert & Ruth, 2017). The result is a dataset on populists in power that covers 46<sup>2</sup> countries between 1994 and 2018, the sample includes 282 separate tenures and identifies 28 populist and 239 non-populist individual presidents or prime ministers. In the dataset populism is a dichotomous variable indicating a populist chief executive, i.e. prime minister or president.

All governments are also coded by ideology as being either far-left, centrist or far-right. The coding for Europe comes from the same source as the populist coding, Rooduijn *et al* (2019) and classifies parties as far-right if they are nativist and authoritarian, and far-left if they have

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<sup>2</sup> Ruth-Lovel *et al*'s study covers 47 countries but their data covers a total of 48 countries. I include the additional country (Croatia) but exclude Iceland and Malta due to incompatibility with other variables used in the empirical analysis.

a radical left-wing economic policy. As Ruth's (2018) dataset on populist presidents in Latin America do not contain classifications of leader's host ideology, Ruth-Lovel *et al* (2019) supplement the coding of ideology using a dataset by Murillo *et al* (2010). This dataset classifies the ideology of Latin American presidents based on the economic policies they implement in office. Parties and leaders not classified as either far-left- nor right are coded as centrist, a broad category including moderate parties on both the left and the right as well as centrists and non-ideological parties. For instance, Nicaragua's Sandinista President Daniel Ortega is coded as centre-populist while Hugo Chávez in Venezuela is considered a far-left populist and President Salvador Sánchez Cerén of El Salvador is coded as far-left non-populist.

### *Control variables*

In order to capture the effect of populist in power on the level of politicization, I apply a number of control variables. These are based on the theoretical expectations and can be expected to effect both the presence of a populist government and the level of politicization.

Previous studies that have studied the populist effect on democratic quality has found that democratic consolidation can moderate the negative effect of populists in power on democratic quality (Huber & Schimpf, 2016). Less consolidated democracies are also more likely to have successful populists (Huber & Schimpf, 2016:164). I expect that the more consolidated democratic institutions will be more resilient to attempts at politicization as the pluralistic institutions and norm of shielding the bureaucracy from political influence are more entrenched than otherwise. To control for the level of democratic consolidation I use data from Polity IV (Marshall *et al*, 2019) on the number of years since the last regime change.

Economic prosperity of a country can be expected to affect the affluence of populist parties and is known to affect governance and the level of democracy, so I expect it to also affect the level of politicization. In order to control for the effect of economic prosperity I include an indicator of GDP per capita (in 2010 USD, logged) from the World Bank's development data (2020).

I also include a variable on region, Latin America, or Europe, as there are quite large differences between the two regions on the average level of politicization (Kopecký *et al*,

2016). The control for region may also capture institutional differences between the mainly parliamentary Europe and the Latin American presidential systems.

The ability of populist to implement changes that increase politicization can be expected to be contingent on the level of control of the government. David E. Lewis's (2008) works on the politicization of presidential appointments in the US has found that when the same party controls both the presidency and congress, the increase in politicization is larger than otherwise. According to the author, this is because when the interests of the two branches are aligned there is less resistance to politicization. Presidents who govern in face of an opposition-controlled congress on the other side, are more likely to have their appointments or requests to expand the number of appointees shot down. Although there are some debate on how party control of government effects politicization in different types of political systems (see Rouban, 2007:491; Dahlström & Niklasson, 2013:894-5) the expectation here is that parties with less control of the government will have a harder time making large institutional changes that facilitate politicization than those leading majority governments.

I expect that since populists wants to take full control of the state, they will try to politicize the bureaucracy if they can. These attempts will be resisted by the opposition which do not share the same ideals and wants to uphold the pluralistic state. Populists who do not control both the executive and legislature will therefore have a harder time politicizing the bureaucracy while those in control of both will see no reason to limit their control of the state. To account for this, I include a control for divided government in the analysis. The variable used comes from V-Dem (Coppedge *et al*, 2020) and is called the Divided party control index and captures whether the same party or coalition controls both the executive and the legislature. Lower values signify unified control, higher values divided control while coalitions make up the middle range.

### *Methods*

The aim of the empirical analysis is to study the effect of populist rule on the level of politicization across time using a sample of Latin American and European countries. The main analysis uses pooled ordinary least-squares (OLS) regression with panel-corrected standard errors (PCSE) (Beck & Katz, 1995) and include a lagged (t-1) version of the dependent variable. The lagged dependent variable is used because the level of politization in a country for any given year is expected to be strongly influenced by the value the previous

year (Mehmetoglu & Jakobsen, 2017:253-4). This dynamic model means that the results can be interpreted as the yearly change in the dependent variable. OLS with PCSE is a method designed specially to deal with the kind of data used here; time-series cross-sectional (TSCS) data, i.e. data where the same units are observed at several points in time. The method is a standard way of analysing time-series-cross section data and suitable for my analysis as I expect variation in my independent and dependent variable both within countries over time but also between countries.

An alternative approach would be to use a fixed-effect model, but these are not suitable in my case as they remove the variation between countries and only test within country-effects. There is relatively little variation on my main independent variable Populist rule, as there are relatively few cases of populists in power. This means that it is important to choose a method of analysis that utilizes this variation as much as possible. Also, my research question is based on the expectation that there are differences *between* countries. A PCSE model can handle this while a fixed-effects model would remove the between-country variation and therefore weaken the explanatory power of the model.

The more conservative fixed-effects approach is instead used as a robustness test to see if the results hold up when controlling for within country effects. So, after the initial analysis, the models are re-run using an alternative fixed-effects (within) regression with country clustered standard errors to test the robustness of the results of the OLS regression. The next section presents the results of the empirical analysis and the results are then discussed in the next chapter.

## Results

The results of the empirical analysis can be seen in Table 1 and 2, the models in Table 1 tests the effect of populists rule on the level of politicization (Hypothesis 1) while the regression in Table 2 tests the direct effect of different host ideologies of populists in power (Hypothesis 2). As higher values of the dependent variable indicate less politicization the variable is referred to as Merit criteria in the tables to ease interpretation. The coefficient should be interpreted as the yearly change in the Merit criteria variable on populist rule. The same controls are applied for both analyses and are described above. Next, I will first review the results in Table 1 before moving on to Table 2. The implications of the results are discussed in the next chapter.

**Table 1. Populist rule and politicization – Main analysis**

	(1a)	(2a)	(3a)	(4a)	(5a)
<b>Merit criteria</b>					
Populist rule	-0.0541*** (0.0163)	-0.0542*** (0.0163)	-0.0543*** (0.0163)	-0.0543*** (0.0163)	-0.0532** (0.0166)
Merit criteria (t-1)	0.995*** (0.00325)	0.991*** (0.00635)	0.991*** (0.00636)	0.991*** (0.00630)	0.991*** (0.00633)
GDP/capita (log)		0.00490 (0.00662)	0.00472 (0.00654)	0.00525 (0.00662)	-0.000263 (0.00898)
Divided party control			-0.00309 (0.00371)	-0.00308 (0.00370)	-0.00220 (0.00357)
Dem. Consolidation				-0.0000472 (0.000113)	0.00000966 (0.0000902)
Region					-0.0153 (0.0174)
Constant	0.00977 (0.00761)	-0.0328 (0.0581)	-0.0307 (0.0573)	-0.0344 (0.0572)	0.0223 (0.0871)
<i>N</i>	1129	1129	1129	1129	1129
<i>Countries</i>	46	46	46	46	46
<i>Years (avg.)</i>	24.5	24.5	24.5	24.5	24.5
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98

Ordinary least squares regression with panel-corrected standard-errors in parentheses.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ . Reference for Region is Europe

Table 1 shows the effect of the main independent variable Populist rule, meaning that there is a populist president or prime minister in power, the reference category for this variable is non-populist ruler. The control variables enter the analysis one by one and the full model can be seen to the far right (5a). None of the controls are statistically significant. The inclusion of a lagged (t-1) version of the dependent variable Merit criteria explains the considerably large R-squared value of all models in Table 1. This is because the inclusion of the value of the dependent variable from the previous year gives the model a lot of predictive power. The results in Table 1 show that the coefficient for Populist rule is negative, suggesting that

populist rule increases the level of politicization and decrease the prevalence of the merit criteria. The effect is statistically significant and in line with expectations.

The effect of populist rule in the full model (5a) is, however, not very big, only about a twentieth standard deviation. As an example, Denmark which has the highest value on the variable in the sample scores 2.987 for each year in the time-series. A yearly change of -0.0532 as predicted by the results would change Denmark's score to 2.455 over 10 years, a score which would still be the fourth highest average in the sample. The same ten-year effect of a -0.532 change can also be express as the difference between Sweden's average value during the time-series and that of Poland before the onset of the current populist regime. Even if this is not a radical change it would still have an impact on how the bureaucracy functions and over time the norms of a political system may change and the balance between merit and politics be altered.

The analysis seen in Table 2 tests the direct effect of far-left, centrists and far-right populist rule. Again, the centrist category is broad and encompasses all populists not considered far-left- or right, including such diverse political figures as Silvio Berlusconi and Daniel Ortega. There are quite few populist rulers in the sample who fall into the extreme categories, during the time period observed four countries had far-left populist leaders and only three had far-right populist leaders (see Appendix for list of countries). The expectation that the more inclusionary far-left populists increase politicization more than far-right and centrist populists is not supported by the results. They show negative coefficients for all three types of populists, but the results are only significant for the two extremes. The size of the effect of far-left populists in power is slightly larger than the general populist variable seen in Table 1 while the effect of far-right populism is almost three times as large. This suggests that it is the two extremes and particularly far-right populism that is driving the effect observed in Table 1.

The effect of far-right populists in power is quite substantial compared to the results in Table 1, about one seventh of a standard deviation. The annual change predicted would have Sweden at the level of Costa Rica in five years and that of South Africa after 10 years. Again, when observing the results of Model 2 it is important to remember that there are few observations for each type of populist host ideology and that the inclusion of a lagged version of the dependent variable effects the R-square value.

**Table 2.** *Populist rule and politicization – By host ideology*

	(1b)	(2b)	(3b)	(4b)	(5b)
<b>Merit criteria</b>					
Far-left Populist rule	-0.0682* (0.0269)	-0.0695** (0.0269)	-0.0688* (0.0271)	-0.0687* (0.0271)	-0.0642* (0.0262)
Centrist Populist rule	-0.00177 (0.0181)	-0.000499 (0.0181)	-0.000928 (0.0181)	-0.00100 (0.0181)	-0.00102 (0.0183)
Far-right Populist rule	-0.146** (0.0563)	-0.146** (0.0560)	-0.146** (0.0559)	-0.147** (0.0559)	-0.149** (0.0554)
Merit criteria (t-1)	0.995*** (0.00355)	0.990*** (0.00660)	0.990*** (0.00661)	0.991*** (0.00656)	0.990*** (0.00661)
GDP/capita (log)		0.00651 (0.00658)	0.00638 (0.00649)	0.00710 (0.00649)	0.00147 (0.00892)
Divided party control			-0.00170 (0.00376)	-0.00169 (0.00376)	-0.000916 (0.00375)
Dem. Consolidation				-0.0000646 (0.000103)	-0.00000874 (0.0000836)
Region					-0.0155 (0.0167)
Constant	0.00769 (0.00796)	-0.0488 (0.0578)	-0.0475 (0.0569)	-0.0526 (0.0562)	0.00523 (0.0869)
<i>N</i>	1129	1129	1129	1129	1129
<i>Countries</i>	46	46	46	46	46
<i>Years (avg.)</i>	24.5	24.5	24.5	24.5	24.5
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98

Ordinary least squares regression with panel-corrected standard-errors in parentheses.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ . Reference for Region is Europe

**Table 3.** *Populist rule and politicization - Robustness check with alternative models*

<b>Merit criteria</b>	(1c)	(2c)
Populist rule	-0.283* (0.136)	
Far-left Populist rule		-0.367 (0.335)
Centrist Populist rule		0.0797 (0.141)
Far-right Populist rule		-0.691* (0.327)
GDP/capita (log)	0.264 (0.284)	0.242 (0.276)
Divided party control	-0.0275 (0.0426)	-0.0155 (0.0355)
Dem. consolidation	0.00133 (0.00665)	0.00213 (0.00613)
Constant	-1.487 (2.532)	-1.318 (2.486)
<i>N</i>	1129	1129
<i>Countries</i>	46	46
<i>Years (avg.)</i>	24.5	24.5
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> (within)	0.0882	0.143

Fixed-effects regression with clustered standard errors in parentheses.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

### *Robustness check*

In order to test the robustness of the results the models are re-run using an alternative fixed-effects regression with standard errors clustered by country. The results can be seen in Table 3. The controls are the same as in the main analysis except for Region, which is excluded as only variables that vary over time should be included in fixed-effects regressions. Also, the fixed-effects models do not include the lagged version of the dependent variable, this in order to avoid potential bias (Nickell, 1981).

Model 1c in Table 3 uses the same general Populist rule variable as in Table 1 while Model 2c tests the direct effect of different kinds of populism just as the regression in Table 2. The results of Model 1c confirm those of the main analysis, again having a populist president or



prime minister is predicted to increase the level of politicization. The effect, however, is larger than the general effect seen in Table 1 and the effects of far-right populist rule in Table 2. The effects reported in Model 2c are also larger than in the main analysis, but the most important difference is that here, it is only the effect of far-right populism that is statistically significant, not far-left populism. Overall the robustness test is in line with the findings of the main analysis, populist governments seem to increase the level of politicization more than non-populists and the direct effect of far-right populist rule seem to be stronger than that of other populists in power.

## **Discussion of the results**

In this section I discuss the results of the empirical analysis and their implications. The results of the main analysis suggest that there is a positive effect of populist rule on the level of politicization, giving credence to the hypothesis that populists are more inclined than others to politicize the bureaucracy. The observed yearly effect is however, as noted in the previous section, not very large. The cumulative effect, however, is not negligible and over time the norms of the bureaucracy and the ideal of isolating the bureaucracy from politics may be eroded. This may lead to shift towards more political control and influence over the bureaucracy. This study has not examined to what extent the level of politicization returns to normal after populists leave office, but once norms have been changed they may be hard to change back as the general trend seems to be towards more politicization rather than less (Peters & Pierre, 2004:6).

The fact that the effect exists but is relatively small suggests that it could be that the populist instinct to politicize exists, but the ability of populists to implement large changes is hindered. This may be because populists are often political outsiders without previous experience of governance, claiming to represent the people and often making a point of not being part of the traditional party elite. For example, Peru's Alberto Fujimori had no political experience before seeking the presidency, Hugo Chávez first became known to the public as one of the leaders of a failed coup d'etat, Silvio Berlusconi was a media-mogul and Donald Trump was a businessman and reality TV host. Peters and Pierre (2019) have argued that outsider populists often lack the necessary skills and experience to take on the institutions that they want to change once in power (2019:1527). The bureaucracy, and the state at large, often have strong pluralistic institutions that are likely to resist populists attempts at reform and without an

organised strategy to take on these institutions, populist governments may struggle to achieve the changes they strive for.

Similarly, Levitsky and Loxton (2013) have also argued that since populists are often outsiders, they lack the experience to build coalitions, negotiate, manoeuvre the political system and may also lack the perseverance necessary to implement their policies (2013:110-11). Institutional experience may help explain why the change in the level of politicization is relatively small; some populists may attempt to change the bureaucracy and implement more majoritarian direct political control but lack the institutional know-how required to successfully carry it out.

Not all populists are outsiders however, for instance when Victor Orbán took office in 2010 he had already served as prime minister once before and he and his party had been part of Hungarian politics for two decades. But then Hungary is an example where the populist government has transformed the civil service and where the level of politicization has increased, more on this below.

The perceived need for politicization may differ depending on what norms are in place when populists come to power. The level of politicization may be less affected if it is already relatively high, an incoming populist government may be satisfied with the level of politicization and see less need to increase it further. While for populists in less politicized countries where the pluralistic norms are stronger, the perceived need for change may be bigger. The data reveals large differences in the mean level of politicization between Latin American and European countries. The mean in the sample on the V-Dem Merit criteria variable is 1.53 for the Europe and 0.24 for the Latin America. If populists on both sides of the Atlantic have the same idea about what ideal level of politicization is, then Europeans may need to change the level of politicization in their countries more than their Latin American counterparts in order to reach this ideal level, leading to a more dramatic change.

The ability of populists to implement changes that increase politicization may also be dependent on their level of popular support. Ruth (2018) found that in Latin America, when populist presidents came into conflict with the legislature over their attempts to erode horizontal constraints on their own power, popular support was the deciding factor on which their success or failure depended. Presidents who lacked support for their attempts to strengthen the presidency and their power over the legislature and judiciary would see their reforms stopped or even be impeached by the legislature. Similarly, populists who do not have

popular support for their efforts to reshape the bureaucracy may be less successful as their efforts are more forcefully opposed by the political opposition as well as members of the bureaucracy who feel that they have the public on their side. In such a situation, populist actors may be able to place loyalists in some strategic places but be unable to achieve real institutional change.

The second part of the analysis which focused on the direct effect of far-left, centrist and far-right populism showed that the two extremes and particularly far-right populism seem to drive the results. The direct effects of these ideological leanings are considerably larger than the general effect and the predicted effect would lead to a rather dramatic change in the level of politicization.

As mentioned in the Methods section, the data on the ideology of presidents and parties comes from different sources for Latin America and Europe, as the Ruth-Lovel *et al* 's (2019) dataset is the result of a combination of several existing datasets. Unfortunately, there is a discrepancy in the way ideology is treated in the different sources. The coding for Latin America by Murillo *et al* (2010) is only based on economic policy where the far-left- and right categories are made up by political actors on the extremes of a left-right scale (see Ruth-Lovel *et al*, 2019:16). Conversely, the coding for Europe, which comes from Rooduijn *et al* (2019), does not categorize the ideology of parties exclusively on their economic policy, rather far-right parties are coded as such if they are nativist and authoritarian, regardless of their economic policies. Economic policy does play a role for coding parties as far-left parties.

This means that Panama's President Mireya Moscoso is coded as far-right based only on her economic policies while the classification of the Hungarian Fidesz and Polish PiS parties as the same is only based on them being nativist and authoritarian and the classification says nothing about their economic policies. Conceptually the Rooduijn *et al* (2019) definition is the closest to the exclusionary right-wing politics described by Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser (2013) and hence more useful for the analysis. This mismatch of definitions is unfortunate and certainly weakens the part of the analysis that focuses on the direct effect of host ideology. It is possible that had the same criteria been used for both continents, the division by host ideologies would have been different. When I re-run the regression separating the sample by region, I find some contrasting results. The host ideology analysis shows that far-left- and right populism has about the same effect using the only European sample, but none of the two extremes are statistically significant at the 95% level using the Latin American

sample (see Table A3 in the Appendix). There are many factors that differ between the two regions which may explain this outcome, but it is an indication that the inconsistency of the ideology coding may have affected the results.

This is important to keep in mind when interpreting the results, as well as the fact that the analysis is based on a small number of observations as there are relatively few examples of fringe-populists in the sample. Only Hungary, Panama and Poland had far-right leaders during the time period with a total of 18 far-right populist country-years. While Bolivia, Ecuador, Greece, Peru and Venezuela had far-left populist leaders for a total of 50 years. This means that individual countries may influence the results heavily, for instance, almost half the observations for far-right populism come from Hungary alone. In fact, looking at the individual scores of the countries it is obvious that it is Hungary and Poland that is driving the effect of far-right populism. The level of politicization in Panama, the third country to be coded as far-right populist in the sample, did not change at all during the five-year term of President Mireya Moscoso, the politicization levels are stable at the same value for the entire 25-year time period. This is perhaps an indication that the discrepancies in the ideology coding are empirically relevant.

As for Hungary and Poland, they both start out at about the European average in the beginning of the time-series and both countries see rather dramatic changes as far-right populists come to power. Hungary scored 1.5 on the Merit criteria scale the year before the far-right populist Fidesz party came to power for the second time in 2010, slipped to 0.44 their first year in office and at the end of the time-series in 2018 the country scores -0.15. Poland underwent a similar decline from 1.44 to 0.142 over the last 5 years of the time-series under the populist PiS-government.

On the other side of the ideological spectrum there are also some interesting revelations to be found by taking a closer look at the individual country scores of the V-Dem data. Here the ideology coding is more consistent as both sources understand far-leftism in economic terms. Venezuela, starting out at about the same politicization value as Poland and Hungary under centrist populist Rafael Caldera in 1994, has seen a sharp increase in the level of politicization over the two decades of far-left populist rule. Starting in Hugo Chávez first year in office, the change has continued gradually over the next decades into Maduro's presidency and in 2017 it reached -1.497, the lowest value of any country in the sample. In Greece, where

politicization is traditionally commonplace, the far-left populist Syriza party's first three years in office lead to a change from -0.032 to -0.782 on the Merit criteria variable.

However, as for the rest of the far-left populists, the pattern does not continue. When Evo Morales first became president of Bolivia there was an initial change from 0.163 to 0.132 his first year in office, but after this small change the levels remained the same for the rest of the time-series. Both Ecuador and Peru have seen the level of politicization decrease under far-left populist leaders. The V-Dem data shows Peru becoming less politicized when the far-left populist Humala took over from the centrist populists Garcia and the presidency of Ecuador's Rafael Correa, saw the level of politicization decrease, from -0.045 before he took office to 0.45 during his two terms as president. So, just as the effect on the far-right side can be attributed to Hungary and Poland, among the far-left populist cases, it is only Greece and Venezuela that actually see an increase in the level of politicization under far-left populists.

My expectations that far-left populists would politicize more than other populists because of their partiality to more participatory elements of democracy were not supported by the results. The results do, however, suggest that host ideology matters. The operationalization used here is quite a rough measurement of the inclusionary/exclusionary spectrum and has some problems due to the different criteria used for Latin America and Europe. Although it is primarily the far-left populists like Chávez and Morales that Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser (2013) base their analysis on, the operationalization of host ideology used here may exclude left-wing inclusionary populists in Latin America not considered far-left by the coding. As mentioned above, Nicaragua's Ortega is coded as centrist rather than far-left but as a leftist he and his government may still encompass an inclusionary type of populism. Ruth-Lovell *et al* (2019) comment the fact that they did not find a moderating effect of host ideology on democracy by saying that the measurement might need to be more fine-grained in order to capture the inclusiveness or exclusiveness of populists. The same may be said here. This also means that the results for the centrist category should be treated with caution as it is such a diverse group, including many different types of political actors with little in common compared to the groups of fringe-populists.

The observed effect of the far-left and far-right populists calls for some attention, it is interesting that there is an effect on both extremes of the political spectrum but not at the middle. Of course, this may partly be due to the diversity of the centrist category. On the far-right side, the results seem to be driven by Poland and Hungary, two countries whose

governing parties are categorised as far-right because they are nativist and authoritarian and on the far-left side a lot of the variation comes from Venezuela, a country that has undergone a far-reaching process of autocratization since Hugo Chávez first came to power.

This warrants the question whether intense politicization is mostly a feature of what Bert A Rockman (2019) calls populist authoritarianism, i.e. populist governments that use populism to legitimise their rule while undermining democratic institutions, rather than populism at large? Leaders with authoritarian leanings or full out authoritarian governments do not have to lead to more politicization, Singapore for instance, is a well-known example of an authoritarian country where meritocracy is well entrenched (Rockman, 2019:1562; Rothstein, 2011:203-5). Authoritarianism can however, act as an enabler of populist ambitions of institutional change. Authoritarian actors may weaken democratic institutions and constraints on their own power, facilitating further politicization by enabling greater institutional change by undermining the pluralistic norms that resist politicization. The role of authoritarian host ideologies is an interesting hypothesis to be explored further in the future.

## **Conclusions**

The general findings of the analysis are that populists in power do seem to increase the level of politicization more than non-populists (Hypothesis 1). This effect was statistically significant and was borne out in the robustness test as well. Previously, not much has been known about the relationship between populists in power and the bureaucracy, this study has begun to fill this gap. The results of this study points in the expected direction and suggest that populists in power may increase the level of politicization and over time populist rule may lead to a shift in the norms that govern the public bureaucracy.

Considering that populism is on the rise in many countries across the world and what is known about the relationship between politicization and the quality of government these findings are important. Political control and accountability are a necessary part of democratic governance, but intense politicization may damage the bureaucracy's legitimacy and performance as well as the quality of government.

The expectation that populists who come into power will try to take control of the bureaucracy, politicize it and purge it from pluralist ideals implies a fast and dramatic process, however the results seen here are more modest. As the observed yearly effect is not very large

and may not radically change a country's relative level of politicization, at least not very fast. However, it can have an affect over time and as norms change the equilibrium between politics and merit may shift. Once changed, such a shift may prove hard to reverse. This means that the results warrant further attention to the quality of government implications of the current populist trend.

The results for far-right populists, however, are more in line with the idea of a swift change. This can be seen in the second part of the analysis, studying the direct effect of far-left, centrist and far-right populist rule. These results indicate that the effect of populist rule is driven by populists on the fringes of the left-right spectrum, particularly the far-right. The analysis showed no significant effect of the largest of the groups of host ideology, the diverse centrist category. The expectation that the more inclusionary far-left populists would increase the level of politicization more than other populists (Hypothesis 2) was not supported by the results. Rather, the effect of far-right populism is stronger than that of far-left populism.

The different effect of host ideologies is an interesting finding, even if the results should be treated with caution due to the lack of consistency of the coding and the relatively small number of observations. The findings do suggest however, that the role of host ideology is something that future studies could benefit from exploring. This would further the debate on inclusionary and exclusionary populism and their properties as well as shed more light on the role of populist authoritarianism in politicization.

The aim of this thesis has been to examine the notion that populist in power politicize the bureaucracy, which had been suggested but not tested in earlier works in the field. Using a combination of different data sources and a quantitative approach the thesis has been able to provide an empirical test and find support for the idea that populists in power do increase the level of politicization more than others. These findings lends support to the theory that populism's majoritarian and anti-elite sentiments makes populist actors more inclined to use appointments to the bureaucracy as a means of control, in order to implement their agenda and to reduce pluralistic and "elite" influences on the state.

As populisms seems to be here to stay, the indication that populists in power furthers politicization may be an important issue to explore for future studies. This thesis' quantitative analysis has been able to empirically establish a pattern. Future studies could gain by studying individual populist governments, how they politicize as well as why some populists may not.

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## Appendix

**Table A1.** *Summary statistics*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Source</i>
Politicization-Merit criteria	1129	1.035841	1.059039	-1.497	2.987	Pemstein <i>et al.</i> , 2019
Populism	1129	.1231178	.328718	0	1	Ruth-Lovel <i>et al.</i> 2019
Populist host ideology	1129	.2054916	..6104338	0	3	Ruth-Lovel <i>et al.</i> 2019
GDP/cap (Log)	1129	9.52496	1.066184	6.969278	11.62597	World Bank, 2020
Divided Government	1129	.0685855	.8421876	-1.631	1.695	Coppedge <i>et al.</i> , 2020
Democratic consolidation	1129	33.26395	27.91399	0	138	Marshall <i>et al.</i> , 2019
Region	1129	.3861825	.487089	0	1	Ruth-Lovel <i>et al.</i> 2019

**Table A2.** *List of countries by populist host ideology, country-years*

<i>Country name</i>	<i>Non-populist</i>	<i>Far-left populism</i>	<i>Centrist populism</i>	<i>Far-right populism</i>	<i>Total</i>
Argentina	16	0	9	0	25
Austria	25	0	0	0	25
Belgium	25	0	0	0	25
Bolivia	13	12	0	0	25
Brazil	25	0	0	0	25
Bulgaria	13	0	12	0	25
Chile	25	0	0	0	25
Colombia	25	0	0	0	25
Costa Rica	25	0	0	0	25
Croatia	19	0	0	0	19
Cyprus	25	0	0	0	25
Czech Republic	24	0	1	0	25
Denmark	25	0	0	0	25
Dominican Republic	21	0	4	0	25
Ecuador	12	10	3	0	25
El Salvador	25	0	0	0	25
Estonia	23	0	2	0	25
Finland	25	0	0	0	25
France	25	0	0	0	25
Germany	25	0	0	0	25
Greece	22	3	0	0	25
Guatemala	23	0	0	0	23
Honduras	25	0	0	0	25
Hungary	17	0	0	8	25
Ireland	25	0	0	0	25
Italy	16	0	9	0	25
Latvia	22	0	3	0	0
Lithuania	24	0	0	0	24
Luxemburg	25	0	0	0	25
Mexico	25	0	0	0	25
Netherlands	25	0	0	0	25
Nicaragua	13	0	12	0	25
Norway	25	0	0	0	25
Panama	20	0	0	5	25
Paraguay	25	0	0	0	25
Peru	3	5	5	0	13
Poland	20	0	0	5	25
Portugal	25	0	0	0	25
Romania	25	0	0	0	25
Slovakia	25	0	0	0	25
Slovenia	25	0	0	0	25
Spain	25	0	0	0	25
Sweden	25	0	0	0	25
United Kingdom	25	0	0	0	25
Uruguay	25	0	0	0	25
Venezuela	0	20	5	0	25

**Table A3.** *Populist rule and politicization - Separate analysis by region*

	(1-Europe)	(2-Latin America)	(3-Europe)	(4-Latin America)
<b>Merit criteria</b>				
Populist rule	-0.0949** (0.0344)	-0.0276 <sup>+</sup> (0.0152)		
Far-left Populist rule			-0.291* (0.140)	-0.0433 <sup>+</sup> (0.0241)
Centrist Populist rule			-0.000563 (0.0328)	-0.000480 (0.0196)
Far-right Populist rule			-0.213*** (0.0627)	0.0109 (0.0101)
Merit criteria (t-1)	0.986*** (0.00929)	0.995*** (0.00794)	0.983*** (0.00955)	0.991*** (0.00790)
GDP/capita (log)	0.00222 (0.0130)	-0.00431 (0.00894)	0.00873 (0.0128)	-0.00127 (0.00888)
Divided party control	0.00327 (0.00876)	-0.00513 (0.00389)	-0.0000779 (0.00890)	-0.00371 (0.00414)
Dem. Consolidation	-0.0000109 (0.000112)	0.000106 (0.000216)	-0.0000813 (0.000112)	0.000181 (0.000218)
Constant	0.00778 (0.123)	0.0337 (0.0796)	-0.0521 (0.121)	0.00531 (0.0798)
<i>N</i>	693	436	693	436
<i>Countries</i>	28	18	28	18
<i>Years (avg.)</i>	24.75	24.22	24.75	24.22
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98

Ordinary least squares regression with panel-corrected standard-errors in parentheses.

<sup>+</sup>  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .