

Prof. Gavin Sullivan: English voters and the Brexit "crisis": The roles of reactionism and resentment in the 2019 UK Election

Populist parties and movements have become stronger in many countries, pushing for irreversible changes to modes of social coexistence and posing a challenge to liberal democracies. In this presentation, reactionism in the form of anti-politics (anti-immigration, anti-elites, anti-science, anti-EU) is distinguished from related concepts of radicalism, populism and authoritarianism. Reactionism in the form of a desire to reinstate the past in the present, break away from the present, resist the formation of new progressive political projects and solidarities, and promote engagement with extreme, violent and out-group intolerant actions, is explored in connection with resentment--conceptualized as a long-term emotional process of transvaluation in response to perceived chronic deficiencies, injuries or injustices that cannot be acted upon. Data from a two wave pre- and post-2019 UK Election online survey are presented along with a thematic analysis of in-depth qualitative interviews with reactionists on the right and, crucially, the left of UK politics. Theories of differing roles for shame and pride on the right and left of reactionist politics are explored in addition to implications for engagement with reactionist voters, non-voters and "left behind" citizens.