

Backfire: How the Rise of Neoliberalism Facilitated the Rise of The Far Right



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Introduction/Background

- Since the election of Donald Trump in 2016, there has been a notable increase in both the visibility and the activity of the far right within the United States.
- One possible explanation of this development is the hegemony of neoliberalism
- **Research Question:** How and to what extent neoliberalism has contributed to the increase in far right activity in the United States?
- **Thesis:** I argue neoliberalism has greatly influenced the rise in the far right, and that specific actors have worked to promote it to benefit their own interests

Literature Review

- **Theories:**
 - **Material Conditions Theory:** The rise in the American far right has been largely motivated by a series of underlying conditions, which will be examined, such as increases in immigration, increasing income inequality, perceived erosion of class identity among white Americans.
 - **Dark money Theory:** The rise in the American far right has been largely motivated by specific wealthy actors seeking to maintain their hegemony and quell populism by invoking attacks against other forces.

Analytic Framework

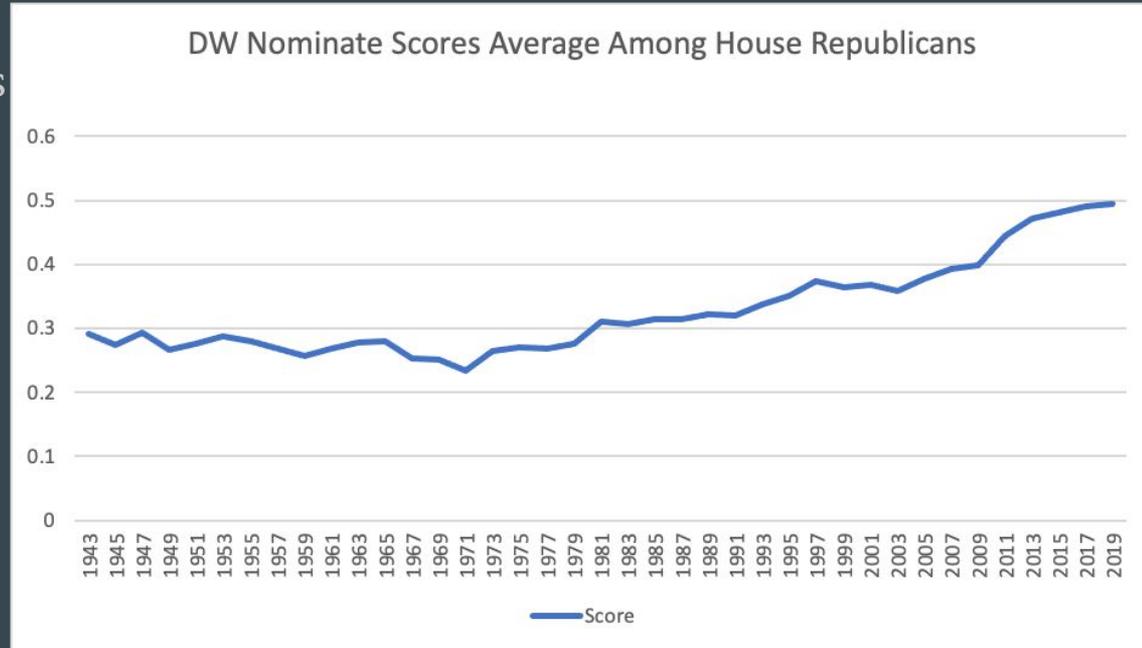
- **Rise in Far Right:** Operationalized by Change in DW Nominat Score, Rise in Hate Groups, Average DW nominat score of GOP
- **Loss of status :** Immigration from Mexico, job losses due to NAFTA+China, Racial makeup of Working class, rates of “deaths of despair”
- **Influence from Wealthy:** percent influence of money in politics, amount of money donated, organizations founded, influence of the dark money in mainstreaming the far right

Method: Process Tracing

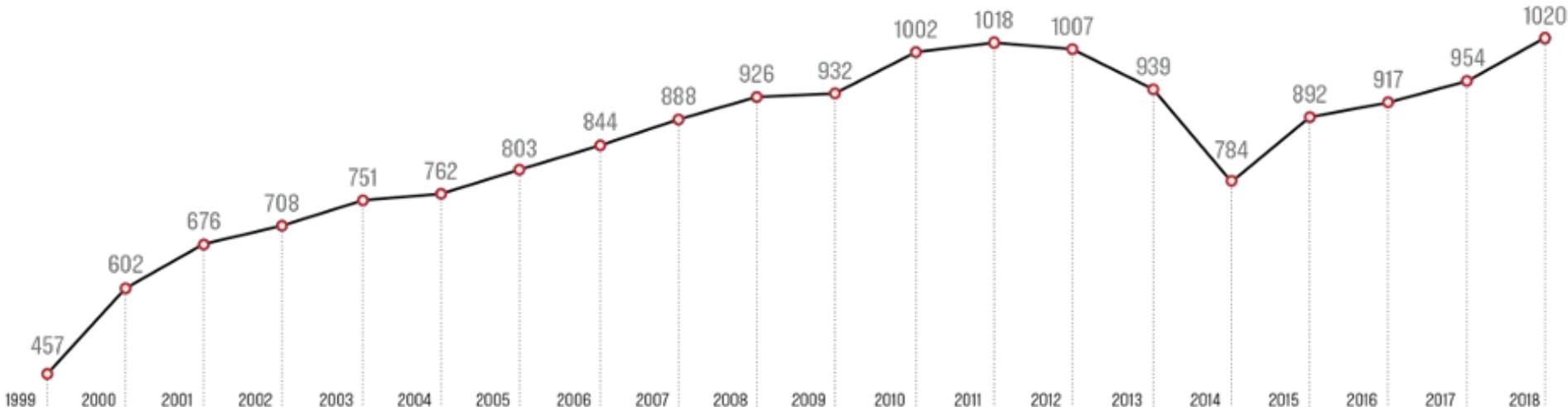
- This will involve examining the historical events that led to the rise of the contemporary far right in the United States, as well as utilizing statistics, and what members of the far right have cited as a major reason for their rise and evaluating whether these are consistent with the current theories on the rise of the far right and evaluating gaps in these theories.

Analysis: Proving the Far Right has actually gained ground

- Since 1980, the far right in America has moved towards the Republican party.
- In addition, average Republican voters have become less moderate.
- The result of this is that Republican DW nominate score of the House Republicans is above .45 which can be considered far right



HATE GROUPS 1999-2018

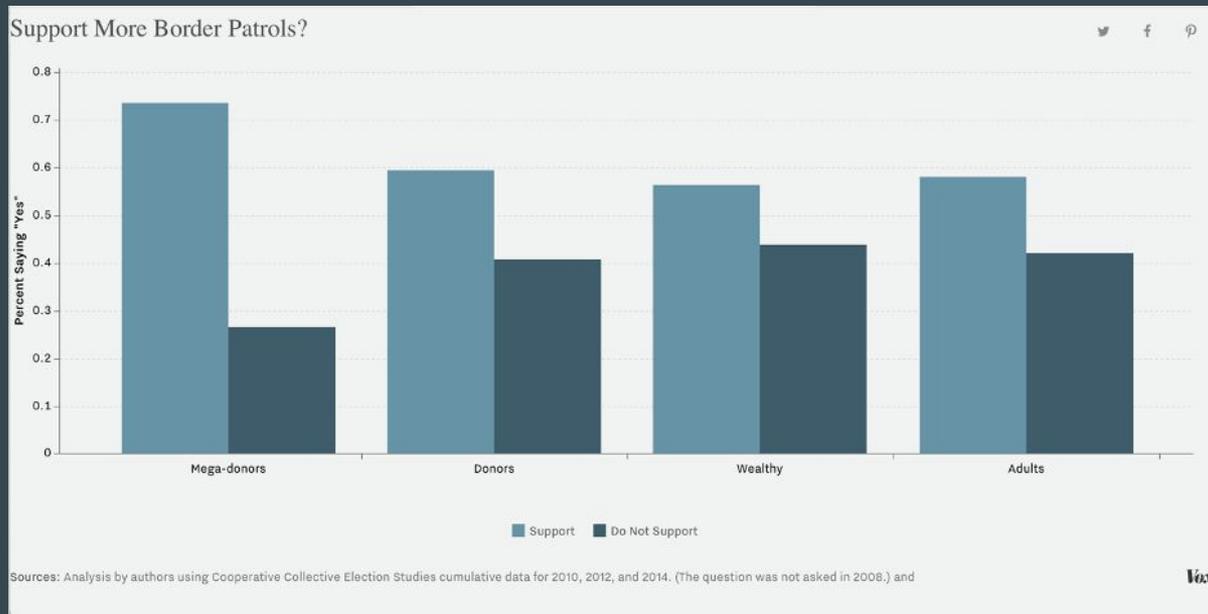


Analysis: The Position of the White Working Class

- Due to trade agreements with Mexico such as NAFTA and repeated trade agreements with China, domestic labor has declined sharply and the working class now have to compete for less positions with more competition from immigrant labor
- Their concerns are reflected in the talking points of the Trump administration, as well as in the rhetoric of many far right thought leaders such as Richard Spencer.

Analysis: Wealthy Influence

- Most come from far right promoters such as the Koch brothers and their network
- They represent a subgroup of multi-millionaire and billionaires
- Fund the mainstream far right as well as fringe groups



Neoliberalism

- Deregulation of markets
- Increase in free trade/movement of capital
- Dismantling of welfare state/ social safety nets

Threatens
Status of White
Working- Middle
Class

Populist
movement
towards
reactionary far
right

Wealthy actors
seeking to boost
this movement to
suit their agendas

Mainstreami
ng

Increase in the
growth and visibility
of the Far Right

Findings

- The rise of the Far Right over the last 40 years has been strongly influenced by a backlash from neoliberal policies that have crippled the white working class, and have led to an erosion of the association between race and economic stability
- **Populist backlash:** Lack of social safety nets and any change has pushed working class towards the right and has pushed national rhetoric towards far right
- This change has been aided by the upper class of Republican donors who have shaped the movement away from effectual class concerns and have tied racial populism with free market economics creating a Neoliberal far right who espouse populist rhetoric but enact neoliberal policies.