

An overview of
populist and extremist
foreign policy positions
In postcommunist Europe

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WHAT are we talking about?

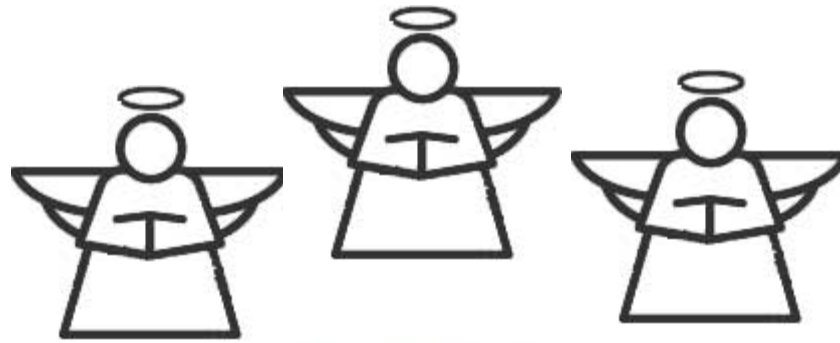
WHO are the players?

WHERE do they stand?

So **WHAT?**

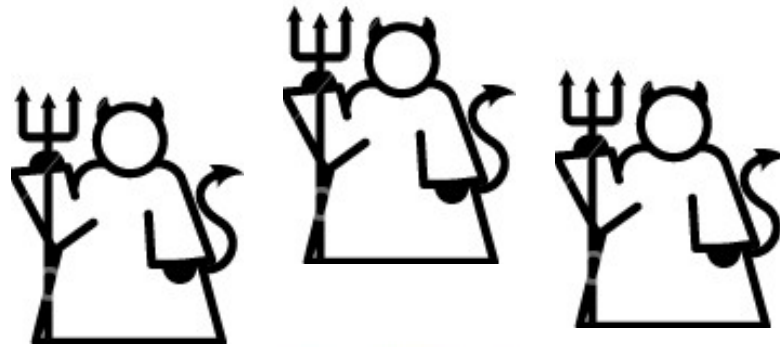
WHAT? Definitions

While it might seem like academic hair-splitting, it's important to be clear on the definitions of "extremism" and "populism" and how they differ.



WHAT? Definitions

And in any case it's not the angels I am interested but rather the demons, and in particular the demons that parties point at to win votes.



WHAT? Definitions

Extremism:

“Repression of

Full quotation: Lipset & Raab’s (1970) more specific definition of political extremism as antipluralism or monism. The “operational heart of extremism,” to follow the argument of Lipset & Raab (1970, p. 6), “is the repression of difference and dissent, the closing down of the market place of ideas. More precisely, the operational essence of extremism, or monism, is the tendency to treat cleavage and ambivalence as *illegitimate*” (243). --Rydgren, Jens. 2007. *The Sociology of the Radical Right* Annual Review of Sociology, 33:241–62.

While the Lipset and Raab definition is limited by context, it is a useful starting point for a non-relativistic understanding of the term within a liberal-democratic context. Of course “extreme” by definition implies a point that the extreme is at the edge of.



of and difference” Raab, 1970

Lipset SM, Raab E. 1970. *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790–1970*. New York: Harper & Row

WHAT? Definitions

Populism:

I have a love hate relationship with this term. It captures something but it is most often used in ways that render it meaningless, as in the following slide.

WHAT? Definitions



**Voters Like
+
So Do I
=
Popular**



**Voters Like
+
I Don't
=
Populist**

WHAT? Definitions

Populism:

For more work on this question, see <http://www.netvibes.populismproject> or visit <http://www.pozorblog.com> and search for “populism.”

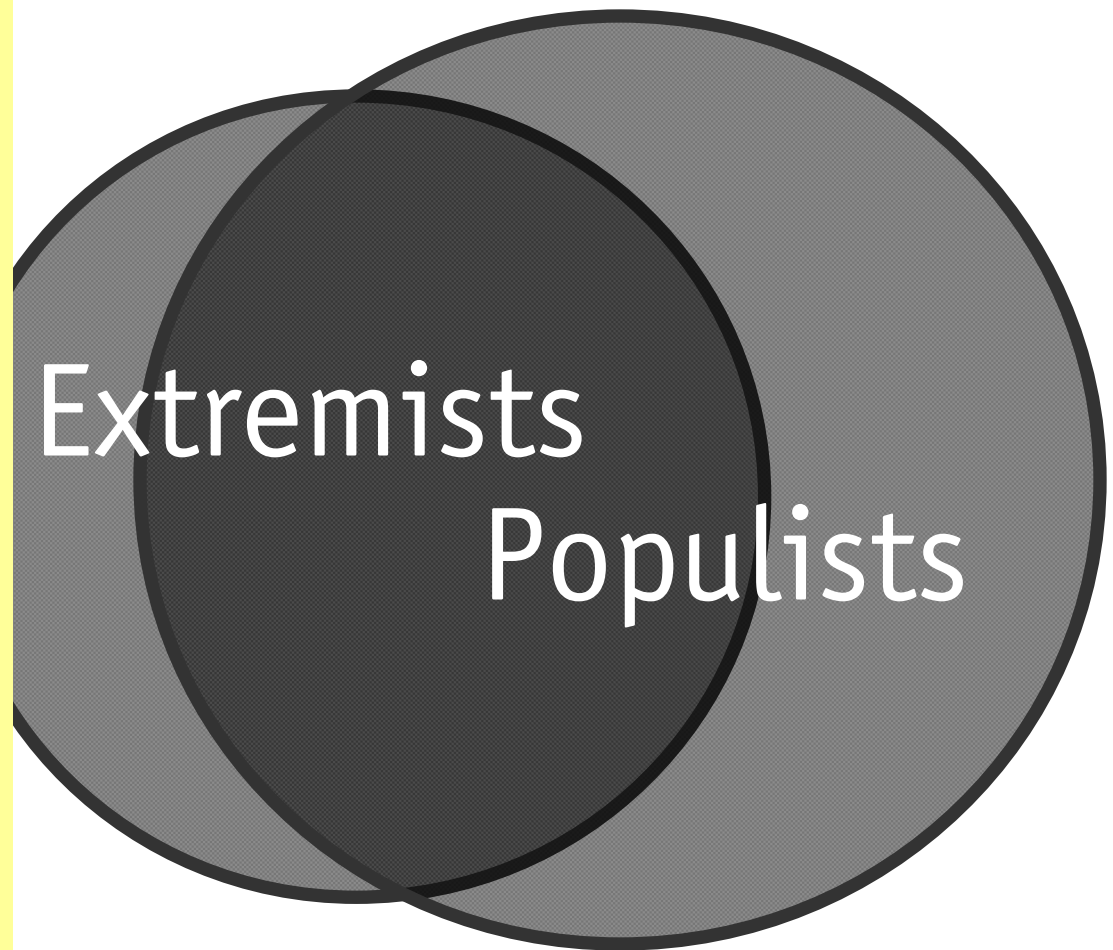
**“Homogenously pure people
against homogeneously
corrupt elite” --Cas Mudde**

“I define 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)
Mudde, Cas (2004) „The Populist Zeitgeist“, *Government and Opposition* (39:4) 542-564.

WHAT? Definitions

Why it matters:

With these definitions it is easy to see overlap between extremists and populists—those who seek marginalize or otherwise exclude those that they perceive as the current corrupt elite—but it is also possible to imagine extremists who are not populists—those who do not reject (or are part of) the current elite and elitists who seek to marginalize others without “popular” sanction—and populists who are not extremists and oppose the current elite not because its members are part of a group but because they are, or are perceived as, corrupt.



WHAT? Definitions



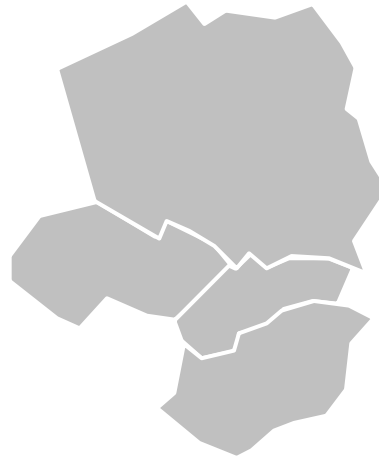
It is also important to understand these not as binary categories but as matters of degree. Extremism and populism are not something that parties are (or aren't) but rather something they do, and do to varying degrees.

WHO?

I want to focus most closely on the countries that I know best with some attention to some of the other countries where I have data (but not personal experience) with some attention to countries beyond this range.

WHO? Extremists

It is extremely useful in this regard to use the expert surveys of party positions developed at Chapel Hill.



Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey on Positioning of Political Parties on European Integration, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

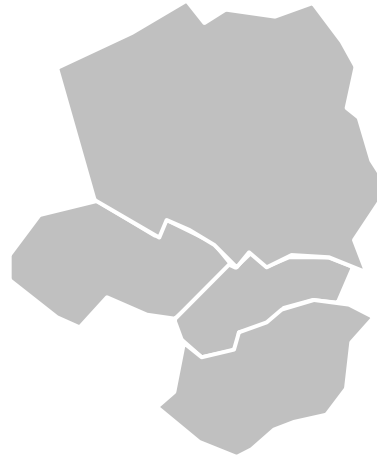
WHO? Extremists

The expert surveys (filtered by personal judgment) suggest certain parties qualify in the “extremist” range, though the degree and type of the extremism varies.

PL: League

PL: Self-Defense

CZ: Communist



SK: National

SK: Communist

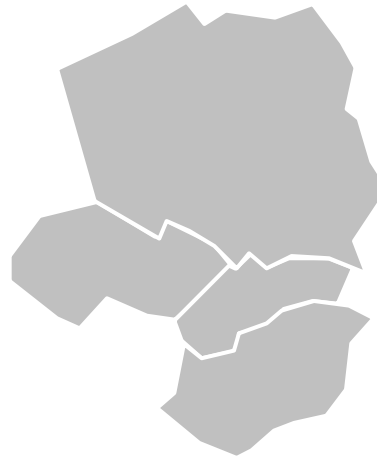
HU: Jobbik

WHO? Not-Quite Extremists

There are others who “flirt” with extremists, sometimes moving into that territory and other times not. It is sometimes useful to think of these in terms of individuals rather than parties.

CZ: Klaus

PL: Kaczynski



SK: Fico
SK: Meciar

HU: Orban

WHO? Populists

There are yet others who may or may not be “extremist” or “flirts” who engage in the “anti-elite” game.

PL: Kaczynski

PL: Self-Defense

PL: League

CZ: Communists

CZ: SZ

CZ: TOP09



SK: Fico

SK: Nationalists

HU: Jobbik

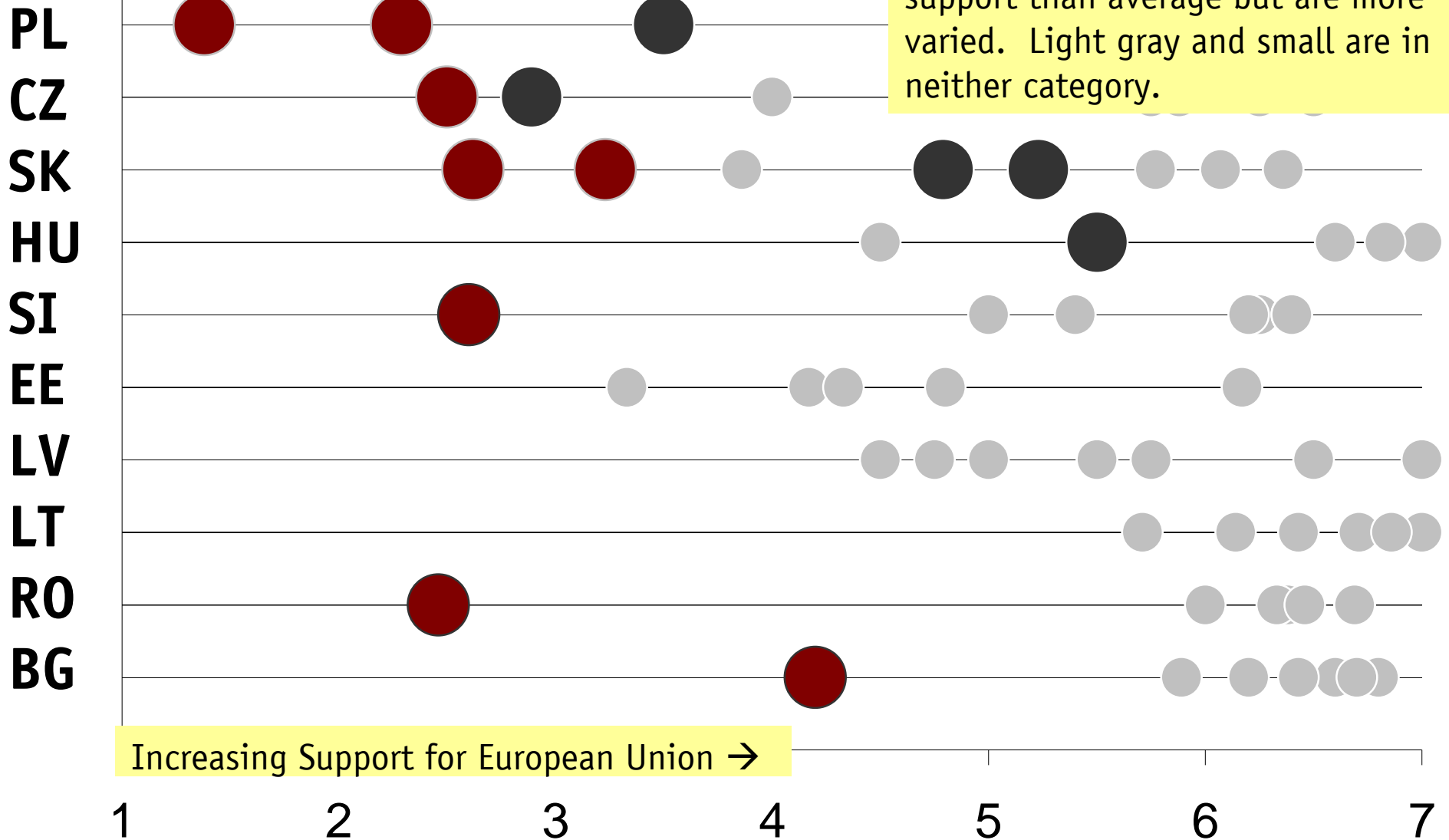
HU: Orban

WHERE? Positions

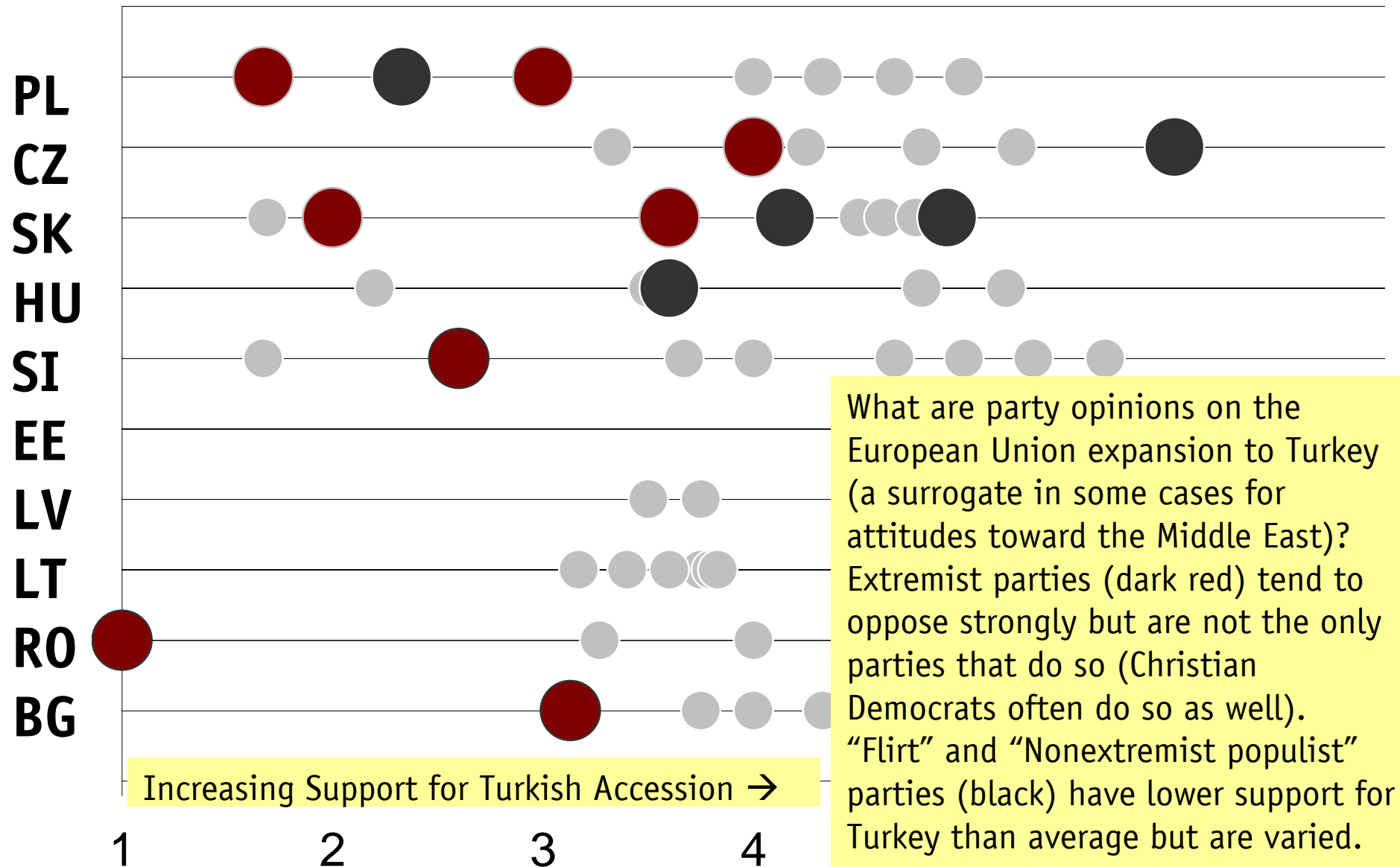
Having defined a roster of parties that fall in the extreme range on basic issues, it is useful to see where those same parties fall on foreign policy questions.

WHERE? EU position

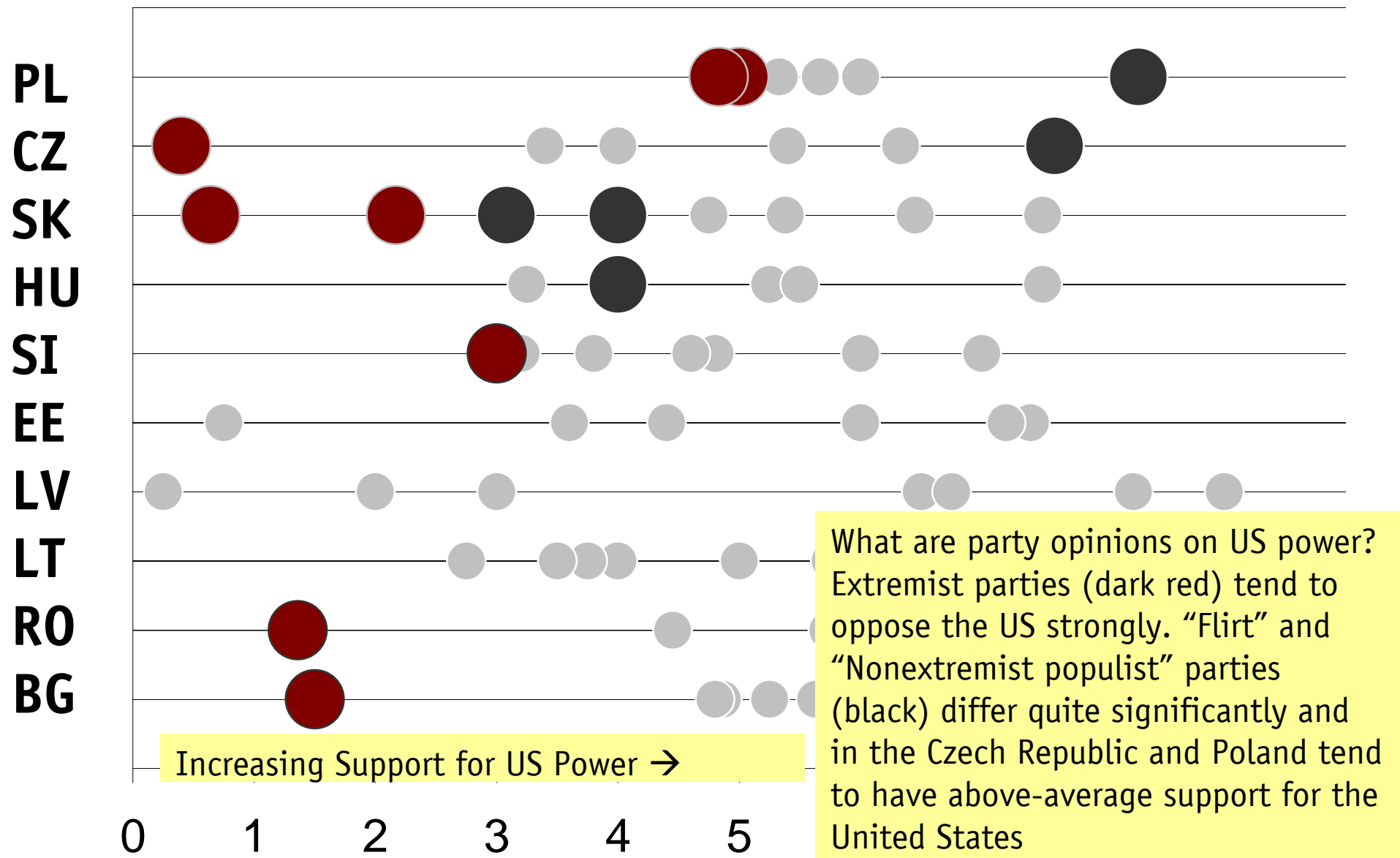
What are party opinions on the European Union? Extremist parties (dark red) tend to oppose strongly. "Flirt" and "Nonextremist populist" parties (black) have lower EU support than average but are more varied. Light gray and small are in neither category.



WHERE? Enlargement to Turkey

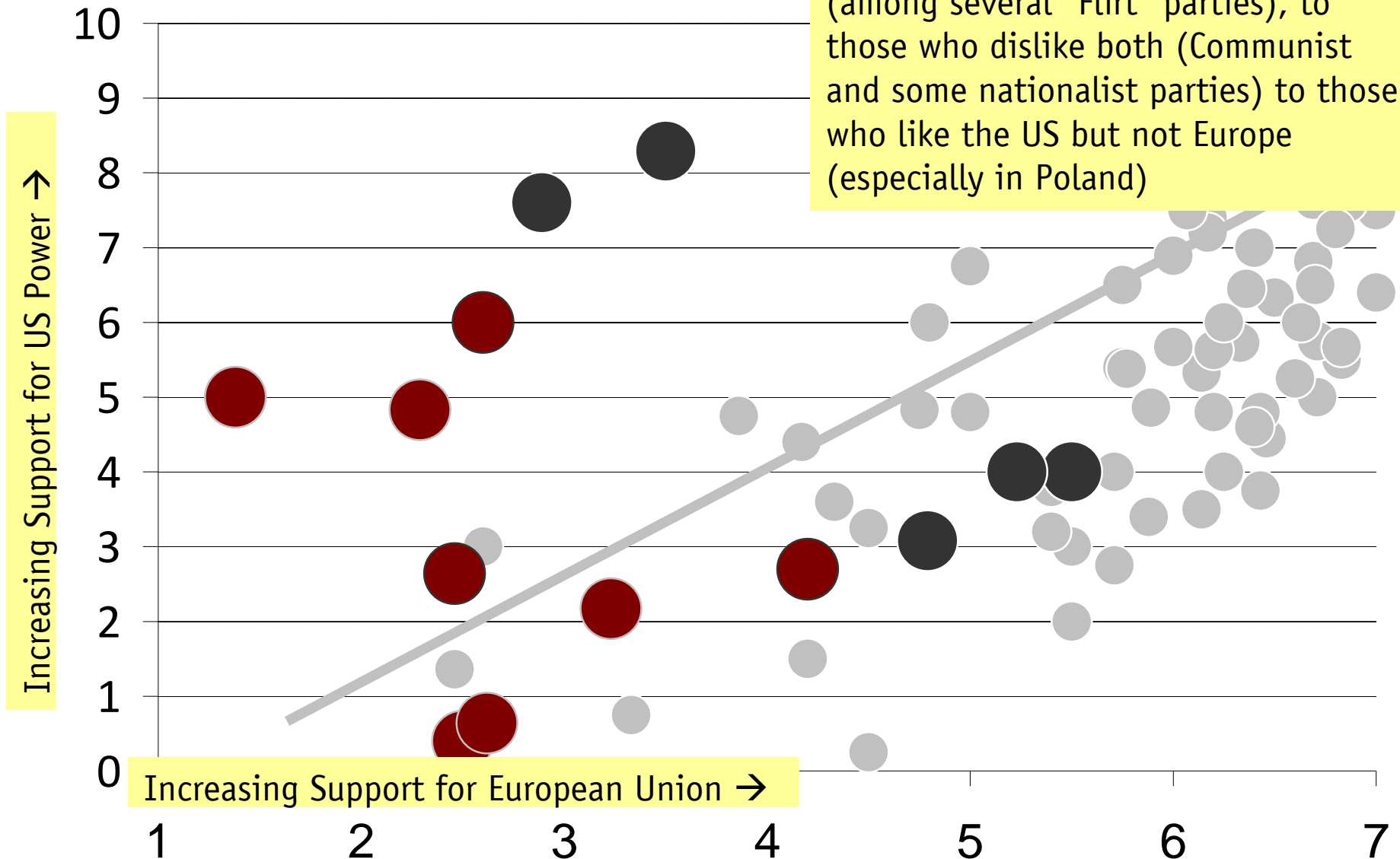


WHERE? US Power



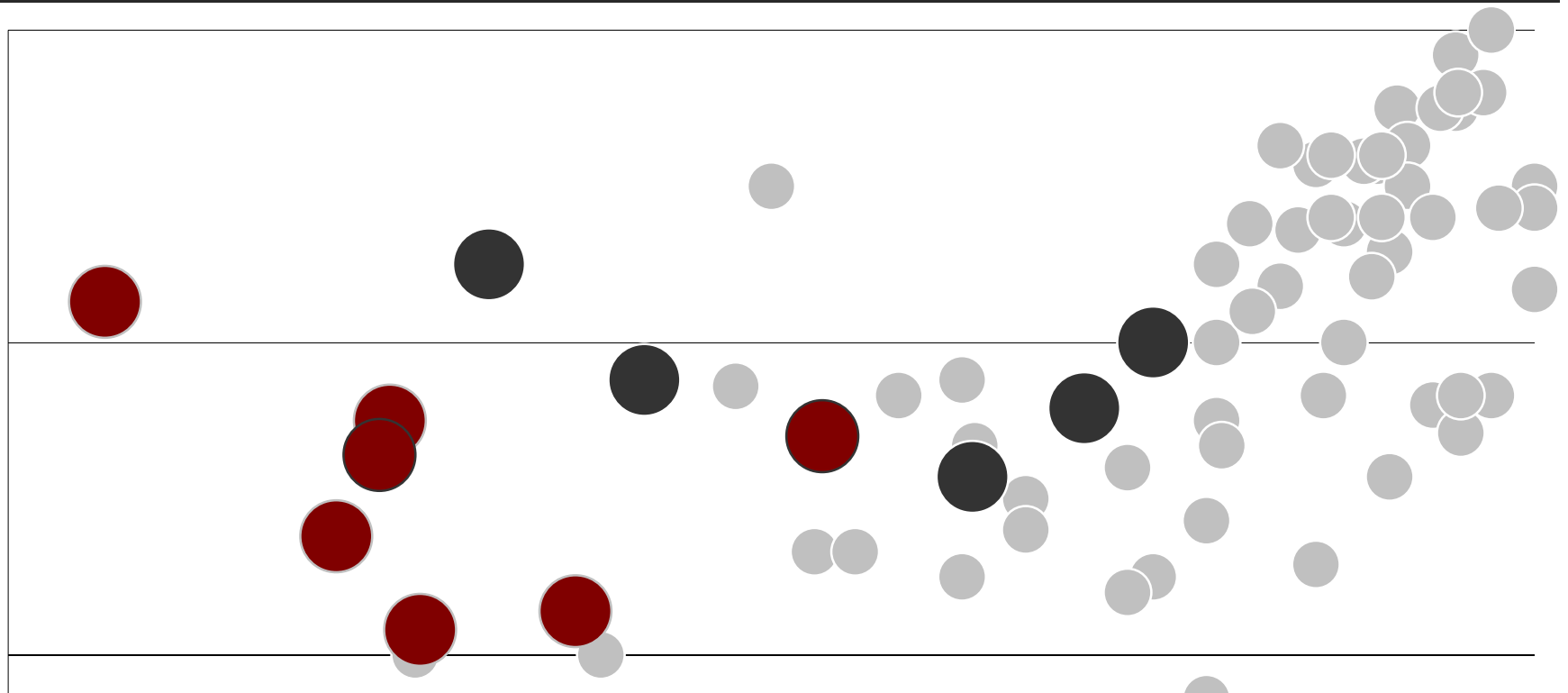
WHERE? EU v. US

Plotting opinions toward the EU (horizontal axis) and the US (vertical axis) produces a variety of positions ranging from centrists toward both (among several "Flirt" parties), to those who dislike both (Communist and some nationalist parties) to those who like the US but not Europe (especially in Poland)



WHERE? EU position v. salience

Increasing Salience of EU for Party →



It is important to note that all the parties attended-to here tend to give lower-than average salience to EU questions, suggesting that their attention is elsewhere and that (as below) foreign policy positions in extremist parties are often secondary to—and likely driven by—domestic political considerations.

Increasing Support for European Union →

1

2

3

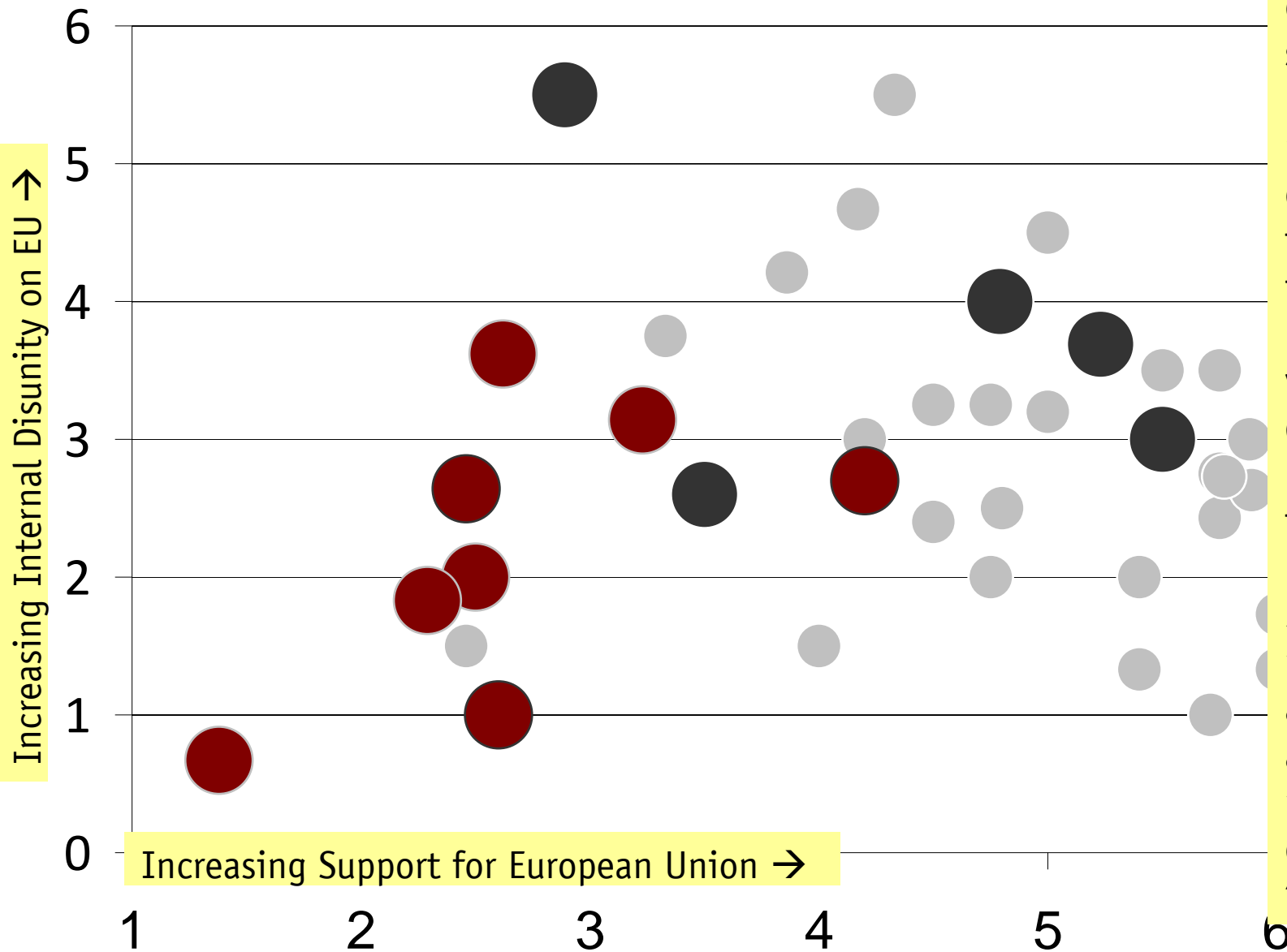
4

5

6

7

WHERE? EU position v. disu



It is also interesting to note that many of the parties studied here (especially those near the middle of the spectrum) tend to be internally divided (measured on the vertical axis) on questions of the EU, reinforcing the notion (addressed below) that parties are not always unitary actors. This is particularly true of the larger "flirt" parties.

So WHAT? Lessons Learned

Domestic \leftrightarrow Foreign

Extremists' enemies

Populists' enemies

Extremes \leftrightarrow Moderates

Intra-coalition

Intra-party

When thinking about the broader patterns and how policy-makers should approach these, it is important to note that there are two important dynamics, areas of competition whose outcome has a critical impact on party positions and government policy.

So WHAT? Lessons Learned

Domestic \leftrightarrow **Foreign**

Extremists' enemies

Populists' enemies

The first dynamic is the give and take between foreign and domestic policy arenas. While it may sometimes be the case that foreign-policy issues are highly salient and come first in the public mind, the evidence here and elsewhere (see Liang, *Europe for the Europeans*) that it is domestic policy questions—and quite often the quest for electoral advantage—that drives foreign policy positions. It is notable, however that extremism and populism have distinct patterns in this regard. In cases of purely extremism, the desire to exclude is often a genuine party goal, and parties may take foreign policy positions to reward those who dislike the same enemies or punish those who champion those enemies (as in the case of extremists increasing their opposition to the United States in response to US recognition of Kosovo, regarded as hurtful to Serbs and metaphorically as hurtful to those countries with large, regionally settled minority groups (Slovakia, Romania))

So WHAT? Lessons Learned

Domestic \leftrightarrow Foreign

Extremists' enemies

Populists' enemies

The populist dynamic can be the same as the extremist dynamic, though the populists may be more likely to employing the extremist cause for the sake of votes rather than out of genuine (this is an assumption and therefore likely to prove wrong on further investigation). The populist dynamic may also have another aspect, however that is relatively unique to populism: since populist parties (by the definition I have used) depend on attacks on a corrupt elite, they face difficulties once in power since they become elites themselves. Rather than seek alternative bases of support, the populist parties may seek instead to look for other "elites" above themselves toward whom they can allege corruption and against whom they can campaign. This may cause them to turn their attacks to major powers and supra-national organizations (the US, the EU) so that they can say, "yes we were elected, but now we're fighting the *real* corrupt elite: them"

So WHAT? Lessons Learned

There is a second key dynamic at play here: the dance between extremists and those closest to the extremists on the “non-exclusionary” side of the boundary (a boundary whose location varies depending on the perspective of the observer and the context). The extremist parties themselves are rarely strong enough to shape policy directly, but they can do so in coalition or through their influence on vote-sensitive “flirt” parties. Parties such as Slovakia’s Smer and Poland’s PiS have demonstrated a willingness to enter into coalitions with parties with similar but more extreme positions on “exclusion” issues. The question, of course, is in which direction the influence runs, whether it is the extremist parties that shape the more moderate (but often much larger variant) or the other way around. Extremist parties can also shift the positions of moderate counterparts by forcing such parties into more extreme positions to avoid the loss of voters to the extremes, but only if they think they can do so without losing centrist voters. More work on such dynamics can be found in Przeworski and Sprague’s *Paper Stones* (1986) among many others).

Extremes \leftrightarrow **Moderates**

Intra-coalition

Intra-party

So WHAT? Lessons Learned

Of course the interaction between extremists and moderates may also occur *within* individual parties and indeed most of the “flirt” parties and larger non-extremist populists have internal factions that represent a range of opinions from those near (or as extreme as) the extremist parties to those who hold rather moderate views on the same questions. The resulting policy positions depend on the complex interplay of coalition partners, intra-party organization and decision-making and voter preference. These are obviously highly contextual and so deciphering (much less predicting) these developments in particular countries requires considerable local knowledge, even as broader, big-N research can help to identify relevant variables.

Extremes \leftrightarrow Moderates

Intra-coalition

Intra-party

So WHAT? Lessons Learned

More information on these questions can be found on my blog, <http://www.pozorblog.com> I welcome comments and questions. Please use the email address listed in the "About the Author" page of the blog.



www.pozorblog.com