From McCarthyism to the Tea Party:
Interpreting Anti-Leftist Forms of U.S. Populism in Comparative Perspective

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Abstract

This paper presents an analysis of McCarthyite and Tea Party political discourse and explores the possibilities of utilizing populism as an analytic construct for making comparisons between the political and economic projects envisaged by these two conservative movements. Relying on a definition of populism as a universal discursive formation, this paper argues that there is a similar structure to the discourses of McCarthyism and the Tea Party, which relies on the construction of a "left-oriented enemy" posed as a threat to the American values of freedom and independence historically tied to the nation's "founding moment." With this comparative discursive structure established, the paper then explores the ideological differences between the movements and attempts to interpret them within a historical framework. This paper concludes by asserting that cases of populism in the immediate postwar period such as McCarthyism were short lived compared to new cases of populism such as the Tea Party, insofar as the universal discursive structure of populism, which once proved to be an exceptional phenomenon within modern forms of political rule, is now becoming part of the institutionalized structure of democratic politics, evidenced by a number of cases taken in comparative-historical perspective.

Introduction

Whether perusing the historical literature on the McCarthy controversy or the liberal media

coverage[1] of the Tea Party, one cannot avoid running into the term "populist" as an ambiguous

and unclarified, yet somehow obvious and accurate descriptor of the essential nature of these

political phenomena. Given this common usage of the term, this paper explores the following

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[1] My analysis mostly covers articles from the New York Times and BBC.

questions: What does it mean to refer to McCarthyism and the Tea Party as forms of populism? Does populism have any utility as an analytic concept in forging comparisons between these two movements, and how must the concept be refined in order to make such comparisons? And if the concept of populism is useful in making comparisons, what does the concept reveal about the role of particular cases, such as the Tea Party, in the changing structure of modern democratic politics?

In order to answer these questions, we begin with an analysis of the academic literature and newspaper articles in which McCarthyism and the Tea Party have been designated as forms of populism. From this literature, concepts such as "paranoia" and "language of the people" are introduced as key components of populism, and this paper proceeds to compare these characteristics with more general definitions of populism constructed in reference to Latin American cases and broader comparative-historical frameworks. After an evaluation of the many characteristics and definitions of populism, we arrive at a definition of populism as a universal discursive structure that is applicable to both the McCarthy and Tea Party cases. Our comparative analysis of the political discourses in these cases reveals this discursive structure as a symbolic system of relations that posits the existence of a leftist enemy/disorder, which disrupts and threatens the country's proposed legacy of freedom and independence tied to its revolutionary founding. Insofar as other cases of populism in different political contexts prove to be ideologically variable, such as the discourse of Hugo Chávez for instance, the enemy posed within the universal discursive structure does not necessarily have to signify a leftist threat. Yet within these specific cases of McCarthyite and Tea Party discourse, the enemy is represented as 'leftist' and constructed as the respective threats that communism and socialism pose to memorialized conceptions of American freedom and independence.

We use this discursive framework to construct a comparison of the similarities and differences between these movements and conclude that the most important difference between McCarthyism and the Tea Party is that McCarthyism functioned as a transitory witch-hunt based on a Manichean discourse that was never able to reproduce itself within a stable institutional political structure, whereas the discourse of the Tea Party has thoroughly infiltrated institutionalized conservative politics within the United States. When measured up against the frequency of other cases of populism emerging around the world that span the political spectrum from left to right, the relative success of the Tea Party and other current movements necessitates the acceptance that not all cases of populism represent an exceptional and aberrant phenomenon opposed to, and in confrontation with, forms of liberal democratic politics, but rather the universal discursive structure of populism, as the raw force of the 'political,' is more readily being contained and harnessed within the stable structure of democratic 'politics.'

Thus, when populism is referred to as a universal discursive structure in this paper, this does not mean that populism is a type or style of politics that simply manifests itself everywhere at all times, and in the same exact manner in each case. Rather, populism is defined here as a constitutive feature, which exists as a kind of potentiality, in the very structure of political discourse itself – that there are certain components in the symbolic constitution of political discourse, in the general sense, that tend toward the formation of a collective memory or founding moment, as well as the construction of an enemy that disrupts this moment and its historical legacy. By analyzing the historical trajectory from McCarthyism to the Tea Party, this paper argues that this symbolic structure of populism, which exists as a potentiality in all forms of political discourse, is beginning to appear more frequently in its reactionary form. In other words, the explicit demonization of the enemy as the disruption of the founding moment is

manifesting itself within the framework of democratic institutions in an increasing number of cases around the world.

McCarthyism in the Populism Literature

The term, 'populist,' was originally invoked as another name for the People's Party (or Populist Party) that emerged in the United States during the 1890s. The Populist Party was composed of Southern farmers who faced hardships under the crop-lien system and banded together to attempt to form farming cooperatives and alliances with other labor groups. They articulated a political discourse that exalted them as the common 'people' oppressed by the economic policies of elites and big business. Many historians have attempted to interpret the meaning and essence of the Populist Party in American history, such as John Hicks, Richard Hofstadter, Lawrence Goodwyn, Ferenc Szasz, Robert McMath, Michael Kazin, and Joseph Gerteis, but Hofstadter was the first to suggest an affinity between the Populist Party and McCarthyism.[2] For instance, in "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," Hofstadter writes about the paranoid style of politics that "the feeling of persecution is central, and it is indeed systematized into grandiose

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[2] John Hicks, *The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmer's Alliance and the People's Party* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961)
Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: from Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Knopf, 1955)
Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964)
Hofstadter, "North America." Pp. 9-27 in *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics* (eds.) Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969) pp. 9-27
Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Movement in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976)
Goodwyn, *The Populist Movement: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978)
Ferenc Szasz, "United States Populism." in *Latin American Populism in Comparative Perspective* (ed.) Michael Conniff. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982) pp. 191-215
Robert McMath, *American Populism: A Social History, 1877-1898* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992)
Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*. Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1995)
Joseph Gerteis, *Class and the Color Line: Interracial Class Coalition in the Knights of Labor and the Populist Movement*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007)

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theories of conspiracy," and he goes on to give side-by-side examples, first of a 1951 speech by McCarthy and then an 1895 Populist Party manifesto, which proclaim conspiracies "by men high in government" and "the international gold ring" respectively.[3]

Authors such as Szasz and Kazin have followed suit and also included McCarthyism as a case of populism in the United States. Though for them, McCarthyism does not represent a perfect fit with the legacy of populist reform dating back to the 1890s. Szasz, choosing to define populism in reference to a type of politician, writes that McCarthy did not perfectly fit the mold of the populist, but he also notes that the impact McCarthyism on American consciousness led Hofstadter to define populism, including the original People's Party, as "a retrograde movement" that "fosterd isolationism, demagoguery, anti-Catholicism, anti-Semitism, and a general anti-intellectualism."[4] For Kazin, who defines populism as a type of language that pits "ordinary people" against "elites" and attempts to "mobilize the former against the latter," the strength of McCarthy's populism emanated from his demeanor when appearing on television and his penchant for catchy sound bites.[5] Much like Szasz, Kazin has his own reservations about directly linking McCarthy's legacy to the contrastingly reformist impulse of the 1890s Populist Party. Kazin notes that the novelty of the Red Scare was that it signified the pronounced shift of populist language from the Left to the Right, and he critiques authors such as Hofstadter and Daniel Bell accordingly for forging such reductive comparisons, yet he admits that "there was a close resemblance between the "rhetoric of Populist campaigners and that of conservative anti-Communists."[6]

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[3] Hofstadter, *Paranoid Style in American Politics*, pp. 4, 7-8
[4] Szasz, "United States Populism, p. 209
[5] Kazin, *Populist Persuasion*, pp. 1, 188
[6] Ibid., pp. 4-5, 192
Daniel Bell, *The Radical Right: The New American Right* (Norwell: Anchor, 1963)

Just as there is this precedent in the literature for analyzing McCarthyism in light of the history and tradition of American populism despite some key ideological differences between the People's Party and the impetus behind the Red Scare, recent representations of the Tea Party in the liberal media have also relied on the term 'populism' as a means for understanding the discourse of this political movement in historical perspective. And once again, despite the vast ideological differences between the Tea Party and the original Populist Party, the characteristics which purportedly link these movements revolve around the use of a certain political language and rhetoric.

The Tea Party in the Media

Since the first protests in 2009, the Tea Party has often been labeled as a 'populist' movement by various news and media sources. But once again, this label is usually applied loosely with little attention to historical detail. For instance, a *New York Times* article from October of 2010, titled "D.I.Y. Populism, Left and Right," focuses in on Utah Tea Party founder, David Kirkham. The point of the article is that the heart of the Tea Party is dedicated to grass-roots organization, (a point that is now highly contested by a funding trail that leads to billionaires, see Rich and Mayer), and that this "do-it-yourself" spirit of local organizing is a constituent feature linking the Tea Party with ideological divergent liberal and progressive movements, which can be traced back to Progressive Era in American history.[7] Although the author's historical representation of

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[7] Frank Rich, "The Billionaires Banking the Tea Party" (New York Times, August 28, 2010 www.nytimes.com/2010/08/09/opinion/29rich.html)
Jane Mayer, "Covert Operations: The Billionaire Brothers Who Are Waging a War against Obama" (The New Yorker, August 30, 2010 www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/08/30/100830fa_fact_mayer)
Matt Bai, "D.I.Y. Populism, Left and Right" (New York Times, October 30, 2010 www.nytimes.com/2010/10/31/weekinreview/31bai.html?pagewanted=all)

the Progressive era here does not extend as far back as the People's Party of the 1890s, he clearly

sees the Tea Party as tied to this historical tradition, and thus his conception of 'populism' entails

micro movements that are spontaneous, perform emotions of outrage and anger, and can be

located on the left or right of the political spectrum. His characterization of populism also

alludes to the presence of strong rhetoric, and he quotes a Utah Tea Partier referring to Obama as

a "socialist" and "statist." Many news sources accordingly associate populism with strong

rhetoric and emotions, and as they trace out the current incarnations of the populist *geist*, the

source of the "outbreak" is most often tied to the fallout from recent economic crisis. It is

evidence enough to point to magazine headlines, such as *Newsweek*'s "The Thinking Man's

Guide to Populist Rage,"[8] and *Time*'s "Why Main Street Hates Wall Street."[9]

The media also frequently single out Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann as Republican

representatives of Tea Party sentiment by pointing to their pronounced anti-elitist rhetoric as

endorsement of populist convictions. In another *New York Times* article, titled "The Populist

Addiction," op-ed columnist David Brooks also makes the argument that populism emerges from

both sides of the political spectrum, and mentions John Edward's "Main Street vs. Wall Street"

rhetoric after referring to how Palin rhetorically divides America "between the real Americans

and the cultural elites."[10] Similarly, an *Al Jazeera* opinion written by Naomi Wolf, "America's

Reactionary Feminists," inquires into the appeal of Palin and Bachmann – only to find it in the

"American tradition of populist demagoguery" from which other notable figures have emerged

such as "the anti-Communist witch-hunter Joe McCarthy."[11] It follows that one of Bachmann's

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[8] Newsweek, March 30, 2009

[9] Time, Vol. 174, No. 18, 2009

[10] David Brooks, "The Populist Addiction" (New York Times, January 26, 2010
www.nytimes.com/2010/01/26/opinion/26brooks.html)

[11] Naomi Wolf, "America's Reactionary Feminists" (Al Jazeera, August 4, 2011
www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/08/2011827168800963.html)

latest throwbacks to McCarthyite rhetoric was her condemnation of members of the GOP as

"frugal socialists."[12] Even more novel, and perhaps alarming, is the fact that prominent Tea

Party figures themselves are identifying with McCarthy and trying to reinstate his once revered

patriotism, as evidenced by Glenn Beck's glowing endorsement of M. Stanton Evan's

Blacklisted by History.[13]

From this analysis it is clear that certain strands of the both the academic literature on

McCarthyism and the media focus on the Tea Party tend to classify these movements as

'populist,' seeing in American history a tradition of ideologically divergent political movements

fostering anti-elitist rhetoric and psychological/emotional states ranging from paranoia to simple

anger and outrage. But are these the only characteristics of the American populist tradition? Is it

enough to point to emotionally charged, anti-elitist rhetoric and end the analysis there? In the

next section, we will argue that the aforementioned authors in the American tradition have been

right to hone in on the "language" of populism, but that their analysis of the constituent features

of this language is not nearly as in-depth or complex as a structural analysis of populist discourse

will reveal, and that identifying populism as a discursive phenomenon with recurring structural

components solves further problems with the ambiguity of the concept and provides a framework

for more insightful comparisons between McCarthyism and the Tea Party.

Overcoming the Conceptual Dilemma of Populism

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[12] Peter Hambly, "Bachmann Targets 'Frugal Socialists' in Republican Party" (CNN Political Ticker, November 7, 2011 http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2011/11/07/bachmann-targets-frugal-socialists-in-republican-party/)

[13] M. Stanton Evans, *Blacklisted by History: The Untold Story of Senator Joe McCarthy and His Fight Against America's Enemies* (New York: Crown Forum, 2007)

In order to delineate the concept of populism and its application to historical phenomena with more precision, it is necessary to investigate how social scientists and historians have defined and applied the concept with respect to other cases and regions. It follows that Latin America is the region that has received the most attention from theorists of populism, and it is arguable that the scholarship focused on this region has produced more rigorous and systematic conceptions of populism than the scholarship focused on the cases in the United States.

The pioneering theorist of Latin American populism was Gino Germani, who analyzed aspects of the Perón administration utilizing a modernization paradigm.[14] Germani defined this type of regime as a sort of intermediate form of political organization between authoritarianism and full democratic participation insofar as it "includes contrasting components such as a claim for equality of political rights and universal participation for the common people, but fused with some sort of authoritarianism often under charismatic leadership."[15] This typology constructed within a modernization paradigm reigned dominant in Latin American studies from the mid 1960s to the late 70s, at which point Ernesto Laclau's publication of *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* initiated a discursive turn in studies of populism.[16] From his initial work to the most recent publication of *On Populist Reason*, Laclau has gone through many formulations of the structure of populist discourse, but the basic components are an antagonistic rift between the people and the power bloc or enemy, and the construction of empty signifiers, such as 'people,'

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[14] Gino Germani, *Política y Sociedad en una Epoca de Transición: De la sociedad tracicional a la sociedad de masas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Paido, 1963)
Germani, *Authoritarianism, Fascism, and National Populism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1978)

[15] Germani, *Authoritarianism, Fascism, and National Populism,* p. 88
[16] Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (London: Humanities Press, 1977)

'nation,' and 'revolution,' which link together a series of democratic demands in a chain of equivalence. [17]

Despite the fact that both the modernization and discursive paradigms have encountered substantial critiques, subsequent accounts still draw primarily from these two models in the explication of Latin American populism and its defining characteristics. [18] For instance economic approaches linking Latin American populism with import-substitution (Guillermo O'Donnell; James Malloy), political approaches focusing on underdeveloped institutions (Claudio Véliz; Carlos de la Torre), and combined approaches focusing on both neoliberalism and institutional failure (Kenneth Roberts; Kurt Weyland), all seem to derive from the central tenets of modernization theory and its teleological assumptions about economic and political development.[19] And the most current sociological approaches (Robert Jansen), which emphasize

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[17] Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (New York: Verso, 2005)
Laclau, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (New York: Verso, 1985)
Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (New York: Verso, 1990)
Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (New York: Verso, 1996)
See Howarth (2004).

[18] Concerning the modernization paradigm and its economic and political derivatives, see Laclau's (1977) critique of Germani and Di Tella, Roxborough's (1984) critique of O'Donnell and Malloy, Cammack's (1983) critique of Véliz, and a summary of all these critiques in Savage (2011).

[19] Guillermo O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1973)
James Malloy, "Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America: the Modal Pattern." in *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977) p. 3-20
Claudio Véliz, *The Centralist Tradition in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980)
Carlos de la Torre, *Populist Seduction in Latin America: The Ecuadorian Experience* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 2000)
Kenneth Roberts, "Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Populism in Latin America. The Peruvian Case," *World Politics* 48:1 (1995) pp. 82-116.
Roberts, "Social Polarization and the Populist Resurgence in Venezuela" in *Venezuelan Politics in the Chavez Era*, (eds.) Steve Ellner and Daniel Hellinger (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003) pp. 55-72
Kurt Weyland, "Populism in the Age of Neoliberalism." in *Populism in Latin America* (ed.) Michael Conniff. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1999) pp. 172-190
Weyland, "Neopoulism and Neoliberalism: How Much Affinity?" *Third World Quarterly* 24:6 (2003) pp. 1095-1115

Charles Tilly's concept of "mobilization" while attempting to still make room for discourse, can be interpreted as a revised synthesis of both paradigms.[20]

Critiques have been leveled at Laclau's discursive paradigm from the majority of populism's many region-based theorists. The substance of these critiques revolves around the over-applicability of the paradigm (in other words, what cases would not count as populism?), the fact that Laclau's ontological orientation precludes a rigorous empirical analysis (David Howarth), and that his linguistic monism discounts the effects of other important socio-historical processes (Ritchie Savage).[21] But despite all of these critiques, only the discursive paradigm has generated a unified theory leading to historical research in which comparisons can be made across regions.[22] That is to say, as of yet, the three regions with the most academic scholarship on populism are the United States, Latin America, and Western Europe (Margaret Canovan; Paul Taggart), and a discourse-oriented approach alone promises the capability of maintaining a common denominator between the multitude of divergent cases labeled populist.[23]

The reason that the discursive approach proves to be the most widely applicable of paradigms for analyzing populism is because other models are constructed primarily with reference to Latin American cases, and still contain assumptions about the specific nature of Latin American political development taken from modernization theory. Of these models, ones that emphasize notions of institutional failure and mobilization in their characterization of the

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[20] Robert Jansen, "Populist Mobilization: A New Theoretical Approach to Populism," *Sociological Theory* 29:2 (2011) 75-96.

[21] David Howarth, "Hegemony, Political Subjectivity, and Radical Democracy" in *Laclau: A Critical Reader* (eds.) Simon Critchley and Oliver Marchart. New York: Routledge, 2004) pp. 256-276
Ritchie Savage. "Populist Elements in Contemporary American Political Discourse." in *Sociological Roots and Political Routes* (eds.) Michaela Benson and Rolland Munro. (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) pp. 169-188

[22] See Westlind's (1996) comparison of Perot's campaign with Sweden's New Democracy and the various studies in the Panizza (2005) reader.

[23] Margaret Canovan, *Populism*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980)
Canovan, *The People* (Malden: Polity Press, 2005)
Paul Taggart "New Populist Parties in Western Europe," *West European Politics* 18:1 (1995) pp. 34-51.

causes or actions associated with populism fundamentally rely on the premise of existing unincorporated and marginalized sectors in society.[24] This implies a situation in which democratic structures and institutions such as those that link civil society to the state have either failed, or have never been formally established, and that there is a substantial portion of the population that is for the most part excluded from political rights and representation. The idea that the formation of democratic institutions lagged behind processes of modernization during the early twentieth-century in Latin America, creating a kind of uneven political development when compared to, say, countries in Western Europe, is not completely unfounded, nor should one deny the fact that these processes still have effects on contemporary Latin America politics. But even in Latin American scholarship, this is readily becoming an antiquated model, which is pejoratively associated with modernization insofar as it discounts, in its reductionist view of political development, a counter-history and contemporary focus on the development of a robust civil society and traditions of democratic participation.[25] And beyond Latin American cases, a model that relies on the presence of unincorporated and marginalized sectors does not provide for much of any comparison to cases of populism emerging in the United States, such as the Tea Party, which neither appeals to, nor emerges from, marginalized sectors.

If only the discursive approach to populism remains tenable, especially with respect to the ideologically and organizationally divergent cases of McCarthyism and the Tea Party, the question remains of how to reconstruct such a model that moves beyond the shortcomings of Laclau's work, while simultaneously elucidating the empirical aspects of these cases and generating more fruitful comparisons.

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[24] Jansen, "Populist Mobilization," p. 82

[25] Carlos Forment, *Democracy in Latin America, 1760-1900, Civic Selfhood and Public Life in Mexico and Peru*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003)

Discursive Applications

We must revisit the basic components of Laclau's theory and evaluate their relevance in terms of how they measure up against the characteristics of McCarthyism and Tea Party discourse. The first component necessary in Laclau's recipe for populism is the formation of an antagonism between the people and the power bloc or enemy, and we have seen this feature of populist discourse in both McCarthyism and the Tea Party. In McCarthy's speeches it was the political elites, "men in high levels of government" from prominent East Coast Anglo-Saxon families that were the effeminate Communist enemies threatening the values of hardworking, middle-class, Midwestern, German and Irish Catholic, common tough guys like "Joe" himself. For Tea Party-courting politicians such as Palin, this antagonist rift is evident in how she divides "the country between the real Americans and the cultural elites."

The second aspect of populist discourse for Laclau is the formation of empty signifiers such as the 'people.' Clearly all of the movements in the tradition of American populism have exalted the common people, but there is a potential problem with examples of empty signifiers that Laclau often repeats, such as 'people,' 'nation,' and 'revolution' insofar as they are all overwhelmingly positive-laden signifiers. From an examination of the discourses of McCarthyism and the Tea Party it is clear that the respective signifiers 'communist' and 'socialist' play a much more salient role in organizing the discourse. As McCarthy stated in a speech published in 1950, "In my opinion the State Department, which is one of the most important government departments, is thoroughly infested with communists."[26] The main theme of the speech does construct an antagonistic rift "in a final, all-out battle between communistic

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[26] Joseph McCarthy, Speech on Communists in the State Department, 1951 (www.civics-online.org/library/formatted/texts/mccarthy.html) accessed January 2012

atheism and Christianity," but where words Christian and Christianity are only mentioned five times, communist and communism are mentioned a total of twenty-one times in a 2,332 word excerpt from the speech. In the same way one is reminded of how Bachmann has admonished the "frugal socialists" in the Republican Party or how Kirkham labels Obama a "socialist" and a "statist."

The third feature of Laclau's notion of populism is that empty signifiers such as the 'people' organize and link together a series of democratic demands that were previously isolated. There is no clear evidence of this in McCarthyism insofar as it was based more directly on a conspiracy theory that resonated with people's anxieties, fears, and fantasies rather than a positive slogan that embodied their democratic demands. Laclau's theory is consistent with the Tea Party case insofar as their top ten demands can be found right on the homepage of one of their popular websites, Contract from America, and the Tea Party's demands to reduce taxes are clearly related to the experience of the original Boston Tea Party.[27] But once again, the demands of the movement are not so much organized around a positive slogan, such as the role "99%" has played in OWS for instance, and neither emancipatory signifiers nor democratic demands are the central organizing features of these discourses.

McCarthyite and Tea Party discourses have more distinctly Manichean themes than simply pitting the people against a common enemy; these discourses demonize the enemy, and this demonization, which represents opponents or enemies as illegitimate political actors, organizes their discourses. Laclau has fallen short of articulating this in his theory of empty signifiers. To be sure, 'communist' and 'socialist' are empty signifiers in the sense of their correspondence to the central tenets of Saussurean, Lacanian, and Althusserian theory, but they

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[27] http://www.thecontract.org/, accessed January 2012

do not embody positive hopes and demands. Rather, they signify disorder, infection, and in McCarthy's language, "infestation." It follows that what 'communism' and 'socialism' infest, disrupt, and corrupt is an American tradition of values tied to the collective memory of the nation's founding moment, and it is this salient memorial aspect of populist discourse that is entirely absent from Laclau's theory.

This analysis of McCarthyism and the Tea Party and their specific discursive attributes necessitates the following reformulated and thereby applicable theory of the structural components of populist discourse. Through a synthesis and modification of the first two aspects of Laclau's theory (antagonism and empty signifier) we substitute a conception of the "left-oriented enemy" as the central organizing trope of populist discourse, found in signifiers such as 'communist' and 'socialist,' as it concerns our two cases. These signifiers reveal the "anti-leftist" orientation of our cases, taking into consideration that 'left' here is only relationally defined as the enemy or opposition to the founding democratic legacy, and thus is not fixed by any specific content. Hence, the second modification constitutes the most substantial break from Laclau's concept of discourse and is found in the trope of the "founding moment" of the nation. This founding moment is a fabrication constituted through the social construction of a collective memory recalling key events in the American Revolution and framing of the constitution that signify the development of a unique American legacy and tradition of strong values. These values are represented in signifiers such as 'liberty,' 'freedom,' and 'independence,' and they are linked together in a narrative that traces itself back to America's point of origin in events such as the revolutionary break from England, the Boston Tea Party, and the writing of the constitution.

This modified populist discursive framework explains key aspects of McCarthyite and Tea Party logic with more empirical depth. By linking together the structural components of the

left-oriented enemy and the founding moment, we can begin to understand how the left-oriented enemy/disorder is constructed as the disruption of the legacy emanating from the founding moment. This provides new insight into phenomena such as Bachmann's self-branding as a "constitutional conservative," which conjures up the framers' concerns with limiting state power as a way to delegitimate and demonize federal spending and government-based social services under the rubric of 'socialism.' It also sheds some light on possible interpretations of why McCarthy's attacks were leveled at "Anglo-Saxons" like Hiss and Acheson and not Jews, Italians and other southern and eastern European immigrants as in the first Red Scare. Just as our Anglo-Saxon forefathers provided the constitutional framework guaranteeing the rights to economic liberties and private property that secured the prosperity of subsequent generations of immigrant groups, including McCarthy's own ancestors, so to were the ancestors of our forefathers, including elites such as Hiss and Acheson, responsible for keeping "the true aliens—the southern and eastern European immigrants and their progeny—in line."[28] Thus their alleged communist actions were even more deplorable than the anarchist activities of Jewish and Italian immigrants targeted during the first Red Scare.

This constant reference back to the "founding moment," which characterizes these two cases, reveals the significance of the 'backward-looking' nature that dominates populist forms of discourse. It might also remind one of the 'mytho-historical' character that Claude Lefort attributes to the social imaginary in "Novelty and the Appeal of Repetition:"

> Thought may well be able to free itself from certain images; but what resists this attempt is the relation that we maintain with the representation of the past, the mythical function that we make it play in order to assure ourselves of a truth which is already given and which will not betray us, in order to conjure away, in sum, the indeterminacy which constantly re-emerges in the history that we live.[29]

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[28] Gary Gerstle. *American Crucible* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) p. 255

[29] Claude Lefort, The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, and Totalitarianism (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986) p. 124

In this sense, perhaps Hofstadter was not so off base in insisting on the 'retrograde' character of populist movements, as a feature which united both the People's Party and the later Red Scare, despite their ideologically divergent progressive and conservative tendencies. Perhaps any political movement that constructs this mythical founding moment out of the past, no matter how progressive, will always contain a kernel of this 'conservative' character – not in the sense of wanting to return to the past, but rather that the 'founding moment' corresponds to Jacques Lacan's conception of 'fantasy,' which, in Slavoj Žižek's political reading, constructs a pure moment out of the illusion of a once existing unified society that would otherwise be perfect if not for the disruption or disorder represented by the 'enemy.'[30]

Internal and External Threats

Now that we have a sense of the main structural similarities in the populist discourses associated with our two cases, we can move on to other comparisons between McCarthyism and the Tea Party, organized around the two components of our modified discursive structure. Let us begin with the "left-oriented enemy." It is true that both cases are characterized by anti-leftist discourses, but how far do the similarities run between their respective forms of anti-leftism?

The fact that McCarthyism targets 'communism' and the Tea Party targets 'socialism' as the enemy leads one to a series of important ideological differences between the two movements in how they construct the relationship between their economic and political ends. The central economic message imparted by both movements is the same – capitalism, free markets, private property, and privatization are good, and forms of state-controlled economies and markets are

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[30] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1966/2006)
Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1989)

bad. And once again, this is integrally tied in a discursive logic to the mythical "founding moment" of our nation, which set up the economic and political values of freedom and liberty that define our uniquely American legacy. However, the similarities between the economic and political dimensions of these pro-capitalist ideologies end here, and in fact, a key difference between McCarthyite and Tea Party discourse lies in the further articulation of the role of the state tied to our American legacy. Whereas McCarthyism promoted the role of a strong state, or a "state-building ideology," common for this time in American history during the Cold War, the Tea Party obviously endorses a "state-dismantling ideology." Gerstle explains this delicate balance between the pro-capitalism and strong-state ideological aspects during the McCarthy era in noting the difficulty of mounting a "radical economic critique" leveled at corporations despite the fact that the Cold War also "dampened conservative opposition to big government" and continued the legacy of New Deal era reforms.[31] Contrastingly, the Tea Party has no qualms about engaging in a radical economic critique leveled at corporations, as they have even fully adopted the "Main Street vs. Wall Street" discourse previously articulated by Democrats such as Edwards. In fact, the noticeable presence of Tea Partiers, Ron Paul supporters, and other libertarians at the different Occupy Movement hubs across the country has led OWS-supporting intellectuals, such as Žižek to declare about the Tea Party that we should embrace them, because despite the fact that "they are stupid… they are on our side."[32]

An important question concerns why the Tea Party, when compared to McCarthyism, has no reservations about embracing a radical "state-dismantling ideology." To answer this question we have to look at the different historical contexts of the two eras, from the Cold War era emphasis on forging links between internal and external threats, to the fall of the Berlin Wall and

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[31] Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 241

[32] Aaron Gell, "Slavoj Žižek Speaks to Occupy Wall Street," (The New York Observer, October 9, 2011www.observer.com/2011/10/slavoj-zizek-speaks-to-occupy-wall-street/)

an emerging neoliberal economic and political context in which right-wing advocacy groups are able to play off of voters' fears and hardships in order to mobilize them around ideologies of deregulation as a response to the internal threat of socialism. It follows that in the discourse of McCarthyism, communists simultaneously constituted internal and external threats. McCarthy believed they had "infested" the State Department and threatened our security in a more "insidious" way regarding policy, and these Communists also followed the dictates of the external threat represented by what McCarthy often referred to as "Russian imperialism."[33] Thus, once again, this external threat attributed to the "left-oriented enemy" is intertwined with the logic of the mythical "founding moment." Just as we broke from the yoke of British colonialism and accordingly punished the treacherous Benedict Arnolds, so too must we stave off Russian imperialism and purge traitors such as Hiss and Acheson, and as Gerstle notes, a strong surveillance state was needed to accomplish this goal.

For the Tea Party, however, socialism for the most part constitutes an internal threat. Politicians such as Bachmann and organizers like Kirkham are more concerned with the socialism present in our own government and represented by political heavyweights from Obama to Romney. It is important here to take into account that the Tea Party first emerged in 2009 after the election of Obama and specifically in response to the passing of "ObamaCare." The Tea Party first presented itself as a grassroots movement that equated Obama and "ObamaCare" with "socialism" and retroactively reinterpreted the economic crisis, already in full effect, in light of these perceived failures, which they attributed to experiments in socialist policies supported by both parties within the federal government. However this grassroots outrage and linkage between Obama and "socialism" was also manipulated by already existing right-wing

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[33] McCarthy, Speech on Communists in the State Department, 1951

advocacy groups and billionaires looking to further mobilize the vast Tea Party networks and organizations around these same policies against "socialism," which also serve their economic agendas of further privatization and deregulation.[34] This demonized discursive construction of "socialism" thus only constitutes an internal threat, supposedly present within the policies supported by the President and the federal government itself.

If there is, however, a set of consistently posited external threats articulated by Tea Party constituents, they are represented by Islamicism and immigration and the purposeful construction of their metonymic contiguity, and we have seen this discourse endorsed from the more fascist-leaning Tea Party enthusiasts in the Christian and evangelical right, including Glenn Beck, Pat Robertson, and Brigitte Gabriel. [35] Within this context, we can understand why Glenn Beck would write about Evan's glorification of McCarthy, "America, please read this book," insofar as Beck's defense of Christianity against the threat of Islamicism is not too far removed from McCarthy's defense of Christianity against "communistic atheism."[36]

It follows that one significant problem the Tea Party has, when compared with the relative success of the McCarthy contagion, is the inability to link up the internal and external threats posited in their discourse. If the Tea Party could directly link up government socialism with Islamicism, they might be more effective in inducing a McCarthyite paranoia. The conservative attitude toward Obama's citizenship and American identity, including Donald Trump's formal inquiry, suggests the potentiality for such associations to be made. Dinesh D'Souza's claim of the "anticolonialism" evident in Obama's economic decisions to

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[34] Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012)

[35] Lauren Goodstein, "Drawing U.S. Crowds with Anti-Islam Message," (New York Times, March 7, 2011 www.nytimes.com/2011/03/08/us/08gabriel.html?pagewanted=all)

[36] Glenn Beck's review of Blacklisted by History (www.amazon.com/Blacklisted-History-Senator-McCarthy-Americas/dp/140008105X accessed January, 2012)

"decolonize" "investment banks" and the "health sector," which was reinforced by Newt Gingrich, also gestures toward forging this link.[37] The fact that these links are typically implied or only hinted at, as well as the distance of these claims from any unified party position, reveal, once again, that the Tea Party is a fluid phenomenon and a moving target for any analytical construction that would apprehend it. Insofar as the Tea Party overlaps with "Birthers," there is concern for an external enemy constructed as "radical Islam," yet whether this concern resonates in a consensus or functions as a consistent position among Tea Partiers is more difficult to determine. Bachmann's comments alleging that Hillary Clinton's aid, Huma Adebin, has connections to the Muslim Brotherhood seem to suggest that the Tea Party could be headed in this direction. However, the mainstream Republican Party has been quick to distance itself from this looming paranoia, which the media has aptly characterized as on the 'McCarthy level.'[38] On a symbolic and discursive level, however, it is clear that Obama's citizenship functions to bolster the fear of a socialist conspiracy at home insofar as his "uncertain" citizenship and religious faith adds credence to the belief in the "foreignness" of his administration's policies, such as "ObamaCare." This demonization and externalization of the enemy is a key feature of the movement and point of comparison between our two cases, but the Tea Party and its discourse reveal something beyond the level of paranoia traditionally attributed to McCarthyism. More than a movement that simply employs a Manichean discourse, the Tea Party represents one of many cases that signal a transformation in the nature of institutionalized politics in the United States and beyond.

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[37] Dinesh D'Souza, "How Obama Thinks," (Forbes.com, September 27, 2010 http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2010/0927/politics-socialism-capitalism-private-enterprises-obama-business-problem_print.html)

[38] "Republicans Attack Bachmann Muslim Conspiracy Letter," (BBC, July 9, 2012 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-18918597)

The Big Différance

Perhaps the most important set of findings generated by the comparison between McCarthyism

and the Tea Party is that despite some of the discursive similarities between these movements,

the historical legacy of the former movement and the advent of the latter suggest different

relations to, and effects within, the realm of institutionalized politics. With the results of the

2010 midterm elections, it became apparent that far from being an amorphous grassroots

movement, which politicians attempt to court, the Tea Party had become thoroughly embedded

within institutionalized politics. In contrast, McCarthyism and its Red Scare represented more of

a contagion and witch-hunt, focused on purging Communists through a strong discursive appeal

to the people, which did have its state-level repercussions in the form of interrogations, trials,

and the formation of the House Un-American Activities Committee, as well as McCarthy's

influence on Truman and Eisenhower's foreign policy.[39] Yet as a form of populist discourse, it

never became a self-reproducing political force capable sustaining its interests within the agenda

of the Republican Party.[40] Michael Rogin writes, "McCarthy continually appealed to the mass of

people for direct support over the heads of their elected leaders," and that this "popular

democracy constituted a real threat to the making of responsible political decisions."[41] Thus in

the cultivation of a direct appeal to the people that circumvented both elected officials and the

liberal democratic institutions in which their power was represented, McCarthy's discourse and

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[39] Richard Rovere, *Senator Joe McCarthy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959/1996)

[40] As a result of McCarthyism, one could argue that *anti-communism* became institutionalized within the Republican Party, especially with respect to the political discourse of conservatives like Barry Goldwater, but not *populism*, per se. Goldwater's anti-communism does not correspond to the same populist discursive structure identified here insofar as it was primarily focused on the external threat of communism, especially in Asia, and it did not link up this external threat with an internal threat that was destroying the historical legacy of the nation in the same way that McCarthy asserted.

[41] Michael Paul Rogen, *The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical Specter* (Massachussets: M.I.T. Press, 1967) pp. 2-3

its symbolic 'political' content may have resonated with the heart of American political consciousness at the time, but it was never able to transition from an "assault" on the "political fabric" supported by civil society to aligning itself with a set of interests within institutionalized politics. The Tea Party, however, has proven capable of sustaining its interests, insofar as it has penetrated all three spheres that traditionally define society from a social scientific perspective (the state, the market, and civil society), and through a functional symbiosis and institutional alignment of interests between these spheres, it has crossed the threshold of the 'political' into formal politics.

In a recent analysis of the Tea Party, Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson attempt to clearly explicate how the Tea Party functions in relation to each of these spheres. They describe the Tea Party as running the gamut from the local to the national, and as funding GOP candidates as well as being funded by billionaires in a network of organizations, including the Tea Party Patriots, Tea Party Express, Freedom Works, and Americans for Prosperity, among others, in which there appears to be no center.[42] What we can gather from this analysis is that the prominence of the Tea Party, from its beginnings in grassroots coalitions and events, to its eventual cooptation and support by previously existing right-wing institutions, represents a fundamental alteration in the structure of processes and lines of influence that define conservative politics in the U.S. Yet even though the Tea Party, which is far from constituting a unified phenomenon, exists in complex framework of overlapping institutions and spheres of influence, what interests us in terms of the comparison with McCarthyism is how the Tea Party, like many other instances of contemporary political movements around the world, is able to

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[42] Skocpol and Williamson, *Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, pp. 83-84

contain this same unconscious kernel of the 'political,' in terms of a harsh and emotionally-charged Manichean discourse, within a stable system of institutionalized politics.

Populism as the Political

Recent advances made in the political theory of populism are beginning to shake off the dust of modernization theory by providing a perspective that does not view populism as necessarily backward, aberrant, and exceptional, but rather as more thoroughly imbedded in essence of the 'political' itself. Particularly emblematic of this paradigm shift is Laclau's remark that "populism is the royal road to understanding something about the ontological constitution of the political as such" – his point being that populism is one of the most overt examples of, but also corresponds to, the same unconscious discursive structure, which is at the heart of all forms of politics.[43] In a similar sense, Margaret Canovan, Francisco Panizza, and Benjamin Arditi describe populism with reference to a "shadow," "mirror," and "spectre" of democracy, also suggesting that populism exists, in an ontological schema of classification, closer to democracy than theorists have traditionally acknowledged.[44] Furthermore, theories of populism that draw either fully (Jansen) or in part (de la Torre) from Tilly's concept of mobilization, combined with increasing attention to the role of civil society in Latin American cases studies (de la Torre; Forment; Steve Ellner) and new cases of viral politics in the "Arab Spring, European Summer

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[43] Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, p. 67

[44] Canovan, "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy" *Political Studies*, 47:1 (1999) pp. 2-16
Francisco Panizza, "Introduction: Populism and the Mirror of Democracy" in *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy* (ed.) Francisco Panizza. New York: Verso, 2005) pp. 1-31
Benjamin Arditi, "Populism as an Internal Periphery of Democratic Politics" in *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy* (ed.) Francisco Panizza. New York: Verso, 2005) Pp. 72-98
Arditi, *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism: Difference, Populism, Revolution, and Agitation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007)

and U.S. Fall" (Arditi) can be interpreted as leading to the conclusion that populism, alongside and constitutive with other new forms of democratic politics, is happening on the ground.[45]

Previous to the unfolding of this realization, modernization-centric theories traced back to the work of Germani, viewed populism as a form of political rule that was the product of a different development opposed to what would be considered the 'normal' trajectory and development of liberal democratic politics. This normal development was viewed as incompatible with the experience of Latin American countries, where former peasant subjects previously dominated by a landed oligarchy entered into urban centers as free persons with new desires for rights and privileges as citizens – desires which were not able to be realized within the political institutional framework insofar as the development of this framework lagged far behind the rapid process of modernization and urban centralization. The rise of populist demagogues, such as Cárdenas, Perón, and Vargas, was interpreted within the classic trope of the caudillo, cultivating and mobilizing the support of the people by dispensing resources and favors through clientalist networks in lieu of the presence of a robust civil society with effective democratic institutions. The presence of these populist figures was viewed as transient as they moved in and out of office, often reelected, but rarely serving consecutive terms. They constituted an exception, not to the possibility of liberal democracy, but in a temporal sense, as they flourished after the legacy of traditional dictatorships yet before the swift arrival of bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes (O'Donnell), and in a formal sense, as they experimented

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[45] Jansen, "Populist Mobilization"
de la Torre, "Populist Seduction in Latin America"
Forment, *Democracy in Latin America*
Steve Ellner, *Rethinking Venezuelan Politics: Class, Conflict, and the Chávez Phenomenon* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008)
Arditi "Insurgencies Don't Have a Plan – They Are the Plan: Political Performatives and Vanishing Mediators in 2011," *JOMEC Journal* Issue 1 (June 2012)

with policies and forms of political control that blended authoritarianism with democratic participation (Germani).[46]

Against the modernization theory that perceives populism as a somehow pathological or deviant outbreak in regions of dependent capitalist development, from the 'normal' trajectory of liberal democratic politics in the capitalist metropoles, Arditi provides a reading of populism as a "symptom" of democratic politics – a framework which provides an understanding populism that can move beyond the scope of classical Latin American cases and links to authoritarianism.[47] The novelty of his approach is that it differentiates between three modes of populism. The first mode is "fully compatible with the institutional regime form of liberal-democratic politics," and the second mode "shifts the focus to the more turbulent ways of expressing demands, articulating collective wills or performing political exchanges behind the procedural normality of democratic politics."[48] Much like Canovan's distinction between "politician's populism" and "reactionary populism," Arditi's conception of populism breaks with the notion that instances of populism must necessarily exist in a state predominately opposed to and in confrontation with mainstream politics, and between Arditi's two gradations of populism as "mainstream" and "symptom," we could begin to analyze how they apply to the discourse and institutional practices of the Tea Party.[49]

However, Arditi also posits a third mode of populism "as the underside of democracy," which is constructed in order to account for how instances of populism can be linked to authoritarian forms of rule.[50] This third mode thus represents Artditi's attempt to distinguish

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[46] O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism*
Germani, *Authoritarianism, Fascism, and National Populism*
[47] Arditi, *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism*, p. 74
[48] Ibid., p. 60
[49] Canovan, *Populism*, p. 13
[50] Arditi, *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism*, p. 81

between what he refers to as the "democratic and undemocratic variants" of populism.[51] And

herein lies the problem with Arditi's approach, which is that he constructs three different modes

of populism on a scale from liberal democratic to authoritarian, with the "symptom" only

corresponding to the middle mode between the two extremes. In this sense, Arditi's analysis of

populism as "symptom" begins to fall short of empirical resonance with cases, such as that of the

Tea Party, as he continues to locate the "symptom" of populism at the "edge" of liberal

democratic politics. More succinctly, for Arditi, the "symptom" of populism still exists outside

of, and in contradiction with, "the presumed normality of institutional procedures."[52] Would it

not be more accurate to locate the "symptom" of populism, as the unconscious and discursive

presence of the 'political' in the social imaginary, as a phenomenon present in all three modes of

populism, which calls into question this very differentiation between modes of populism in the

first place? The limitations of this theoretical approach thus stem from the fact that although

Arditi explicates his "symptomatology" by beginning with Freudian theory that is then extended

to politics through a reading of Žižek, Arditi's theory still confines itself primarily to a Freudian

framework and fails to embrace Žižek's reading of Lacan, which compels us to "identify with the

symptom."[53]

And it is from this point that we state our main argument concerning the importance of

analyzing the Tea Party as a case of populism – that it is both problematic as well as theoretically

limited and reductive to classify the Tea Party as a simply reactionary and irrational form of

'abnormal' politics in its embodiment of the "symptom," whereas the common populist

discursive structure of this political formation, taken together with overwhelming evidence of its

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[51] Ibid., p. 59

[52] Ibid., p. 74

[53] Žižek, "Against the Populist Temptation," *Critical Inquiry*: 32:3 (2006) pp. 551-574.

institutional presence and effects, in actuality, reveals something about the normal trajectory of modern politics. If we are to truly heed Žižek's Lacanian call to "identify with the symptom," would this not entail moving beyond characterizations of the Tea Party as 'symptomatic' or 'abnormal' in order to interpret contestations to institutionalized politics from within an institutionalized political framework (i.e. the conservative rebranding of conservatism) as concomitant with the normal and regular functioning of political processes?

Our argument is then that one can locate the "symptom" in all cases of populism, and that this "symptom" constitutes more than "an internal element of the democratic system that also reveals the limits of the system" (Arditi 2007:74).[54] The symptom also corresponds to the raw force of the 'political,' which is the discursive or symbolic link that is made, in cases such as McCarthyism and the Tea Party, between the "left oriented enemy" and the "founding moment," coupled with the unconscious resonance of this discursive link. The point then is not to distinguish between different cases of populism with reference to their respective places along a continuum of forms of rule from liberal democracy to authoritarianism, but rather to empirically analyze the ways in which the 'political,' or the unconscious appeal of the discursive structure, becomes integrated in various ways within different systems of institutionalized 'politics' – playing here, as many have already done, on Lefort's distinction between the '*le politique*' (the political) and '*la politique*' (politics).[55]

This revised theoretical framework allows us many entry points back into a comparative-historical analysis of cases of populism. It first allows us to retroactively describe, once again, the essential difference between the McCarthyite and Tea Party populist cases, being that the

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[54] Arditi, *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism*, p. 74
[55] Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) p. 216

unconscious symbolic link between the enemy and the founding moment, which corresponds to the 'political,' was never able to reproduce itself in a sustaining manner within institutionalized 'politics' in the case of McCarthyism; whereas in the Tea Party, the cries against "socialism" from our supposed "constitutional foundation" have found a sustained voice in a complex institutional matrix of lines of funding and influence. Secondly, this framework for examining the relationship between the 'political' and 'politics' will allow us to make comparisons between the Tea Party and recently emerging cases of Latin American populism such as *Chavismo*, which is also able to contain this unconscious discursive linkage between the enemy and founding moment within a system of institutionalized politics, however different from our accepted liberal democratic model. And finally, this framework will allow us to compare classical cases of populism spanning the political spectrum in both the United States and Latin America, to new forms of populism utilizing this same link between the 'political' and 'politics,' in order to argue for the presence of a phenomenon, which is the increased frequency of cases of institutionalized populism around the world.

New Institutionalized Populism in Comparative Perspective

As many theorists have suggested in their various stage theories of populism, the era of "classical populism" is over. In the way we define it here, classical populism corresponds to those cases of populist discourse, which began to emerge in the mid-twentieth century, in Latin America and the United States. These cases, including the widely acknowledged administrations of Cárdenas (Mexico, 1934-40), Perón (Argentina, 1946-55), and Vargas's second term (Brazil, 1951-54), as well as an outlier example like McCarthyism, revealed diverse ideological orientations from left

to right, and sometimes an oscillation between these orientations. And in terms of the constituent features of these movements, the Red Scare, as a contagion fueled by the discourse of a congressman, seems radically different when compared with the Latin American cases, which are typically characterized by a "top-down" appeal to the people from a highly personalistic and centralized form of leadership. But these movements have two very important similarities: (1) the employment a Manichean discourse, which demonizes the enemy and glorifies the founding moment; (2) the fact that these movement were all relatively short-lived and subsequently not able to reproduce this 'political' discourse within an enduring system of political institutions.

After this classical wave of Latin American populism came the rise of more staunch dictatorships as well as bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes.[56] When faced with the veritable extinction of classical Latin American populism, theorists such as Paul Drake even considered whether one might have a "requiem for populism."[57]

Just as the political medics were about to call "time of death," the mid to late 1980s witnessed a resurgence of what political theorists were again referring to as populism, once again in a sense that had some degree of affinity or continuity with old forms, yet also in a new sense that implied a transformation in modern politics characterized by new ideological forms and institutional alignments. Concerning cases in Western Europe, Taggart coined the term "New Populism" linking a series of nascent party development to "a rising tide of right-wing extremism," also noting that "all these parties have combined elements of nationalism with neo-liberal economic policies."[58] And with reference to new forms of Latin American populism,

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[56] O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism*

[57] Paul Drake, "Requiem for Populism?" in *Latin American Populism in Comparative Perspective* (ed.) Michael Conniff (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982) Pp. 217-245

[58] Taggart, "New Populist Parties in Western Europe," pp. 34-35

Roberts and Weyland used the term, "neopopulism," to refer to the administrations of political figures such as Menem (Argentina), Fujimori (Peru), Collor (Brazil), Bucaram (Ecuador), and Pérez (Venezuela), which were also associated with neoliberal economic policy developments.[59] But once again, due to the fact that these regimes relied on highly personalistic and centralized forms of leadership, they often resulted in institutional failures and were short-lived.

However, the late 1990s signaled yet another transformation in cases of populism with the rise of Hugo Chávez (Venezuela), and more currently with Evo Morales (Bolivia) and Raphael Correa (Ecuador). These administrations have been characterized as "post-neoliberal regimes" in their left-wing orientation as they experiment with forms of socialism and participatory democracy.[60] And what is radically different about these regimes for the purpose of our comparison, besides their ideological orientation, is the fact that they have found new ways institutionalize the populist essence of the 'political,' and have thus proven a more enduring legacy, especially in the case of Chávez, who has been in power for over thirteen years. As a counter to the traditionally accepted model of Western liberal democracy, the Chávez administration, for example, employs a Rousseauian model of participatory democracy, which attempts to give power directly to the people through cooperatives and community councils.[61]

These cases of "New Populism" are described as reactionary, right-wing, neoliberal, nationalist, anti-immigrant movements, and some of the parties Taggart (1995) refers to that fit within his ideal type of "new populism" include: Haider and The Austrian Freedom Party (see also Mouffe 2005), the Northern Leagues and Berlusconi's Forza Italy, the Ticino League and Automobilist Party in Switzerland, the Danish and Norwegian Progress Parties, Sweden's New Democracy (see also Westlind 1996), the Flemish Bloc of Belgium, Le Pen's French National Front, the Republicans in Germany, etc. To these we can now add Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands – and beyond Europe, Preston Manning's Reform Party in Canada and Pauline Hanson's One National Party in Australia (Canovan 2005), to which I would add, more recently, Wilders in the Netherlands and Sarkozy in France (to name a few).

[59] Roberts, "Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Populism in Latin America"
Weyland, "Populism in the Age of Neoliberalism"
Weyland, "Neopopulism and Neoliberalism"
[60] de la Torre, *Populist Seduction in Latin America*, preface to second edition, 2010
[61] Ellner, *Rethinking Venezuelan Politics*

Although the political systems fostered by these regimes are often critiqued on the grounds of their lack of efficiency and effectiveness, as well as the fact that they do not address the more fundamental problem of the rentier status of these countries (Weyland; de la Torre), these participatory democratic configurations still function in the manner of institutionalizing what we have referred to as the 'political.'[62] Thus, the difference between these new cases of populism and classical populism is the more successful attempt to link their 'political' discourse with actual institutionalized forms of democratic practice on three levels: (1) within civil society; (2) on the level of the nation-state; (3) and also corresponding to regional economic and political ties fostered between nation-states, such as the formation of alliances like ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America).

Conclusion

We are now at a juncture in history where we are beginning to see more cases of institutionalized populism, not only in Latin America, but also in the United States and Western Europe. Just as we found a decisive difference between McCarthyism and the Tea Party in the capacity of latter to institutionalize their discourse, we can now look for similar comparisons between cases of cases of Latin American populism in the immediate postwar period and the present.[63] To this we can add the recent proliferation of scholarship concerning Western European right-wing

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[62] Weyland, "The Rise of Latin America's Two Lefts: Insights from Rentier State Theory," *Comparative Politics* 41:2 (2009) pp. 145-164
de la Torre, *Populist Seduction in Latin America*, preface to second edition, 2010

[63] The other regional focus of my dissertation concerns Venezuela and a comparison between Acción Democratica (1945-48) and the Chávez administration. In these cases I have found the same discursive structure, which links the enemy with the founding moment, as well as a similar historical shift toward more enduring forms of institutionalized populism in the contemporary period.

populism, and the attempt of these administrations to institutionalize their nationalist, anti-immigrant discourses in the practice of denying civil liberties and rights based on citizenship to Muslims. These new cases of populism have often been characterized as embodying the politics of anti-politics (Panniza), and in this same perspective one could view the Tea Party, in its attack on the 'mainstream' Republican Party, as orchestrating a strategic attack on itself in order to reconstitute its agenda and lines of influence.[64] But we might now question whether we are actually dealing with anti-politics, or rather, new institutionalized forms of the 'political.'

Yet how are we able to account for what has caused this increased frequency in cases of institutionalized populism around the world? Are these political realignments somehow related to the "accelerated tempo" of capitalist crises?[65] And what about the role of the media, in what Manin has called the democracy of the "audience," or how Skocpol and Williamson claim that the Tea Party uses the media as "megaphone?"[66] Rather than pursuing this argument that populist performance is bolstered by the media, we have shown that it is also important to analyze what the media is referring to in its own use of the term populism.

Another pertinent question is whether these new institutionalized forms of populism represent a crisis for liberal democracy, and if so, how they alter democratic practice, participation, and legitimation. If there is a crisis, this analysis would suggest it involves a new relationship between the center and periphery of a party and how they function together, especially considering the Tea Party. A situation arises in which the core ideological element of the discourse, involving extreme demonization, can be articulated from the periphery, such as the voice of Bachmann attacking Muslims in the White House. And even though these remarks

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[64] Panizza, "Introduction: Populism and the Mirror of Democracy"
[65] Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, pp. 72-78
[66] B. Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)
Skocpol and Williamson, *Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*

come from the 'outside' and are discredited by the mainstream Republican Party, they still correspond to an ideological position close to the center of Republican policy-making within Congress, which is capable of equating regulations on investment banking and healthcare with "decolonization." In this sense, new institutionalized forms of reactionary populism call attention to the manner in which the Manichean view articulated within populist discourse can operate as an implicit and unexamined horizon behind what would otherwise be justified as a rational economic agenda or policy orientation.