Diverging destinies and the populist tumult

Mike Savage (LSE) and Magne Flemmen (Oslo)
The drama of populist nationalism

Anything is possible if enough decent people are prepared to stand up against the Establishment. .... We made June 23\(^{rd}\) (2016) our independence day when we smashed the Establishment.

When we win, it is the people, not powerful, who win. The nurse, the teacher, the small trader, the carer, the builder, the office worker, the student who wins..... We don’t accept that it is natural for Britain to be governed by a ruling elite.
Today’s ceremony, however, has very special meaning…. we are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the American People.

For too long, a small group in our nation’s Capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost.

Washington flourished – but the people did not share in its wealth.

Politicians prospered – but the jobs left, and the factories closed.

The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country.
France’s newly elected leader, Emmanuel Macron, represents the European establishment fearful of a popular revolt, former MI5 intelligence officer Anne Machon tells RT, as many analysts appeared to be sceptical the former Socialist minister could bring change.

“Former US President Barack Obama endorsed Macron, the EU endorsed Macron. They were very frightened about another popular revolt against the establishment. Macron is very establishment: the elitist universities in France, the fact that he was [France’s] Economy Minister,” Machon said.

According to the former British intelligence officer, the fact that his En Marche! political movement “that came from nowhere within one year” looks very much “an establishment stitch-up.”
Diverging destinies: probing the National Child Development Study

- The NCDS is the ‘gold standard’ panel survey which has regularly followed 10,000 respondents from the same cohort, born 1958.

- With Andrew Miles, Jane Elliott and Sam Parsons I collected 220 qualitative interviews in 2008 which can be linked to the panel data to provide unprecedented insights onto attitudes.
Hypothetical life history

Parents’ social class

- Born 1958
- Age 7
- Age 11
- Age 16
- Age 23
- Age 33
- Age 42
- Age 46

- Exam results
- Gets married
- 1st Child 1984
- 2nd Child 1987
- 1981
- 1987
- 1991
- 2000
- 2004

- Voting behaviour
- Savings
- Training and skills
- Job 1
- Job 2
- Job 3
- Working hours preferences
- Domestic division of labour
- Union membership

- Maths and reading tests
- Free school meals
- Parents’ divorce
- Parental interest in school work
- Mother smoking
- Teachers’ assessment of child’s behaviour
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CULTURAL CAPITAL + ECONOMIC CAPITAL -

ECONOMIC CAPITAL + CULTURAL CAPITAL -

Economically privileged

Culturally privileged

Economically deprived

Culturally deprived
Clustering the respondents

- Cultural elite
- Business elite
- Precariat
would not mind working with other races
would not mind if another race moved in next door
I wouldn't want another race for my boss

Attitudes to race

- precariat
- business elite
- cultural elite
none of the political parties would do anything to benefit me

politicians are in politics for self-interest, not community benefit

not much difference which political party is in power

Attitudes to politics

precariat  business elite  cultural elite
working people don't get fair share of nation's wealth
one law for the rich, and another for the poor
management always try to get the better of employees
If you had to represent your life through a diagram, which of these would it be?
Nationalist & racist repertoires

Looking carefully at the qualitative interviews from the three clusters, we found very different repertoires between them.
Clustering the NCDS

Cultural elite

Business elite

Precariat
### 1: Sensuous Nationalism

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<td>it’s because the way of life that we have, the scenery we have, we are more... generous isn’t the right word I’m looking for but we’re-, we’re more obliging, we tend to try and help, we’re not the scroungers or the people that the English portray us to be (461)</td>
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| Ambivalent        | 47, 481, 498, 578 (Scots), 1307 (Welsh), 736, 430 (British), 47, 52, (English), 5, 441 | I think everyone---, I’d like---, personally I think that everyone’s the same, you know. It doesn’t matter in respect of race, creed or colour, if you’re born in this country and that’s your allegiance, you’re British (430)  
I just see myself as British and don’t think I’m very patriotic at all, no. If they asked me to stand up tomorrow and swear allegiance to the Queen, I don’t think I would (430)  
I’m not out with my flags waving at [both laugh] big royal events or anything like that. No, I mean---, no I don’t feel particularly---, quite frankly at the moment I’ve---, I’d rather be anywhere than England [laughs], I just think it’s the most depressing place. (441) |
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Anti –establishment Scottish Nationalism...

Darling and Brown are Scotsmen in London and Scotsmen on the make in London basically. I find them... very traitorous really, to use not too strong a word. Rather than all these parts of--, an independent Scotland they’re trying to demolish it so we’ll end up in the union because we’ve got nowhere else to go, the unionist propaganda for 300 years has told the Scottish people you’re too small, too stupid and too dumb to run your own affairs, there is nowhere comparable in the world that would allow the big country next door to run us. There’s nowhere in the world that has discovered oil and become poorer apart from Scotland......
2: Imperial nationalism

We get a raw deal from other countries because.... you can’t say anything against the Asians and they play the card a lot..... My friend’s married to a girl from Africa... I think it’s too serious... it should be addressed and it’s a very difficult question where everything is, but I would say British is a leader... it leads the way for the rest of the world’

I think we’ve lost the plot basically, yeah. Well we’ve just been to Europe for a week which was lovely, I loved it..... it’s the first time I’ve been abroad when there’s not been loads of English yobos there really, spoiling the thing. And we came back here and my wife immediately says, “What country are we in?” She said all these different coloured faces, some are good, some are bad, but we’ve just lost it, and as for industry and government, we’ve--, it’s out the window isn’t it really? So being British doesn’t mean a lot now, I’d love for it to go back to that, the Victorian ways.
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3: Managerial multi-culturalism

I did a lot of equality and diversity stuff at work and... I used to like that, they used to send me out to conferences and to speak at conferences.... With another little housing association, a small one in the middle of Manchester that we’d worked with quite closely for quite a long time.....it all fitted in beautifully, it was a black and minority ethnic led association, it was my thing......

But (a manager who has to be dealt with) had this absolutely ruthless approach to it, and he was also dreadfully sexist, he was racist, he was anything ‘ist’....... I mean the boxes that you get for all ticking as to what occupation and, you know, I can put myself as a professional managerial type person, you know, so comments, and he was a terrible racist himself and he used to say the most outrageous things in public, sometimes in writing to people. And so I spent a lot of time getting people to sign compromise agreements so they couldn’t take us to a tribunal, you know, and paying them to go quietly ‘cause of something stupid he’d said,
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Conclusions

• Very strong anti-establishment discourse has deep roots because of the entrenchment and accumulation of economic and cultural inequalities

• Populism is also associated with privileged groups engaged in internal ‘elite’ contestation

• These dynamics cannot be captured by singular variables (class, race, etc) and are bound to generate unstable political outcomes.....