

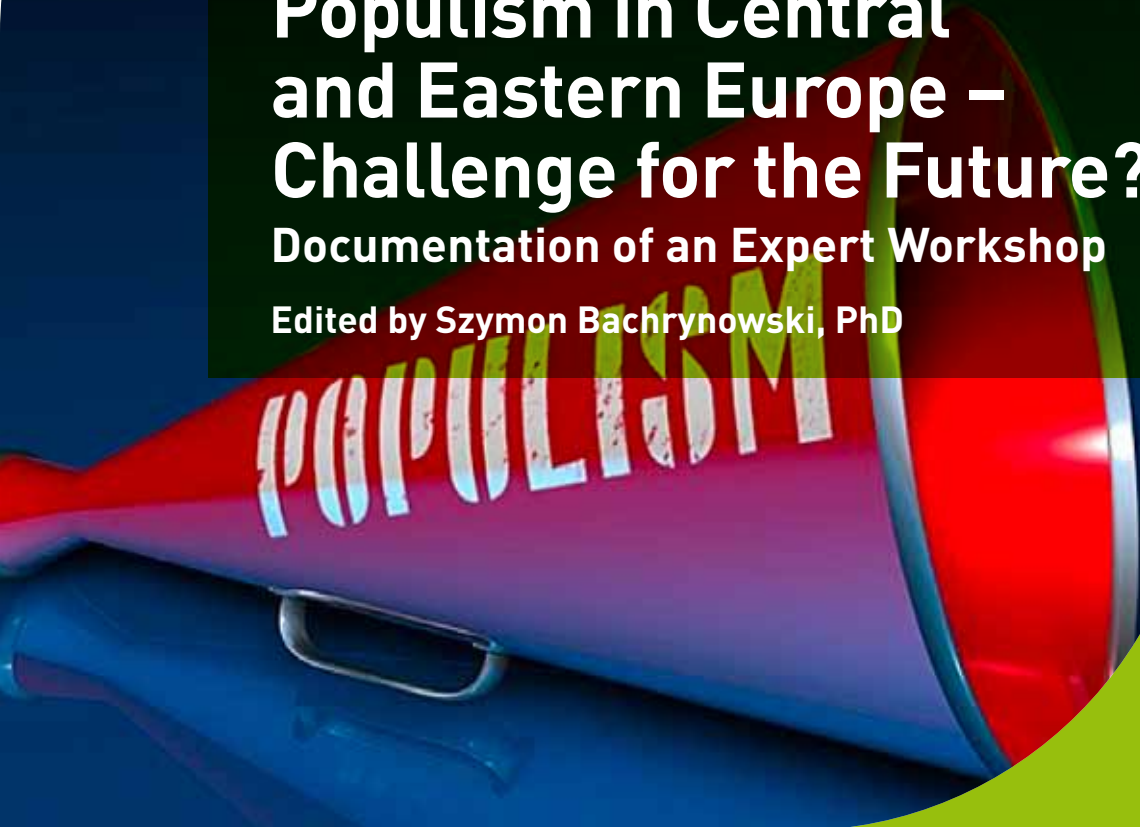


**GREEN EUROPEAN
FOUNDATION**

Populism in Central and Eastern Europe – Challenge for the Future?

Documentation of an Expert Workshop

Edited by Szymon Bachrynowski, PhD



 **HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG**
WARSZAWA



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October 2012

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Foreword

With 'Populism in Central and Eastern Europe – Challenge for the Future' we present a collection of contributions to a seminar and an open panel debate organised by the Green European Foundation (GEF) with support of the Heinrich Böll Foundation Warsaw and the Warsaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities (SWPS) on October 22nd and 23rd 2012 in Warsaw, Poland.

These events were part of a multiannual GEF project which built on the book publication 'Populism in Europe' (2011), which was translated and published in German in 2012 as 'Rechtspopulismus in Europa'. This GEF publication presents the issue of right-wing populism from a variety of thematic angles and national perspectives. It touches upon the similarities as well as the differences between European cases of populism, and several authors discuss how Greens and progressive parties in particular should respond to this phenomenon. As a follow on, book presentations and round tables were organised by GEF and its partner organisations in venues as diverse as Malta and Finland, Athens and Ireland to continue the discussion.

A year into these debates the political context had shifted. In the wake of Europe's economic and social crisis, the (right-wing) populist argumentation had partly moved from a cultural to a socio-economic one, playing with European north-south / east-west divisions. Political cleavages along the left-right axis came back to the fore, and we witnessed an accompanying rise of traditional and populist movements on the left side of the political spectrum. Many election results throughout Europe paid tribute to the fact that political populism seems to have become a permanent feature of our democratic political systems.

With this in mind we considered it highly important to focus specifically on the cases of CEE countries in 2012, as the challenges of populism have become equally pressing here while at the same time seemingly less documented. In a two-day workshop with young scientists from Poland, Austria, Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, the rise of populism in the

CEE region was a matter of intense debate and exchange of opinions. The discussion focused on questions of populist politics (based on political thought/ideology content) and at the same time presented the populist way of doing politics with several examples from the region. Is there a way of changing the narrative from a 'politics of fear' to a politics of 'freedom and security' in Central and Eastern Europe? With the region's high representation of populist politics in government and the overt presence of populist ideology in the public sphere this remained one of the most pressing questions of the debates.

We express our sincere thanks to those who made this project a reality. First, project coordinator Szymon Bachrynowski, PhD from the Warsaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities, who has put a lot of effort into the workshop and the report alike and who was assisted by Lila Religa from the Heinrich Böll Stiftung Warsaw office. This collection would not have been possible without the experts participating being willing to summarise their thoughts into articles – a big thank you for sharing your expertise! And last but not least our thanks go to Prof. Wawrzyniec K. Konarski, PhD, from Poland and Dick Pels, PhD, from the Netherlands who contributed their opening and concluding remarks to the seminar and this collection.

If – as Dick Pels puts it in his concluding article – 'resistance to European integration and to the local elites which promote it' will truly become the point of convergence for populist movements and parties across the East-West divide in Europe – the debate we document in this report is here to stay. We hope you will find this collection of articles an interesting read and it will enrich your reflection on the topics at hand.

Leonore Gewessler
Director, Green European Foundation

Małgorzata Kopka
*Program Coordinator Dialogue Forum Europe,
Heinrich Böll Stiftung Warsaw office*

A stylized map of Europe is shown in the background. The map is light gray with white borders between countries. A single country in Central Europe, likely Poland, is highlighted in a darker gray. A red dot is placed within this highlighted country, indicating the location of the workshop and debate.

POPULISM IN CENTRAL EUROPE – challenge for the future!

An Introduction to the workshop and open debate

Prof. Wawrzyniec K. Konarski, PhD (Jagiellonian University)

An Introduction to the workshop and open debate

Foreword article by prof. Wawrzyniec K. Konarski¹, PhD (Jagiellonian University)

The basic difference in analysing populism is caused by the broad scope and diverse forms of organisation of this phenomenon. This has been noticed first during the experts' panel-workshop

and then an open debate, which summed up the former. The panel-workshop was organized in Warsaw, on October 22-23, 2012, with the debate on October 23, in the afternoon. The three partners were responsible for both initiatives: the Warsaw office of *Heinrich Böll Stiftung*, the Green European Foundation and the *Warsaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities*. I had the opportunity and pleasure to be a moderator of both undertakings.

¹ Short biographical note about the author: Wawrzyniec K. Konarski (1957) is Professor of Political Science, Chair of Ethnocultural Politics at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland. Ph.D. at the University of Warsaw (1985). Graduate of the Summer Institute in the American Political System (Washington D.C., Philadelphia, 1995) and a research fellow of the International Salzburg Seminar (Salzburg, 1996). His scientific interests concern widely understood connections – analyzed in a modern historical perspective – between ethnicity and politics, including ethnic aspect of political systems, nationalism, and ethnoregionalism. He has been lecturing extensively as a visiting scholar in more than ten countries in Europe and both Americas. Author and co-author of eleven monographs and almost 150 articles, expert appraisements, and critical reviews. He comments extensively Polish and international politics in manifold Polish and World media. Member of Polish and international scientific organizations, a.o.: Polish Committee of Cooperation with the Club of Rome (deputy president since 2011), Polish Political Science Association (PPSA, Polish, 2003, deputy president in 2007-2010), and International Political Science Association (IPSA, 2008).

They were organised to discuss the collective publication *Populism in Europe*, issued by the Green European Foundation in 2011. The aim of the publication was to collect and classify the experiences of West European populism and to make partial references to its character at the area of Central Europe. The issues, which are the outcome of the current understanding of populism in that region of Europe, were discussed both during the panel-workshop and the debate. They were linked by the common title *Populism in Central Europe – Challenge for the Future*.

Experts from seven countries: Austria, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary, took part in the workshop. All the above-mentioned countries had and have a substantial experience with populism. That is why the opinions of the experts from these countries were a particularly interesting source of information and an inspiring base for an animated debate.

It is understandable that during the above-mentioned open debate, references were made to the claims formulated during the workshop and these claims were creatively developed. In the debate, five experts from three countries: the Netherlands, Poland, and Slovakia, took part. During its course they presented their approaches to local and external sources of populism, mainly, but not only, in Central Europe, and also discussed to what degree populist movements are organised and what the relations between political culture and populism are.

Both the workshops and the open debate have proved that there is no uniform perception of research approaches. This remark is quite understandable as it is based on different experiences from many countries. Namely, populism is perceived by some academic milieus as a concrete ideology containing right- or left-wing designates but also able to compile them depending on the socio-economic-political character of a given country. From populism perceived as an ideology derives the adopted form of political strategy. For other experts' milieus it may be mainly a combination of a rhetoric based on a concrete axiology combined with a form of activeness or simply political behaviour considered as useful. These two general approaches are linked by the black-and-white perception of the socio-political reality visible in the populist division into 'us and them'. It assigns to all the versions of populism a definitely

anti-elitist character, and the notion of elite itself is frequently and intentionally left imprecise.

A synthesis of these two approaches makes it possible to formulate one more definition of populism. Thus it may be understood as **a collection of deliberately selected values of anti-elitist nature, emerging from various ideologies (and not from only one separate & cohesive ideology) and applied in practical activity in order to achieve political influence on society and state institutions, including the possession of power, however not for a very long time.**

The populist slogans gain social response especially when two interdependent processes occur at the same time. These are: *the growing alienation of the society from the rulers and the increased oligarchic tendencies within the political class and thus within the power elite, and within the legal, namely internal opposition.* I understand the political class mainly as a group distinguished only according to the stratification principle and not as a group of *people with class*, i.e., the ones verified by a positive social response. This negative opinion is an outcome of a prolonged observation of behaviour and statements made by the people involved in political activeness. I am also aware of the popular view that politicians are to a great extent an emanation of their electorate. On the one hand, this is not a comforting knowledge, but on the other one, it is the politicians who are particularly responsible for creating models legitimating the rulers in the eyes of the society. It seems quite evident that such a belief is quite alien to a large majority of the political class in Central Europe but not only there.

The analysis of the common methods of making politics allows us to distinguish its several negative characteristic features. They are very common, but their presence has had a particularly negative impact in Central Europe or rather Central-Eastern Europe. The especially harmful phenomena also strengthening the processes of de-legitimation of the system of power are in my opinion the following: the **political rentierism**, i.e., the profit-oriented, mercantile approach to politics; the **pollocracy**, i.e., excessive subordination by politicians of their activities to the results of current public opinion polls at the expense of earlier formulated promises; and the **re-election obsession**, which is the outcome of the two former phenomena. An additional factor is the existence of two types of political parties: **a party-cartel**,

i.e., one directed at gaining profits from the state resources, mainly governing one and a **doctrinarian party**, mainly in opposition. The rhetoric used by them significantly hinders the political dialogue, strengthening at the same time the above-mentioned **oligarchic** but also **tribalistic** image of modern politics.

The above-presented phenomena help considerably to strengthen the social, economic and *stricte* political consequences, unfavourable for the image of the state. This is closely connected with populism. The consequences may be presented as a continuum composed of several stages. First, there occur the *social* consequences: *anomy* and *alienation*, which signal the occurrence of the *passive social contestation* process with respect to the political elites – both the ruling one and the opposition – as it has been said above. The statistical proof of the occurrence of this process is the constant high level of electoral absenteeism. Its scale is particularly disturbing in Poland, which for a long time has held an inglorious record in this respect among the European states. The next stage is the active social contestation, i.e., some form of the revolt of the masses against the elites – to quote José Ortega y Gasset. Its extreme expression, i.e., one directed at overthrowing the existing system of power, would be, obviously, a revolution. However, a more realistic manifestation of such a revolt, but one consciously using the democratic mechanisms, is **populism**. Of course, existing experiences, in this respect, have been shared by many countries, not only the Central European ones. However, the ‘young’ age of the democratic systems in this region does not warrant an automatic correction of the errors made by the rulers and thus increases the level of social uncertainty in the nearest future. The persistence of the negative features in the image of politics may make populism more vital, both with respect to its electoral impact, and to the prolonged existence of these conditions. It should be remembered that populists use either left-wing or right-wing argumentation depending on the situation, but also both of them: this depends on the character of the social conflict in a concrete time and milieu, which they want to use for their political purposes. Thus the current utility of the adopted argumentation is what only matters and that is why populism by its very nature undergoes axiological changes.

Part of the electorate in the democratic countries manifests mostly in the *tribalistic* approach, i.e., one based on a strong and usually uncritical loyalty to their party which they associate with tribal relations. The tribal effect is enhanced by the social apathy demonstrated by a large proportion of the society, which often results in a high level of electoral absenteeism. This high absenteeism may be explained by a disappointment in the course and results of the process of the socio-economic-political transformation. As for Poland, a substantial change in the preferences of the electorate may occur if this large, but inactive group were persuaded to take part in the elections. The politicians are not really interested in taking actions which may make these inert voters break the electoral lethargy. So far, the rivalry between the parties has shown that they mainly fight to persuade those who generally take part in the elections. As a result many mediocre people who care only for surviving their term without making effort and do not wish to initiate important actions become entrenched in politics. This regularity was mentioned by Richard von Weizsaecker, a former German President, in his famous article published in *Die Zeit* on February 27th, 2003, even though he referred it to a broader context. This results in an evident shortage of true statesmen in current modern politics, both at the local and global scale. The outcome is that the two processes enhance one another: *the apathetic society observing the mediocrity of its representatives loses interest in elections, and its formally elected representatives, seeing this apathy, feel exempt from the duty of increasing the quality of their work*. In consequence, the long term election absenteeism and unwillingness to undertake other forms of citizen participation heralds the above-mentioned passive social contestation. The change to the active form of anti-elitist social revolt, but one using democratic instruments for its purposes, brings about, in turn, active social contestation. It is expressed by populism. Its statistically high, and prolonged in time, electoral influence depends on the level of sensitivity to the populist slogans of exactly that, so far apathetic but numerous part of the electorate, i.e., the people who, colloquially speaking, ‘vote with their legs’. Their mobilisation by a skilled leader using socially catchy slogans may be the reason why populism as a movement questioning the *status quo* at a scale earlier unheard of may gain importance. Adequate examples of such political processes in Central Europe are Hungary and Slovakia. Poland may be another one.

Finally, I presume populism as relatively new phenomenon:

■ may be **generally** perceived in three ways, as: 1. one, thin-centered ideology, 2. a rhetoric and a way of behavior, and 3. a collection of ideologically diversified factors, right-, left-, but also disregarding the left-right antagonism or binding them in one eclectic entity; all three understandings are linked to each other by sharing the anti-elitist approach;

■ in **Central (and Eastern) Europe** may be rooted in some predominantly 1. communal, and also 2. ethno-nationalistic (ethnically exclusivist) traditions against the background of recent history; hence it has modern historical origin and is placed rather within the right-wing option or at least the ideologically eclectic one than the evidently left-wing;

■ in **Western Europe** may be rooted in 1. the post World War II phenomenon of the neo-fascist ideology, and 2. the manifold periods of economic decline after 1945 resulted in economically, culturally, and mentally motivated xenophobia of well-off societies against the new and non-Christian immigrants in particular;

■ in **Latin America** may be placed in historically identified socio-economic and political injustice verified on a large quantitative scale.

Populism feels at its best as a reviewer of the democratic principles. Its animators however, do not hesitate to use its instruments for their extemporary purposes, including gaining power, even for a short time, as it was said already. All in all, everyone likes the taste of power.

I would like to recommend the presented report and wish everyone an interesting reading.

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POLAND

From periphery to power: the trajectory of Polish populism, 1989-2012

Dr. Ben Stanley, PhD (UKSW Warsaw)

From popular protest to elite-led transition, 1989-1991

In response to a wave of strikes and social unrest in the summer of 1988, Poland's communist government made overtures to representatives of the banned trade union and social movement Solidarity (*Solidarność*) and other opposition movements that had continued clandestine activities during the 1980s. The two sides held a Round Table during February and April 1989. The common purpose of these talks was to negotiate a path out of the current impasse; however, at this stage negotiations were not intended to lead

toward democracy. The geopolitical uncertainties of early 1989 compelled Solidarity to accept the communist leader General Jaruzelski as (indirectly elected) president and 'guardian' of the Round Table compromise.

However, in the semi-free parliamentary elections of June 1989, candidates of the Solidarity Citizens' Committee (*Komitet Obywatelski 'Solidarność'*, KO 'S') won 160 of the 161 parliamentary seats they were permitted to contest and 99 out of the 100 freely contested seats in the newly-created Senate. Alone, Solidarity could not form a government, but neither could the communists.

The post-electoral stalemate was finally broken in September 1989 when Tadeusz Mazowiecki became prime minister of a Grand Coalition dominated by Solidarity. The onset of rapid changes elsewhere in the eastern bloc in the latter half of 1989 gave the Mazowiecki government an opportunity to bring about a wholesale transformation of the Polish economy. On 1 January 1990 a package of economic laws (dubbed the 'Balcerowicz Plan' after Leszek Balcerowicz, Mazowiecki's Finance Minister), enacted 'shock therapy' on the ailing economy and laid the foundations of the new capitalist economic order. As the withdrawal of Soviet 'supervision' meant that transition to democracy became an increasingly realistic prospect, the Mazowiecki government cautiously extended the scope of reforms to the political sphere.

Solidarity's moral status reinforced the opposition's claim to popular legitimacy, and the 1988 strikes had initially forced the hand of the PZPR, yet Polish transition remained very much an elite project. The Solidarity element of the Mazowiecki government comprised in large part those intellectuals whose involvement in Solidarity was more strategic and advisory than direct and participatory. These politicians had borne direct witness to the extraordinary power of Solidarity as a mass movement, and were concerned that in conditions of democratisation these energies might destabilise the processes of reform. Even prior to the formation of the Mazowiecki government, there was a sense of unease at the possibility of an outbreak of populism in conditions of political freedom. In June 1989, the liberal daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* (1989) defined populism as 'a particular type of demagoguery' that appealed to the simple worker, impatient as he was at the hair-splitting formulations of the intellectual.

Competing ambitions, ideologies and conceptions of transition politics ruptured the unity of Solidarity, with the fundamental dividing line between the cautious, incremental approach espoused by Mazowiecki, and the 'acceleration' (*przyspieszenie*) advocated by Wałęsa and his advisors. The struggle for supremacy on the Solidarity side expedited the holding of direct presidential elections in November–December 1990. It also accelerated the deepening of the divide, since the two main competitors were Wałęsa and Mazowiecki. The consequences of the rent in Solidarity were made plain when in the first round of voting an expatriate Polish businessman, Stan Tymiński, emerged from nowhere to attract a quarter of the votes. Although Solidar-

ity closed ranks to ensure Wałęsa triumphed over Tymiński in the second round, the divide between Solidarity elites would, in the longer run, prove insuperable. As Hall (2011, 31) observes, the Round Table became a locus of contestation between these two camps. A 'golden legend' emerged from the 'clan' and the 'retinue', according to which the communists 'freely consented to give up power, opening up the path to democracy'. According to the 'dark legend' espoused by the 'court' the Round Table constituted a 'conspiracy by the elites of both camps', with the conspirators agreeing to share economic and political power.

Enmities between former Solidarity allies deepened during the remainder of the 1989–1991 parliamentary term. Chafing at the perceived lack of pluralism in Polish political life, Jarosław Kaczyński set up a new party, the Centre Accord (*Porozumienie Centrum*, PC), which attracted a number of smaller parties and groupings critical of the Mazowiecki government. PC became the nucleus of a post-Solidarity current that contested the 'orthodox' transition consensus that coalesced around the Mazowiecki government and its allies in the media.

The 'war at the top' between post-Solidarity elites came to a head after Poland's first fully free parliamentary elections of the post-communist era, held in October 1991. No clear winner emerged from these elections, but Jarosław Kaczyński oversaw the eventual creation of a fragile minority coalition of post-Solidarity parties centred on PC, with Solidarity lawyer Jan Olszewski as premier. The Olszewski government claimed a mandate to pursue the politics of acceleration, since it was the first government created under conditions of full democracy. As a minority administration with significant internal tensions and a weak base of support in a fractious parliament, it struggled to make headway with this agenda. In mid-1992 the government attempted to push forward its objective of decommunisation through 'lustration' (the provision of information about the collaboration of public functionaries with the security services), with Minister of the Interior Antoni Macierewicz presenting to parliament a list of alleged collaborators that implicated many serving politicians, including Wałęsa himself. This act led to the immediate passing of a vote of no confidence in the Olszewski government.

The events of this 'night of change' (*nocna zmiana*) became 'the most significant generational

experience of part of the Polish right' (Janicki and Władyka 2007, 167), strengthening their conviction that self-styled mainstream political actors were conspiring to restrict full political pluralism in post-communist Poland. In a speech to parliament prior to his ousting, Olszewski contended that,

'from today onwards the stake in this game is something other than simply the question of which government will be able to execute the budget to the end of the year; at stake is something more, a certain image of Poland: what sort of Poland it is to be. To put it another way, whose Poland is it to be?' (Jan Olszewski, cited in Sejm stenographic transcript, term 1, session 17, day 1 [04.06.1992], Sejm Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1993, emphasis added).

This question could be interpreted in a number of ways. While Olszewski's emphasis lay on the consequences that the delay to decommunisation might have for the quality of Poland's democratic transition, it also resonated with those who had suffered material losses as a result of the economic politics of transition, and with those who feared the effects of 'imitative modernisation' on Polish national identity and culture.

Populism at the margins: the hegemony of the "regime divide", 1993-2001

Initially, it seemed that the elite compact of 1989 was likely to unravel as voters deserted established elite figures for new populist entrepreneurs. The performance of Tymiński in the 1990 presidential election appeared to confirm liberal fears about the immature and biddable character of the Polish electorate. As Ost (2005, 109) observes, Solidarity liberals began to 'shun[...] applause', to 'equate popularity with "populism"', and to treat 'their own lack of support as the surest sign of the justness of their cause'. Despite the initial assent for an elite-led transition from communism, the process of transition to democracy threatened the return of 'an elitist and ritualistic style of politics defined by the rift between the governing elite and the governed' (Puchalska 2005, 816).

From the beginning of 1991 onwards, the public mood significantly worsened, with a majority of Poles concerned that the country was heading in the wrong direction (CBOS n.d.). Nevertheless, movements and parties that founded their political appeal on populist critiques of the policies and elite of transition remained marginal to

the political system. Aside from Tymiński, the most significant of these was the agrarian protest movement Self-Defence, which comprised a trade union, a social movement and a political party. This organisation was founded to protect the interests of indebted farmers in the north-west of Poland, but grew into a nationwide movement that sought to represent all those who had – or could be persuaded to believe they had – lost out as a result of transition. Self-Defence's leader Andrzej Lepper achieved notoriety for leading direct action protests that often descended into violence. However, the party failed to make any significant progress at the polls during the 1990s, declining to such an extent that in the elections of 1997 it gained a mere 0.1% of the vote and appeared to be moribund.

During the 1990s, hitherto unknown challengers like Tymiński and Lepper failed to make a consistent impression on the electorate. The inherited 'regime divide' marked the dominant line of division between parties, and dictated the shape of the nascent party system. The revival of the post-communists in the form of successor alliance (and subsequently party) the Democratic Left Alliance (*Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej*, SLD) prompted the formation of an uneasy and short-lived 'umbrella coalition' of post-Solidarity parties, Solidarity Election Action (*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność*, AWS). The regime divide provided a clear heuristic for voters disoriented by the remarkable proliferation of political parties in the first few years of transition. It also cut across the ideological debates of transition, diminishing their political potential. Parties with strong ideological profiles but no regime-divide pedigree were simply irrelevant to the main locus of political competition.

Poland's political earthquake: the breakthrough of populism, 2001-2005

There are no neat explanations for why the Polish party system changed so dramatically in 2001. However, in light of subsequent developments, three significant factors can be distinguished: the volatility of Polish voters, a decline in public attitudes to the politics and political elites of transition, and the inadequacy of the regime divide as a means for the articulation of emerging political interests and differences.

Long-term survey trends show that while in the mid-nineties Poles were generally more positive

than in previous years about the direction of change and less negative about the political and economic situation in their country, from 1998 onwards there was a clear decline in these attitudes (CBOS n.d.). The public reacted badly to the 'second wave' of economic reforms implemented by the 1997 – 2001 post-Solidarity coalition (comprised of the AWS and the liberal Freedom Union [*Unia Wolności*, UW]) and support for the governing parties declined precipitously. Although dissatisfaction with transition grew in most sections of society during the first decade of transition, it started to become more clearly differentiated in relative terms. The old, those living in small towns and villages, those of lower educational attainment, those in the lower income quartile, the unemployed, retired, and those receiving invalidity benefit were increasingly more likely to state that post-1989 reforms had negatively affected them (Czapiński 2006, 184).

The souring of the public mood created new opportunities for populists to appeal to these 'transition losers'. From 1998 onwards, Self-Defence returned to prominence through the organization of numerous protests that went beyond the party's agrarian constituency to appeal to small-town and urban 'transition losers' on both sides of the regime divide. The party's ideological appeal was not dogmatically anti-capitalist. Rather, it inveighed against the alleged failure of successive governments to make the transition to capitalism work to the benefit of the majority, demanding the realisation of positive rights: 'the right to work, for appropriate remuneration, the right to have housing needs satisfied, the right to health and healthcare, the right to education and equal life chances' (Samobrona Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 2003, 8). This appeal was couched in textbook populist rhetoric. The party's challenge was, contended its leader Andrzej Lepper, simply another iteration of an age-old pattern:

'[t]he authorities in Poland can be called 'them'. They rule, they make laws, they give, they take, they permit – or not – others to live. The greatest success of Self-Defence is that when talking about us, Poles do not say "them", but "us"' (Lepper 2002a, 9).

Self-Defence made a virtue of its lack of attachment to either side of the regime divide and the fact that it had not been involved in the implementation of transition. The party's electoral appeal portrayed post-Solidarity and post-communist formations as indistinguishable, and argued that

transition elites from both sides had 'had their turn' (*oni już byli*). Instead, Lepper insisted, '[o]ur country should be ruled by the people and the representatives of their majority' (Lepper 2002a, 196).

The League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin*, LPR) emerged just prior to the 2001 election, drawing on Catholic-nationalist currents that had remained outside the political mainstream in the first decade of transition. LPR attacked post-communist politics in its entirety as a 'socio-economic experiment' with greatly deleterious effects on the Polish family, that 'elementary unit of the life of the nation' (Liga Polskich Rodzin 2006, 5–6). This discourse echoed the concerns of the Catholic-fundamentalist media empire centred on Radio Maryja and its charismatic proprietor Father Tadeusz Rydzyk. The Radio Maryja movement was, and is, an example of a rare phenomenon in post-communist Europe: a genuine, self-sustaining movement of civil society. The extension of the activities of the radio station into a newspaper, college of further education, television station and even mobile phone network constituted a set of alternative institutions founded in large part on volunteer labour and grassroots initiatives. These institutions constituted 'a place in which less privileged members of society are able to maintain social ties and create networks of social interaction outside the direct influence of the state' (Burdziej 2008, 28). The apparently 'authentic' nature of this social movement lent credibility to claims that it represented a broad constituency of 'ordinary Poles' whose shared interests and values were expressed through natural human interaction rather than dictated by elites.

Together, SO and LPR gained just under a fifth of the votes in the 2001 parliamentary elections. This 'unexpected political earthquake' (Szczerbiak 2002) saw both governing parties ousted from parliament, and the emergence of two new post-Solidarity parties, Civic Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska*, PO) and Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, PiS) alongside the populists. The unconventional and obstructive behaviour of Self-Defence and LPR in parliament was deeply alarming for political elites, and contributed to a marked decline in public approval both for parliament and for the present administration (see CBOS n.d.). Both parties were quick to exploit the difficulties of the beleaguered post-communist administration. Self-Defence relentlessly attacked an economic strategy that remained within

the liberal paradigm (Lepper 2002b), seeking wherever possible to bolster its credentials as defender of the interests of the 'little man' and opponent of 'big-business' privileges. Both parties were particularly active in criticising the concessions made by Polish negotiators during talks on Poland's accession to the European Union, raising the spectre of foreign ownership of Polish land, exposure of Polish firms to asymmetric competition, and the loss of Polish identity and sovereignty so soon after their recovery.

Both Self-Defence and – to a lesser extent – LPR increased their standing at the polls as a result of their greater visibility over the 2001-2005 parliamentary term. However, they were not the only beneficiaries of an increasingly radical mood. This period saw more attention than ever before turned upon the issue of corruption; the 'Rywingate' scandal – in which the government were alleged to have been involved in an attempt to solicit a bribe from a media organization in return for changes to a proposed media bill – afforded Poles 'a window on the world of political networks, business links to politics, and general intrigue' (Millard 2006, 1011). PiS began to exert a greater influence on the course of public debate as the issues it prioritised – corruption and decommunisation – meshed in the public consciousness.

In policy and personnel, PiS constituted the revival of PC, and hence a return to the themes and arguments associated with the Olszewski administration. Although the party entered parliament on the back of the substantial popularity Lech Kaczyński had gained as a hardline Justice Minister during a spell prior to the 2001 elections, it was Jarosław Kaczyński who shaped PiS's narrative and ideological priorities. For Kaczyński², the exposure of numerous instances of alleged or proven corruption confirmed that his diagnosis of the pathologies of transition was indeed accurate.

Kaczyński's thesis ramified in response to events but in essence remained the same as it was in the early 1990s. Actually existing transition consisted, he argued, in a compact between the communist-era *nomenklatura* and liberal Solidarity, whereby the former yielded power to the latter in exchange for 'certain guarantees'. The agreement resulted in the 'covert cooperation' of a network (*układ*) spanning the political, administrative, business and media sectors. To ensure

the stability of this new arrangement and protect the interests of the new oligarchy, it was necessary to exclude patriotic and traditional values from the political mainstream, and to delegitimise any political actors who might pose a threat to its interests. The promulgation of the 1997 Constitution saw this system reach maturity, crystallising unequal access to state institutions, the media and the market (Kaczyński 2006).

Aside from a shared interest in enrichment, the common element that held this elite together was the content of communist-era secret police files, the compromising nature of which was evident by virtue of the refusal of successive governments to engage in meaningful decommunisation (Kaczyński 2011, 43–5). According to Kaczyński (2011, 73), the *układ* was interested only in setting up basic democratic institutions and the free market, and not in creating a genuinely new state and establishing a 'new social hierarchy'. In these circumstances, the special purpose of PC was to furnish Poland with a new 'counter elite' to oppose the remnants of the *nomenklatura* and the Solidarity figures they had co-opted (Kaczyński 2011, 49).

In the interest of ordinary Poles: Poland's populist moment, 2005-2007

Prior to the dual presidential-parliamentary elections of September-October 2005, there was no reason to suppose that populists would come to power. Neither Self-Defence nor LPR looked likely to improve their standing, and everything indicated that PiS and PO would form a post-Solidarity coalition government. However, the intertwining nature of the two campaigns had a crucial influence on subsequent events. With PiS's Lech Kaczyński and PO's Donald Tusk the front-runners in the presidential race after the withdrawal of the post-communist candidate Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, PiS and PO – two parties with a significant element of ideological overlap – were forced to emphasise their differences. Seizing the initiative, PiS recast itself as the 'social' alternative to the liberal PO. The campaigns became increasingly acrimonious, and by the time PiS – victorious in both elections – commenced coalition negotiations with PO, relations had deteriorated to the point that no agreement was forthcoming.

PiS was reluctant to risk sacrificing its slim advantage in new elections. After a period of minority

2 For the avoidance of repetition, any references to 'Kaczyński' by surname alone refer to Jarosław Kaczyński.

government, the party signed a 'stabilisation pact' with Self-Defence and LPR and subsequently a formal coalition agreement in May 2006. The formation of this 'exotic threesome' (Paradowska 2006) was greeted with widespread shock. While no explicit *cordon sanitaire* was erected around these parties during their time in opposition, it was generally assumed that all 'mainstream' parties would continue to treat them as uncoalitionable.

The coalition declaration outlined an ambitious programme for comprehensive reform in the direction of a new 'Fourth Republic' (*Czwarta Rzeczpospolita*, IVRP) (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, Samoobrona Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, and Narodowe Koło Parlamentarne 2006). The flagship policies of this pact could be distilled into four categories: reforming the state and public institutions, 'reclaiming' foreign policy, engineering a moral and cultural renewal, and legislating for a more socially-sensitive economy. Reflecting PiS's dominance, the agreement was more representative of their priorities than those of SO and LPR, with reform of the state looming largest.

While the October 2005 – May 2006 minority administration was relatively restrained in its approach and emollient in style, the formation of the three-party coalition and the assumption of the office of prime minister by Jarosław Kaczyński introduced a more confrontational kind of politics centred on a distinctly populist discourse. A particularly aggressive parliamentary speech given by Kaczyński just prior to his assuming office delineated the basic structure of the model, at the heart of which was the aforementioned concept of an *układ* – a system of connections binding together the elite of the Third Republic. In language that would foreshadow a particularly fertile period for new rhetorical coinages, Kaczyński attacked the 'mendacious elites' (*łże-elity*) of the Third Republic; a 'front for the defence of criminals' (*front obrony przestępców*) whose elimination from public life was a matter of urgent priority. The coalition would restore order 'in the interest of ordinary people, ordinary Poles' (Jarosław Kaczyński, cited in Sejm stenographic transcript, term 5, session 10, day 3 [12.05.2006], Sejm Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 2007). In tackling the *układ*, the coalition would act as the representatives of

an ordinary, authentic, legitimate 'people' against an illegitimate and usurping elite.

The government's attempts to implement the content of the coalition agreement drew it into repeated conflict with institutions of state, the major opposition parties, and leading politicians and public figures associated with the Third Republic. These conflicts were particularly evident in the case of state reform. PiS gave priority to the reform of the institutions of state as a means to extirpate vested interests. Even prior to the formation of the coalition it purged the board of the National Council of Radio and Television (*Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji*, KRRiT), transforming it from an institution in which the parliamentary opposition enjoyed representation into one peopled entirely by candidates of the ruling coalition. Subsequently, the coalition – or more precisely PiS, which held the relevant ministries – legislated to make significant changes to the process of recruitment for the upper echelon of the civil service, dissolve the Military Intelligence Service (*Wojskowe Służby Informacyjne*, WSI), and increase ministerial oversight of the judicial system. A new 'lustration' law³ sought both to restart the process of decommunisation and to widen its scope. With substantial cross-party and public support, the coalition also created a Central Anticorruption Bureau (*Centralne Biuro Antykorupcyjne*, CBA).

In the course of implementing these reforms, the coalition came into repeated conflict with the Constitutional Tribunal, most prominently in the case of the lustration law, which the Tribunal found in repeated violation of the constitution. Jarosław Kaczyński's response to the stance of the Tribunal was characteristic of the coalition's reaction to the institutional obstructions it encountered: he argued that attention should be paid to the 'structure [of the Tribunal] and the political connections of particular judges' rather than treating it as a 'body of wise men who make decisions in accordance with the law in every case' (cited in Siedlecka 2006). PiS's conflict with the Tribunal culminated in an unsuccessful attempt to amend the Act on the Constitutional Tribunal through legislation that would have made it more susceptible to political interference.⁴

³ 'Lustration' refers to the measures taken by a state to restrict or otherwise regulate the participation in public life of citizens who, during the communist era, were involved in controversial activities, in particular collaboration with the secret services.

⁴ The most naked example of this was the proposal to reduce the term of the Tribunal's president from nine to three years, thus ensuring that it would potentially be possible for 'disobedient' presidents to be subject to the discipline of the same President [of the Republic] who had been responsible for their nomination.

These reforms also deepened and entrenched the enmity between the coalition parties – in particular PiS – and the ‘Third Republic’ elite, reaching a high point during the tense and emotional public debate over the lustration law in the spring of 2007. Many prominent legalists, academics and media figures – all of whom the new law would affect in significantly greater measure than before – regarded this law as an instrument tailor-made for disciplining opponents of the coalition, and several announced their refusal to comply with a requirement to submit affidavits about their past contacts with the secret services. Out of this milieu emerged the short-lived ‘Movement for the Defence of Democracy’ (*Ruch Na Rzecz Demokracji*), which sought to defend the achievements of the Third Republic against the actions of a government with ‘a fundamentally different concept of the state and its role, not understanding the essence of democracy, neglecting the rule of law, and striving for the ‘party-isation’ (*upartyjnienia*) and ideologisation of the state’ (*Ruch Na Rzecz Demokracji* 2007).

A similar pattern emerged in the case of foreign policy, where PiS also pursued a policy of elite replacement. PiS saw the diplomatic corps as a ‘corporation’ dominated by the figure of Bronisław Geremek, who had been intimately involved in foreign policy from the beginning of transition, serving as chairman of the parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs between 1989 until 1997, after which he assumed the post of Foreign Minister. In Kaczyński’s opinion, the dominant role of the *układ* in the diplomatic corps had resulted in a foreign policy conducted on bended knee, with successive Foreign Ministers pursuing essentially the same course of concession and supplication to foreign powers, regardless of which party they happened to belong to. The coalition agreement stressed that the new government would inaugurate a new era in foreign policy, with the objective of defending a clearly articulated national interest (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, Samoobrona Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, and Narodowe Koło Parlamentarne* 2006, 19).

This conception of the national interest was fired by a sense of historical injustice. PiS regarded it as morally correct that Western European powers recognise Poland’s status as a substantial player in Europe. However, it also nursed the conviction that these powers – particularly Germany

– had no interest in treating Poland as an equal partner. This stance resulted in a number of *contretemps* between Poland and other member states, often couched in rather undiplomatic language. A representative incident occurred at the June 2007 European Council summit concerning negotiations for the EU Reform Treaty, prior to which Jarosław Kaczyński argued that Polish voting power in the EU should reflect the greater population it would have had if not for the Second World War (Kuźniar 2008, 283). Poland threatened to use its veto unless its demands were addressed, leading to a deal reverting temporarily to the relatively favourable 2001 Nice Treaty provisions. This episode encapsulated the spirit of the new foreign policy, marrying a sense of entitlement to an uncompromising negotiating stance, underscored with emotive anti-German rhetoric.

The content and style of PiS’s foreign policy provoked a strongly negative reaction at home as well as abroad. When President Lech Kaczyński cancelled a meeting of the Weimar Triangle – a diplomatic summit of the Polish, French and German heads of state – after the German government refused to condemn a critical article about his presidency published in a German newspaper.⁵ This act drew sharp condemnation from previous foreign ministers, all of whom signed a letter criticising this action as detrimental to good relations between the countries. For PiS, a coordinated response by politicians of both post-communist and post-Solidarity provenance furnished further evidence of the hostility of the *układ*. Deputy Minister of Defence Antoni Macierewicz baldly alleged that the majority of the signatories were former agents of the Soviet secret services.

If the national interest was to be defended abroad, it needed to be articulated and reinforced at home. PiS and LPR envisaged a key role for the state as patron and pedagogue of cultural traditions and patriotic feelings, with schools a particular site for the inculcation of such values (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, Samoobrona Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, and Narodowe Koło Parlamentarne* 2006, 15). More important than legislative activity – or the lack thereof – was the moral discourse of the coalition. A vital part of the coalition’s agenda was the ‘politics of history’ (*polityka historyczna*), ‘a conscious effort to analyze, discuss and present the past in a way that leads to

5 The official reason for the cancellation was illness, but few believed this explanation.

the strengthening of the nation's sense of identity and purpose' (Kochanowicz 2007, 2-3). The politics of history would restore national prestige through the exposition of narratives in which 'Poland and Poles become key players of modern history' with due recognition of their contributions and sufferings (Nijakowski 2008, 198).

In PiS's interpretation of recent Polish history, the Warsaw Uprising constituted the moment at which the Poles of the Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*, AK) rose against the German occupier and in pre-emption of the Soviet incursion, in a doomed attempt to assert the sovereignty of the legitimate Polish nation. The division between a 'Home-Army Poland' (*Polska AK-owska*) and 'People's-Republic Poland' (*Polska PRL-owska*) was a key theme of Lech Kaczyński's 2005 presidential campaign, and was easily adapted to the social / liberal divide. Affiliation to the AK was one term of a binary discourse of martyrological patriotism versus cynical collaborationism, the latter term of which could embrace post-communists (collaboration with the Soviet Union) and liberals (collaboration with post-communists).

With the post-communist/post-Solidarity divide still a potent source of emotional responses but no longer reflective of political divisions, PiS strove to annex it to the social / liberal divide. Against the mainstream pantheon of Solidarity heroes – particularly Wałęsa – PiS promoted dissident figures such as Anna Walentynowicz and Andrzej Gwiazda, two Solidarity pioneers who had long accused Wałęsa of collaboration with the secret services and who shunned the Round Table settlement and the politics of liberal transition. In a controversial speech at the Gdańsk Shipyard, Jarosław Kaczyński asserted that 'we', those gathered in support of PiS, 'stand where we stood back then' [in 1980 – B.S.]. 'They', those opposing the creation of the Fourth Republic, 'stand where the ZOMO stood'⁶ (Kaczyński 2006b). This schema placed many prominent Solidarity activists – many of whose involvement with the Solidarity movement was more substantial than Kaczyński's – together with the historical oppressor, ranged against those whose defence of Poland's authentic interests, values and identity inhered in a refusal to recognise the legitimacy of post-communists and liberals alike.

PiS rapidly superseded LPR as proprietors of the Catholic-nationalist narrative of transition politics. It was Kaczyński, not Giertych, who stood alongside Father Rydzyk at Jasna Góra, a site of Catholic pilgrimage, declaring to the throng that '[t]oday, Poland is here. I can say that with full conviction and belief' (Mamoń 2007). Rydzyk's transfer of patronage from LPR to PiS was a boon for the latter; the Radio Maryja movement providing organisational resources and disciplined participants for the large public rallies and marches that were a hallmark of this period. Protests by students and teachers were a regular feature of Giertych's tenure as Minister of Education; skinhead and nationalist groups – including the LPR-affiliated All-Polish Youth (*Młodzież Wszechpolska*, MW) – staged counter-demonstrations against gay pride marches, and pro-choice and anti-abortion groups clashed over the politics of life and death (Grzymski 2008, 28). Public sector workers struck for better pay and conditions on several occasions, to the evident discomfort of a nominally social-solidarist government. These distinct acts of protest coalesced into larger public movements: on one weekend in October 2006 approximately 20,000 people marched either for or against the coalition, with all major parties involved in organising these rallies.

The populist reckoning and its aftermath, 2007-2012

The high political and emotional temperature of the 2005-2007 parliamentary term had a significant impact on the relationships between parties; both within the coalition and across the opposition divide. Both the stabilisation pact and coalition agreement were fragile from the outset. In part this was due to the headstrong character of all three party leaders, but structurally the coalition was always likely to experience problems due to the nature of its formation and composition. It became commonplace to refer to SO and LPR as the 'appetisers' (*przystawki*) vulnerable to being 'eaten' by their larger partner. This vulnerability was confirmed by the turbulent history of the coalition, where the minor parties' attempts to assert their position in light of the growing radicalism of PiS resulted in numerous inter-coalition ructions. The period of coalition government lasted from 5 May 2006 to 21 October 2007, during which it saw five changes of government.

⁶ The ZOMO (*Zmotoryzowane Odwoły Milicji Obywatelskiej*; Motorized Reserves of the Citizens' Militia) was a crack police unit infamous for repressive policing.

PiS always maintained that it had only engaged with parties of SO and LPR's ilk with the greatest reluctance. Jarosław Kaczyński explained that PiS did not wish to pass up the opportunity it had been afforded for undertaking substantial reforms.

'We took the decision that we would try to change Poland in such circumstances as existed. Anyone who has seen – as I have – the history of Poland over the last 30 years from up close, knows that at many moments it was necessary to work with the kind of people who were there and not the kind of people we would like to be there.' (Gmyz and Janke 2006).

However, the choice of coalition with SO and LPR was rather more than the unfortunate mathematical expedient PiS professed it to be. It was a decision to pursue a more radical path that, in hindsight, was more attuned to the logic of its reform project than a more moderate PiS-PO coalition would – indeed, could – have been. Although in mid-2005 a PiS-PO coalition seemed the obvious choice, it is very unlikely that such an arrangement would have been any more stable than the PiS-SO-LPR coalition, given PiS's determination to pursue their reform programme in the teeth of all opposition.

Szczerbiak (2008, 27) characterised the early election of October 2007 as 'a plebiscite on a polarising and controversial government'. This was as much a result of PiS's determination to defend its record as of the attacks conducted by the opposition. To recall the schema proposed earlier, the election was the 'reckoning' that follows an intense populist moment. This impression was heightened by the truncated nature of the parliamentary term, which deviated from the ordinary, predictable electoral rhythm established since 1993. In many ways the 2005-2007 term was reminiscent of the 1991-1993 term in its high emotional register and the focus on the difference between mainstream, orthodox parties and radical, unorthodox parties. However, the line of competition in 2007 was much clearer than in 1993, essentially running between PO and PiS.

The 'appetisers' were rapidly eaten, but proved difficult to digest. Some, including political scientist

and future PiS MEP Marek Migalski (2008) praised the party for its good deed in 'eliminat[ing] ... the populists'. Yet PiS had eliminated populists in large measure by internalising their populism.

If the PiS-SO-LPR coalition government owed its origins to a fortuitous collocation of contingent circumstances, its downfall was entirely in line with the structural logic of the populist dynamic. The determination of PiS to press ahead with reforms in spite of the moral hazard of coalition with LPR and SO led PiS into a deeply antagonistic relationship with other political actors. If the minor coalition parties swiftly ceased to be taken seriously, liberals and socio-democratic post-communists alike viewed PiS as a potent adversary and laid aside their own differences to oppose what they commonly perceived as a threat to liberal democracy. It would be hyperbolic to suggest that Poland in 2007 was analogous to Slovakia in 1998: the future of democracy itself was not in question. However, the counter-mobilisation against PiS was a clear indication that for a substantial section of Poland's political elite, the will to uphold the principles of the liberal-orthodox transition model trumped historical-cultural differences along the post-communist divide. Although the future potential of this divide could not at that point definitively be ruled out, by the formation of the new PO-PSL government in November 2007 it could safely be said to have become subordinate to a social / liberal 'transition divide'.

Subsequent events have confirmed the lasting impact of Poland's populist moment on its party politics, with the April 2010 Smoleńsk tragedy and the bitter exchanges that followed it driving a seemingly insuperable wedge between two parties once thought to be natural coalition partners. Although the party system is not yet entirely stable, the basic line of division is more clearly defined than in previous years, running as it does between two very different conceptions of the role of the state, Poland's role in Europe and the world, and the values and priorities that should guide policy-making. PiS's turn to populism did not ultimately help it to realise its objective of elite *replacement*, but it furnished Polish politics with an alternative elite.

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GERMANY

Populism in Germany

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Populism – as a tool not an ideology

When discussing the concept of populism in relation to Germany it is first of all necessary to outline a definition. According to Albertazzi and McDonnell populism is '[a]n ideology which pits a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous "others" who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice.'⁷ Broadly speaking we

can therefore say that populism is the appeal to the masses, the people, often in conjunction with the proclaimed aim of fighting against an elitist system, which allegedly privileges the few instead of the many. Alternatively the threat may also be emanating not from the elite but a 'dangerous other'. A frequent example of the latter not necessarily being the same as the former, is that of populism against immigration. In such cases immigrants are portrayed as a burden to society and as harming economic and social sustainability.

⁷ Albertazzi, Daniele and Duncan McDonnell, Twenty-first century populism: The sceptre of Western European Democracy, Palgrave Macmillan, February 2008, p. 3.

We can therefore reduce the definition to three parts:

- a supposedly virtuous/ homogenous group of people with common interests;
- this group positions itself against an elite/ dangerous other;
- the elite or dangerous other is depriving the group of its interests.

Relying on this basic definition we can assume that firstly a simplification of issues takes place, in order to find broader appeal in society. As we will see, this assertion is supported by the fact that populism is inherently steered towards the less informed parts of society. This over-simplification may express itself by identifying a single threat and/or perpetrator and then continuing to expose a problem in a one-sided way. The propagated populist policies will usually defy a mainstream way of life or an accepted structure and claim to expose an evil. As part of this populist reasoning it follows that the supposedly 'dangerous other' or elite needs to be contained in order to avert the ongoing harm to the virtuous people.

Although this is the definition this author also subscribes to, there are some commentators maintaining that populism is not simply a process of creating support but in fact an ideology. This is not the case. Populism can find application within different ideologies, but lacks the very inherent nature of an ideology, a set of values and political and economic ideals. At best it can be said that the necessary ideology to feed populism can be varyingly complete and may have few conceived goals.

A rapprochement of policies

In Germany the political system is fairly centrist. With recent experiences of far right-wing movements (Third Reich) as well as far-left wing movements (GDR) both paths are generally fringe movements. However, the LINKE (far left party) enjoys a fairly broad appeal in the former GDR – partly resulting from economic challenges after German reunification and partly because of a rapprochement of the mainstream parties. Equally the NPD (far right nationalist party) has its main base of voters in eastern Germany, probably because of the same economic difficulties. The former is reminiscent of a better past where everyone was taken care of, i.e. the political elite, capitalism and Western German money is seen as the dangerous other; the latter is actively

identifying migration as the root of economic hardship and argues openly in nationalist rhetoric used during the Third Reich.

The political outlook in German politics is generally more conservative than in France but more left-wing than in the UK. Indeed, within the main German political parties we have recently seen a further rapprochement of policies. The Christian conservatives have swayed in favor of formerly alien policies, such as the abolition of conscription or the end of nuclear energy. Similarly the liberals had to let go of their plans to lower taxes. Previously the social democrats under Gerhard Schröder's leadership introduced a stiffer welfare system as regards social benefits and pension rights. Likewise the green party had to admit in government, with Joschka Fischer as foreign secretary, that in certain cases military action is in fact necessary.

This rapprochement has been an ideal breeding ground for more populist parties to fill the vacuum. The red-green change of position to some left-wing policies was a major contributor for the Linke to grow stronger and reach comfortable levels of support.

The more recently created Piraten party on the other hand is still trying to find a permanent position in the left-wing arena. The party's main pet-project is freedom of expression in connection to the Internet. The Piraten are largely benefiting from the liberals' staunchness to protecting intellectual property and business interests in the new media.

Both the Linke and the Piraten are in this author's opinion using populism as an instrument to promote their goals. Applying the definition, we can find that both are promoting certain main interests (social welfare/ freedom of expression). Furthermore, both parties identify the elitist capitalist system as the dangerous other. Finally, both parties argue that this system is harming society by depriving them respectively of a fair share of the created wealth and the perceived endangerment of Internet freedom.

In this context it does not seem unlikely for a similar party to come into existence to the right of the Christian conservatives and the liberals, especially because of the latter's current unpopularity. Alternatively, the NPD (nationalist right) could attract these votes if the party were to become less extreme and more respectable.

We will now briefly look over the main instruments populism uses in the German example.

Instruments of populism

Instruments for populist politics in Germany include mainly different sorts of media. As we will see in our case studies these include books, newspapers and the media in general. The German media landscape as such, is, in its political outlook, also fairly centrist; if that is because it reflects society, or vice versa, is a matter of opinion. Although the Bild newspaper is the most widely read tabloid newspaper in Europe with around 11.5 million readers a day it has no firm political inclination and is chiefly opportunistic so as to generate the greatest reader attention. Other newspapers may have a certain slant such as the broadsheets Frankfurter Allgemeine (more conservative) or the Süddeutsche (more left-wing).

The television landscape is similar in that certain channels may be prone to expose a problem more from one or the other political perspective. This is also true for the state television channels.

Other instruments may include banners or posters to generate support (e.g. elections). For less organized movements demonstrations are sometimes the main way of generating attention in the media, especially when lacking sufficient funds.

The new media Internet is probably one of the most important ways populist movements can get organized. It is a fairly inexpensive and speedy way of communicating to a potentially vast amount of people. An interesting example may be Kreuz.net an Internet site operated by supposedly religious far right extremists who demonize homosexuals and Jews in the name of Christian Catholicism.

Lastly, political parties are probably the most organized and structured expression of populism in society. Currently, there are three major populist parties in Germany, which we will now briefly examine in general before shedding more light on them individually.

Established populism

There are three main populist parties, namely the Linke, the Piraten and the NPD. Of course there

are many smaller parties, which could also be mentioned and some commentators would include the green party (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen). The latter was probably a populist party to begin with but now seems to be a solid part of society with a comprehensive set of policies, which are no longer expressed as a populist discourse.

The three parties we will briefly look at are, on the one hand important as they represent the two main extremes: left- and right-wing politics (Linke/ NPD), and on the other hand as they are the major fringe parties in German parliaments (regional and federal level). However, all three parties are very different in the way they are established in society. The Piraten party is fairly new and therefore only represented in some regional parliaments, as it has not had the chance of standing for election to the Bundestag. The NPD on the other hand has not met the 5% threshold needed to gain seats in the Bundestag, whereas the Linke is a strong opposition party at federal level, though mainly thanks to votes from eastern Germany.

We will now look at the three parties mentioned. It will be broadly outlined what these stand for, and what kind of voters/members support the party.

Die Linke – The Left

Die Linke is a party which is largely reminiscent of the GDR system, which is also why the party had a much higher share of votes in the East than the West during the last general election. The Linke is the successor party of the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED), which was the governing party in the GDR. The party's members tend to be older (68.1% are over 60 years and only 3.9% under the age of 30) and it has the highest percentage of female membership of all German parties (44.4%). The election results in 2009 showed that voters are more likely to be male and, according to 1990s figures of the interceding party of the democratic socialism (PDS), a large percentage are from formally better educated backgrounds (26% have a degree opposed to the 11% average in other parties).⁸

Piraten Partei – the Pirates Party

The Piraten Partei (pirates' party), is a relatively new phenomenon. Its main raison d'être is free-

⁸ German federal centre of political education (bpb) website, Dossier – Parties in Germany, Die Linke, <http://www.bpb.de/politik/grundfragen/parteien-in-deutschland/42138/waehlerschaft-und-mitglieder>, retrieved 28th November 2012

dom of expression in relation to the Internet and intellectual property rights. It was founded in September 2006 and based on the Swedish anti-copyright organization Piratbyrå, which was founded in January 2006.

The voters tend to be male, young and relatively educated (having higher education entrance qualification rather than a university degree). Furthermore, based on these statistics one may extrapolate that the voters are either predominantly unemployed or self-employed and unaffiliated with any religion.⁹

NPD – the Nationalists

The Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD) is a nationalist party reminiscent of the Third Reich. It is largely the successor of the Deutsche Reichspartei (DRP), which was founded 1964.

The voters tend to be young, male and less educated. In a regional election in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in 2006 it could be observed that the highest approval rate came from the under 30 age group (16,8%) and decreased with age to as little as 1,6% with the over 60s. The same is true as regards educational background. Whereas the approval rate of voters with only primary school level education was at 8.1% and that of junior high school level education at 10.4%, voters with Abitur or university degree represented only 4.7% and 2.3% respectively. Following on from that, it is not surprising that the party's supporters are often unemployed and/or from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.¹⁰

To illustrate what populism in Germany may look like when not party-affiliated we will now look at three fairly recent examples, which received wide media coverage. As emphasized before populism is fairly moderate in Germany and better examples can surely be found abroad to illustrate the concept. Nonetheless, they are good demonstrations of how the supposedly virtuous group claims that certain things are not working properly and that there was a taboo, which needed breaking in order of achieving positive change and end a certain threat to society.

Contemporary examples of populism in Germany

Thilo Sarrazin's book is a good example of a mainstream populist right-wing movement. Many conservatives agree with him on the notions he put forward in his book entitled 'Deutschland schafft sich ab' ('Germany makes away with itself'). However, in general the book was criticized as being racist and demonstrating a belief in eugenics under the cover of speaking about 'cultural differences'. Such notions included the idea that Jewish and Muslim people have certain genes and that the Turks living in Germany are only productive as market traders and otherwise a burden on the welfare state. Nonetheless, the book was a bestseller in 2010 and has so far sold around 1.5 million copies.

The debate, which followed from the publication created greater interest in the debate surrounding immigration and integration. Some conservative circles saw it as a courageous step of speaking-out a truth that was evident but seen as politically incorrect to mention. The left and the mainstream in society condemned the social democrat and member of the Executive Board of the German Bundesbank as being racist and as having produced fallacious conclusions on figures with which he was claiming scientific reliability.

The Occupy movement is a good example of left-wing populism that occurred recently in 2011. Although the original movement was created in the US there was some support for it also in Germany. The movement is positioned against social injustice, speculative banking business and the influence of industry on politics. The main threat is perceived as coming from the finance industry, which is amassing the bulk of wealth in society and exerting illegitimate influence on the political system. The movement was of relatively limited success in Germany as the country has been less directly affected by the financial crisis.

Another, even more current example of populism in Germany is that of Günter Grass who formulated criticism as regards Israel and its role in the Middle East in a poem. The Nobel laureate of literature stated in his poem, entitled 'Was gesagt werden muss' ('What needs to be said'),

⁹ Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung website, Piratenpartei – Jung, männlich, gottlos, 20.04.2012, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/piratenpartei-jung-maennlich-gottlos-11724563.html>, retrieved 28th November 2012.

¹⁰ German federal centre of political education (bpb) website, Dossier – Parties in Germany, NPD, http://www.bpb.de/themen/ZMQY70,0,Wer_w%E4hlt_rechtsextremistisch.html, retrieved 29th November 2012.

that it was necessary to speak-out against Israel endangering world peace. Furthermore, he disapproved Germany's role in relation to Israel, asserting it was not possible to criticize Israel in the Germany of today without automatically being seen as an Anti-Semite. His work was published on 4th April 2012 in the *Süddeutsche* newspaper as well as in *La Republica* and *El Pais*.

The poem was widely seen as bordering on anti-Semitism and received little approval in the media. It did however reignite a controversial debate how Germany should handle its Holocaust heritage and deal in German-Israeli relations. Although Grass was exaggerating the situation it seems likely that his criticism did hit a nerve in German society explaining why the poem created so much attention in the German media.

A benefit to democracy

In conclusion populism in Germany is not as pronounced as in other countries. The definition we proposed in the beginning seems to be applicable. Moreover, we find in the German example, populism-defined groups of people trying to polarize debate by making often-exaggerated statements about a challenging situation. As we have seen, a single person may also ignite the populist debate by claiming that he is breaking a taboo and speaking out for society at large against an evil or unacceptable situation.

As regards the populist political parties in Germany we can say that these are essentially fulfilling the role of giving an impulse to the political process. Quite often these parties are the call of last resort for voters despairing over, what is for them, an unacceptable situation. In order for established parties not to lose ground and not to get out of touch with their constituents these worries have to be addressed in form of adapted policies. These may include integration policies, updating intellectual property rights, protecting the environment or addressing social injustice.

All three examples of populism we briefly looked at illustrate that populism, especially in such a mild form as in Germany, is not necessarily harmful. It is probably the opposite. In all three cases there were discussions and exchanges about these challenges to society afterwards. This polarization that populism brings with itself supports an adversarial exchange of thought throwing up all sorts of arguments and ensuring that a complex of problems receives adequate attention. If such a created debate remains factual and balanced, as we argue it is in Germany, populism will actually benefit the democratic process in society.

A map of Europe with the borders of all countries outlined in white. Austria is highlighted in a dark blue color, while all other countries are in a light blue color. The map is centered on the European continent.

AUSTRIA

1. Right-wing populism in Austria: just populism or anti-party party normality?

Dr. Manfred Kohler, PhD (European Parliament & University of Kent)

Conventional literature on populism often describes populist parties as new parties or even movements (see, e.g. Decker 2006). Others see a new type of populist parties emerging especially in Western Europe, classified by Dick Pels (2011) as a new kind of '*national individualism*' – as it has occurred, for instance, in the Netherlands (Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders) and Belgium (Bart de Wever's New Flemish Alliance). This new type has abandoned the notion of a uniform and homogenous *Volksgemeinschaft*, the latter of which

is still endorsed by first generation populist parties, such as the Austrian Freedom Party. The two Austrian 'populist' parties (now three including the single-man party running for the 2013 national elections called 'Team Stronach' founded by the Austro-Canadian millionaire, Frank Stronach), the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) and its rather weak Haider-initiated break-off, the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ), are very hard to locate within the populism research spectrum.

One reason is that they are both rooted in Austria's traditional third camp of German-nationals. Another reason is that, while they purport to be movements and anti-elite parties, they have more or less existed in alternating forms before and after World War II, with its national-socialist roots protruding most in their genealogy. A third reason is that both of them have formed part of coalition governments, albeit always in the role of junior partners. While the Freedom Party of Austria has successfully marketed itself as a non-traditional party constituting the voice of the people, it has in fact never really acted different from the other two major traditional parties in Austria, Social Democrats (SPÖ) and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP). This is especially true when the Freedom Party had to assume a position of responsibility in government. Whenever forming part of a governing coalition, it became hard for the latter to maintain its non-traditional image as the voice of the people. In fact, government participation led to intra-party conflict and break-offs ('BZÖ') and declining election results.

Characteristics of Populist Parties in Austria

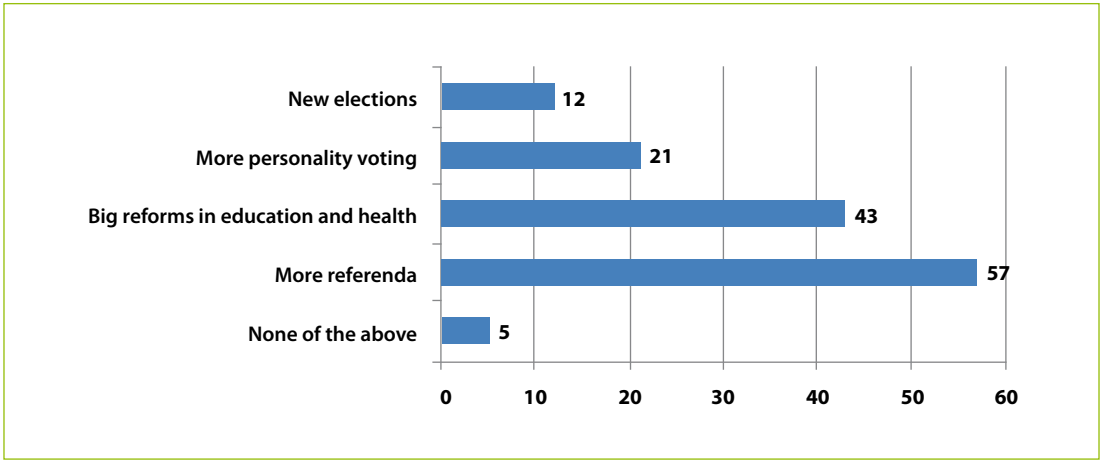
While the excellent contribution by Karima Aziz (in this volume) focuses more on the history, evolution, and manifestations of Austrian populist parties, this contribution takes a closer look at the characteristics of and tools applied by what I prefer to call Austrian 'anti-party parties' (see, e.g. Pallaver & Gärtner 2006; Frölich-Steffen 2006), rather than Austrian populist parties. The author does so because he thinks that the evolutionary reality of Austrian politics is very strongly co-featured and shaped by the Freedom Party of Austria, which has, since the 1950s, well marketed itself as a party using populist style rhetoric and tools to highlight its purported anti-systemic character, while at the same never shaking the constitutional foundations of Austria's Second Republic after 1945, even when in government. This contribution departs from the general idea that populism is more of a political instrument and stylistic means to create a dualism between 'we' and 'them', e.g. the elite, the Muslim or the European Union here. Populism is thus conceived as a means to make use of multiple ideologies, but not representing one itself. Embarking from this conception of populism, however, makes it harder to define the Freedom Party, which I will focus on here, as a classical populist party. This is because the latter party is indeed endowed with

a clearly demarcated ideology, which is that of ethno-nationalism (see e.g. Smith 1998) and the idea of a pure *Volksgemeinschaft* of Austrians. As opposed to other European populist parties which have embarked on a journey towards more individual nationalism (Pels 2011), the predominant anti-party party of Austria, the Freedom Party, has not abhorred the notion of uniform Germanic (Austrian) peoplehood, even if, at times, the latter is less emphasized against the background of challenges like the Euro crisis. Nevertheless one can posit that the Freedom Party makes heavy use of the dualisms applied by conventional populism. It undeniably markets itself as a modern movement or new party, the voice of the people, the antagonist of the local political and European elites, and the protector of the native *Volk* as well as the guarantor of popular (Austrian, not anymore German) sovereignty against the corrupt and impure elite at the national and European levels.

Instruments of Populism in Austria

First of all, all Austrian anti-party parties are located to the right or at least center-right of the political spectrum. The Freedom Party, which has always had the potential to muster between 15-30% of the electoral vote ever since the ascendance of Jörg Haider in 1986, has used the following populist tools to succeed in regional, national and European elections: the first is to attack the political establishment and the corresponding Austrian consociational democracy model (see, e.g. Lijphart 1981), also called 'Proporz', which is based upon the consensus among the Social Democrats (SPÖ) and the conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) to share power in the governance and administration of Austria (see, e.g. Pelinka 2008). The second populist strategy is to base the party organisation upon a charismatic leader, who is marketed as the representative of the ordinary man ('Der kleine Mann') – a political messiah. This leader, Heinz-Christian Strache of the Freedom Party, constantly appeals to the need of strengthening and implementing popular sovereignty in the form of a stronger plebiscitary democracy, a notion which is very popular among Austrians, as the representative sample below demonstrates.

What do you expect from politicians (responses in percent)



Source: Author's own depiction. Data from: http://diepresse.com/home/politik/innenpolitik/708004/Die-Ergebnisse-der-PresseUmfrage?direct=707911&_vl_backlink=/home/politik/innenpolitik/707911/index.do&selChannel= (accessed 11 December 2012)

One of the reasons why the Alliance for the Future of Austria is less successful than its 'big brother', the Freedom Party, is that its leader, Josef Bucher, is non-charismatic and hardly known.

The charismatic leader's call for more direct democracy is aimed at establishing a 'direct' link between himself and the people. This link is reaffirmed by the alliance with and reliance on local and Austria-wide tabloids and newspapers, like the Kronen Zeitung, to advocate 'real' popular rule. Another populist strategy is to brand the party (leader) as the saviour of the Austrian culture from the invasion of immigrants and asylum seekers ('Daham statt Islam').

Another populist aspect that makes the Freedom Party attractive is that it aims to overcome classical cleavages by taking right and left positions, which makes it palatable to a wider electorate, not just to 'losers of modernization' (see, e.g. Pelinka & Wodak 2002). The strategies and tools of agitative speech, resorting to common sense, radical solutions, the polarization between the elite and the grass roots of society, between 'we' and 'them' (Muslims), conspiracy theories, taboo breaches, intentional provocation, violent metaphors, biologicistic rhetoric and fear-mongering all constitute a poisonous but indeed tasty cocktail to the people - 'opium for the people' in a dull and rigid political landscape.

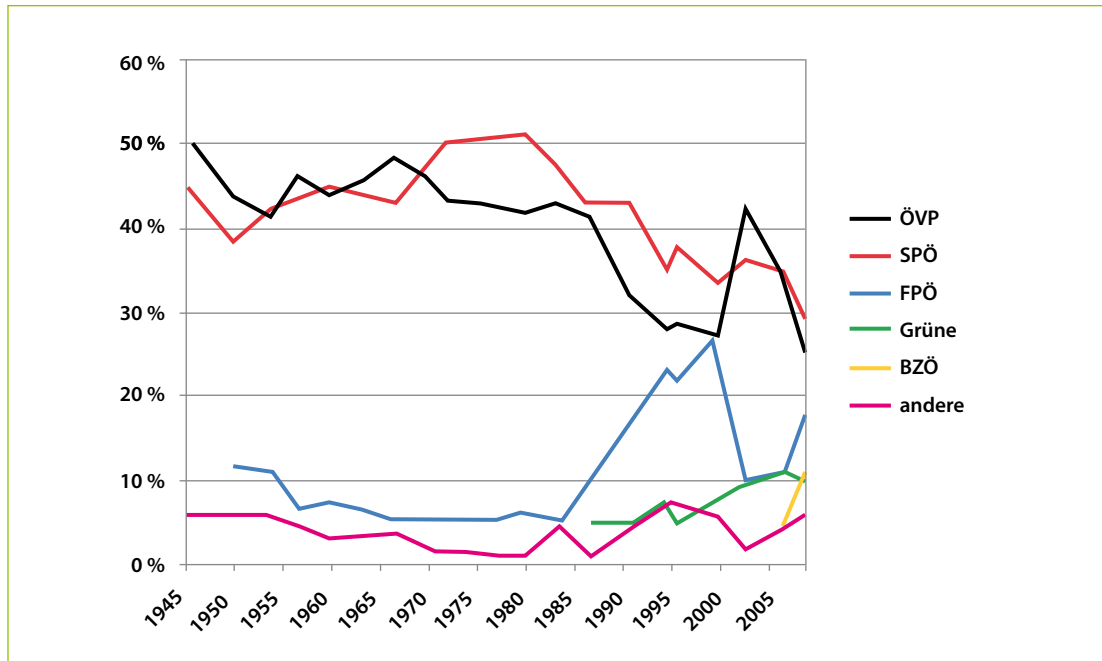
The impact of populist strategy in Austria

One of the major impacts of populist rhetoric and strategy is the fact that the traditional governing coalition parties, the Social Democrats and the Austrian People's Party, have steadily lost ground in national elections.



Source: Web archive of Heinz-Christian Strache's homepage. See online: <http://web.archive.org/web/20071105204733/http://www.hcstrache.at/index.php?style=7> (accessed 11 December 2012)

Austrian National Council elections since 1945



Source: See online: <http://www.nationalratswahl.at/ergebnisse.html> (accessed 11 December 2012)

Another impact of populist politics in Austria is the widespread anti-EU attitude among the citizens. Austrians are among the most EU-sceptic Europeans among all 27 member states of the European Union (European Commission 2012). The current sovereign debt crisis increases this trend, while the anti-European Freedom Party uses the crisis to depict the Austrian Chancellor, Werner Faymann, and the Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister, Michael Spindelegger, as politicians who just sell Austria's neutrality, the pillar of Austrian identity after World War II, for the sake of creating a European super-state. Other rhetoric expressly accuses the Austrian government of pouring millions of Euros generated by Austrian taxpayers into the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), thus helping out the 'lazy' Greeks. This strategy of forming internal (Austrians vs. Muslims) versus external dualisms (Austrians versus Greeks) does not only strengthen popular support for the Freedom Party especially, but, in the latter case, it also potentially shakes the foundation of European integration, which is based upon the growing together of nation-states upon equal terms.

Last but not least a powerful impact of Austrian populism is that anti-immigration attitudes among Austrians have not just prevailed, but continue to exist. This is best reflected in the ever

increasing tightening of immigration and asylum rules over the past ten years, and this process was not only driven by the Austrian right wing parties, the FPÖ and the BZÖ, when they were in government from the beginning of 2000 until 2006, but it was further intensified by the currently ruling government coalition of the Austrian People's Party and the Social Democrats, the latter of which even supported tight immigration and asylum laws while being in opposition. Instead of fighting negative stereotypes on foreigners, migrants and Greeks in the case of the current Euro crisis, the ruling parties have decided to bandwagon with the Freedom Party and thus popular opinion. This may have the most damaging long-term impact on the socio-cultural as well as public spheres in Austria. But are populist tools and strategies all that negative from a normative or moral perspective? Or do they also highlight problems that cannot be ignored in the long-run?

Is Populism destructive?

In the case of Austria, the answer as to whether populism is destructive or not has to be answered with a clear 'Jein', that is yes and no.

Yes, because Austrian populist instruments have contributed to widening the gap between 'we' and 'them', whoever the latter stands for, be it the

Muslim, the immigrant in general, the political establishment or even the European Union. This is a tremendous success for Austria's anti-party parties, particularly the Freedom Party. But when it comes to, for instance, anti-EU sentiments among Austrians, this also highlights the fact that the European Union's political system is not tangible and conceivable to the citizens of Europe due to a weakly developed principle of representation at European level, with a weak popularly elected European Parliament confronted with the almighty heads of state and government in the European Council. Other destructive impacts of populist strategy in Austria are an intolerant climate towards foreigners and the questioning of the achievements of liberal representative democracy in favour of 'real' popular rule, which in itself bears the seeds of authoritarianism.

The advantage of anti-party party politics with its populist elements is that it has shown that society in Austria has changed towards more modernization and individualism. Being a party member

'from the cradle to the grave' is no longer a social reality, just like the long-standing party camp mentalities that have widely eroded. The social cleavages between secularism and religion or capital and labour have been widely closed due to the consociational democracy model established after World War II in Austria, which placed emphasis on power sharing between the two major political parties, the SPÖ and ÖVP. However, this successful system of consociationalism is now questioned by many Austrians, probably rightfully so since it served its purpose of maintaining peace within a once divided society made up of Social Democrats and ÖVP members. A leap towards more personality voting and more competitive democracy is thus a legitimate claim. Taking citizens on board in a liberal representative democracy is a huge challenge at both the national and European levels. Populist parties in Europe and the anti-party party, the FPÖ, are not just destructive, but can also be correctives in liberal representative democracies that sometimes do not come to terms with the principle of representation.

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2. Populist parties in Austria

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In the Austrian political scene there is primarily one party which can be defined as a populist party. The Freedom Party Austria, Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs FPÖ, applies to both approaches of 'populism' as an ideology as well as an instrument of politics. However, the FPÖ also needs to be identified as a right-wing, or even extreme-right, party (see below). There are other smaller movements, such as the BZÖ, which emerged as a split from the FPÖ, and for example the new Team Stronach. These are often described as populist in how they conduct their style of politics. The following paper describes the history and representation of the FPÖ as well as the BZÖ, as a successor in a certain sense; the geographical differences; the social stratification of the electorate as well as the level of radicalisation. Furthermore, the links of the FPÖ to other countries are exemplified and a short look into a possible future, as ascertained from current opinion polls, will be presented.

History & representation

The Freedom Party of Austria (see Bauer 2012: 53 ff.) (FPÖ) was constituted on the 7th of April 1956 as the successor to the Association of the Independent, Verband der Unabhängigen VdU, which brought together former national socialists, German nationalists and liberal pan-Germans. The goal of the FPÖ was the establishment of a 3rd camp to compete with the major parties of Social Democrats SPÖ and the Christian-Social party ÖVP. The FPÖ grew to be a German nationalist party, which reached between 5.5% and 7% of the vote, and was used as a bargaining chip in negotiations by the two major political parties. For a long time two groups within the FPÖ were fighting for predominance; the radical-nationalist against the economic liberal wing. At the party congress in 1980, the economic liberal wing won and, after the national elections in 1983 in which the FPÖ achieved its lowest result of 5%, formed a coalition with the SPÖ and therefore was part of a government for the first time.

Despite the liberal orientation (see Bauer 2012: 54-55) a lot of German nationalist voters remained attached to the party, which led to irritations amongst the governing coalition and within

the party. The resistance of the German nationalists under Jörg Haider grew, and after his election as the new party leader in 1986 the coalition broke up. Under Jörg Haider the FPÖ went through a radical repositioning as a right-populist protest party, which could win votes in even the traditional worker's strongholds. In the middle of the 1990s the FPÖ changed from a rather diffuse protest party with broad voter coalitions to an articulated right-populism with an electoral focus on the lower social and educational classes. At the same time, Jörg Haider expressed controversial comments on the NS regime and thereby kept the traditional electorate close to the party. Following the referendum 'Austria first' in 1993, which was launched by the FPÖ, the liberal wing of the party split off and founded the Liberal Forum LIF, at the same time the FPÖ left the Liberal International.

After the takeover by Jörg Haider the FPÖ's election results (see BMI) continuously went up – 1986: 9.7 %, 1990: 16.6 %, 1994: 22.5 % – and reached their peak in 1999 with 26.9 %. The FPÖ was then the second largest party in Austria and the strongest right-populist party in Europe. In 2000 the ÖVP and the FPÖ formed a coalition, which led to sanctions being imposed on the Austrian Government by the other 14 EU Governments. In 2002 a snap election was held due to the FPÖ internal disputes between the pragmatic governing wing and the followers of Jörg Haider, who did not occupy a ministerial position. At this snap election the FPÖ lost a lot of votes and reached only 10 %. With the ÖVP emerging as the winner of the election, the two parties continued their coalition.

The FPÖ couldn't sustain the balancing act (see Bauer 2012: 55-56) between a populist anti-establishment party and a governing party supportive of the state. Previously critics of corruption and nepotism, the FPÖ soon became subject of such scandals, and flawed personnel policy made it difficult for their Ministers to conduct their work. After disastrous results in state and European elections in 2004 (23.4% to 6.3% in five years) the party leaders including Jörg Haider left the FPÖ in 2005 and founded the Alliance for the Future of Austria, Bündnis Zukunft Österreich BZÖ. The BZÖ was not really a new party, but rather the successor of the FPÖ in order to be able

to continue participation in government. In April 2005 Heinz-Christian Strache was elected as the new FPÖ party leader. Strache also acts as a right populist, but has stronger ties to the German nationalist scene than Haider did. Almost the whole Carinthian FPÖ transitioned into the BZÖ; in the other regions the FPÖ was able to stay dominant. The federal state elections brought up weak results for the FPÖ and the BZÖ, but they continuously improved.

At the national elections in 2006 the FPÖ reached 11% of the votes and due to its good results in Carinthia the BZÖ reached 4.1 % nationally and thereby passed the 4% threshold for parliamentary representation.

In snap elections in 2008, both parties benefited from dissatisfaction with the ruling Grand Coalition and won 18% (FPÖ) and 11% (BZÖ), both outpolling the Greens. Combined, this result would make them the second largest party in Austria. Two weeks later Jörg Haider passed away in a car accident. In December 2009 the Carinthian BZÖ broke from the national BZÖ and entered into a cooperation alliance with the FPÖ. At the Viennese city election in 2010 the FPÖ received 26% of the votes and is now the second strongest party in Vienna. The FPÖ is currently represented in the national assembly, in all of the nine state assemblies and a number of local councils. At the elections for European parliament the FPÖ managed to double its votes from 6.3% in 2004 to 13.1% in 2009, but was still below expectations since it lost a lot of votes to the Eurosceptic populist Hans-Peter Martin, who reached 17.9% and who clearly distanced himself from extreme right and racist positions.

Geographical differences

Concerning geographical differences (see BMI) in the results of the FPÖ and the BZÖ there is of course one major difference, which is the local situation in Carinthia. Carinthia was always a stronghold of Jörg Haider, so when he founded the BZÖ, almost the whole Carinthian FPÖ transitioned into the BZÖ. Currently it calls itself FPK (Freedom Party Carinthia) and is again in cooperation with the FPÖ. In Carinthian state elections the FPÖ reached 42.4% in 2004, but in 2009 after the establishment of the BZÖ, the BZÖ got 44.9% and the FPÖ only 3.8%.

In Vienna the FPÖ was the second strongest party in the city elections of 2010 with 26%. In Vorarlberg, the FPÖ achieved a similar result with 25 %. After Vienna and Vorarlberg, the FPÖ is strongest in Upper Austria with 15%, in the other states the FPÖ polls between 9 % and 13%, the BZÖ is meaningless almost everywhere except Carinthia.

During national elections, the BZÖ was able to reach more votes than in state elections, especially in its results in Carinthia with 38.5%, but also in the other federal states between 4% and even 13%. Also, the FPÖ received more votes at the national elections than at the state ones, between 7% and 20%.

Social stratification of the electorate & level of radicalization

The FPÖ is itself an 'old party', *Altpartei* (see Bauer 2012: 54), as its politicians used to describe the SPÖ and ÖVP and their tendency towards corruption and nepotism. FPÖ politicians lack distance from the NS regime, use anti-Semitic (see Schiedel) undertones, or rather 'overtones' – as most recently HC Strache published a cartoon (see *Der Standard* 20.08.2012) of a stereotype of a Jew with a hook nose and a Star of David posing as a bank being fed all the food, sitting across from starving people – and formulate clearly racist statements.

In its populist orientation (see Bauer 2012: 57) it is patriotic of Austria and can attract protest voters, the so called "losers of the modernisation process", who are susceptible to right-populist phrases, especially concerning topics such as the European Union and migration. Voters with lower educational levels as well as men vote disproportionately highly for the FPÖ. It reaches those voters who were released from their traditional party ties by the modernisation process, which is connected to the transition of the FPÖ from a former middle-class party to a more proletarian party, thus using anti-European and anti-Internationalist rhetoric against all that is foreign. The party is evidently a right-wing party and is preferred by those on the right who are disappointed by the system. What differentiates the FPÖ from most other right-populist parties is its traditional stance within the Austrian party system and its huge early successes. The FPÖ has also been so successful because of the Austrian system of high political stability and the separation of all

areas of life between spheres of influence of the SPÖ and the ÖVP. During the erosion of this concordance system (see Frölich-Steffen 2006: 153), the FPÖ transformed itself from a former notability party to a protest party in an outsider role.

Fritz Plasser and Peter Ulram (see Plasser / Ulram 2000: 225-242) argue that only 40% of the FPÖ voters are the core of the party, the majority are protest voters who vote the FPÖ because of their populist politics. The FPÖ states that they received a large share of the youth vote, while the SORA institute (see Die Presse) analysed that the lower the youth's educational background and their parents' educational level, the more likely they were to vote for the FPÖ. Votes from former Yugoslavians are also disproportionately high for the FPÖ.

The main focuses of the FPÖ are Austrian patriotism, the 'foreigner problem' and EU scepticism. The FPÖ is successful among people with lower education and workers (see Plasser / Ulram 2000: 232), especially young men without union- or religious-ties and a pessimistic outlook on life. Since the FPÖ is also a proletarian party, parts of its protest can be characterised as left-populist. The FPÖ mobilises the marginal and hard-working against the elites, the Austrians against the foreigners, the Christians against islamization and so on. The FPÖ can be characterized as a right-populist party with extremist phrasing (see Weisenbericht 2000: 28). Anton Pelinka (see Pelinka 2005: 92 ff.) argues that the combination of the intensity of the right-populist rhetoric with its tradition including the NSDAP past justifies defining the FPÖ as, at least partially, extreme-right.

Links to other countries

The FPÖ maintains strong contacts (see Bauer 2012: 60) with other right-populist and extreme right parties such as Vlaams Belang, people's

movement pro Köln and the Swiss people's party. The FPÖ used to be part of the European parliamentary fraction Identity, Tradition, Sovereignty (see Bauer 2012: 113-115). Following EU enlargement, the nationalist, right-wing parties managed to bring together enough members of the European Parliament to form their own group. Already in 2005 some extreme right and right-populist parties met in Vienna and published the 'Viennese declaration' against mass immigration, islamization etc. In January 2007 they were able to be recognised as a group in the European Parliament, but already in November 2007 it was dissolved due to its own xenophobia. In 2008 there was again a meeting of extreme right and right-populist parties in Vienna, where they planned the establishment of a new right-populist, extreme-right European party. In February 2011 the European Alliance for Freedom was registered as a European party, with the FPÖ as a member. Since summer 2011 the FPÖ is also cooperating with the Slovakian National party.

A look into the future: opinion polls

Austria has a new politician – Frank Stronach. His agitation is described as soft populism (see Sperl 2012), he promotes the abolition of the Euro and wants to go back to the Schilling or an "Austrian Euro" and he poses as the saviour of Austria and the Austrian soul. In opinion polls (see profil.at) he continuously gains votes, mostly at the expense of the FPÖ. Stronach now reaches between 9% and 11% in polls. If next Sunday there were elections, the FPÖ would reach between 19% and 21%, the BZÖ is always around the 4% threshold. Before Stronach's appearance the polls estimated the FPÖ to receive between 24% and 29%, but at the time of writing this article all parties lose voters to Stronach. The Austrian election year 2013 will show whether this trend will be sustained.

Internet:

Official website FPÖ: <http://www.fpoe.at/>
H.C. Strache: <http://www.hcstrache.at/>
Official website BZÖ: <http://www.bzoe.at/>
Official website team Stronach: <http://www.teamstronach.at/>

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Weisenbericht (2000): Bericht von Martti Ahtisaari, Jochen Frowein und Marcelino Oreja. On 27.11.2012: <http://derstandard.at/upload/images/bericht.pdf>

A map of Europe with Slovakia highlighted in dark blue. The rest of the map is in a light blue color. The map shows the outlines of the countries in Europe.

SLOVAKIA

Populism in Slovakia

Peter Učeň, independent researcher

An experience confirms that more often than not any discussion on populism is impaired by the gravely differing opinions of participants on what populism actually is. Many people automatically apply the approach 'we do not know what it is but will recognise it immediately when we see

it.' Therefore, it is inevitable to present briefly my preferred approach to populism before proceeding to the description of populist politics in Slovakia. After all, that description is predictably marked by the chosen definition.

Defining populism for the research and ‘policy’ purposes

Obviously, the prevailing motivation in choosing any definition should be the methodological one; the definition should provide for a meaningful scientific inquiry and analysis. There are, however, cases when the notion, such as populism, starts to live the life of its own and most of that life takes place outside of the realm of scholarship. Various groups and public in general adopt the notion in their discourse for their own particular goals and tracing this inflated usage of the term inevitably leads a methodology-minded scholar to a single conclusion – conceptual stretching. A scholar often moving between academia and policy development realm (‘think tanking’), is regularly confronted with the dilemma of choosing different definitions for different occasions to tackle the conceptual stretching outside of academia: In my case, **for the sake of (comparative) political research I prefer an approach which considers populism to be a ‘thin-centred ideology,’ while for the sake of ‘think tanking’ and debates with public I often resort to defining it as ‘the particular way of doing politics informed by the populist ideology,’** followed by the next logical step, that is defining populist ideology.

A ‘thin-centred ideology’ approach comes from the *morphological approach to ideologies* developed by Michael Freeden [Freeden 1996, 2003]. In it, the *conventional notion of ideology* as a ‘set of political ideas, beliefs and attitudes that involve the adoption of practices which explain, support, justify or contest socio-political arrangements, and which provide plans for action for public political institutions’ (Freeden 1998, 749), has not been challenged; but Freeden regards ideologies as ideational phenomena with a capacity of influencing how we perceive and behave in political realm. Paraphrasing the author, while ideologies indeed compete over plans for public policy, they do it primarily through the competition over the control of political language; and they do it in a special way (Freeden 2003, 54). This way is to be discerned through the analysis of morphology of ideologies as structured and patterned systems – assemblages of *political concepts* – where the functions to a great degree hinge upon they way the concepts are configured. In sum, ‘[a]n ideology is,’ Freeden affirms, ‘a wide-ranging structural arrangement that attributes meanings to a range of mutually defining political concepts’ (Freeden 2003, 52). Each ideology consists of its core – a fundamental and ineliminable class of

concepts which define which major areas of the politics the ideology refers to. (Those areas, in case of grand mainstream ideologies, are typically related to the problems of social justice, distribution of resources, and conflict-management of societies (Freeden 2003, 99).

The morphological approach to populism – and to any other ideology for that matter – then rests on identifying the concepts in its ineliminable core. The unique combination of these concepts makes ideology distinct. Freeden’s morphological view of ideologies is far from being ahistorical. It is based on the fact that traditional ‘grand’ ideologies have been created by concrete actors and that they evolved around important historical traditions. Those are specimens of established, distinct and ‘full’ ideologies. In order for ideology to be established, it needs to ‘manifest a shared set of conceptual features over time and space’ (Freeden, 1998, 749). To be a distinct one, ideology’s core ‘will have to be unique to itself alone’ (Freeden 1998, 750) vis-à-vis other thought-patterns.

The essence of this section of the text is to claim that populism can be justified as distinct, yet thin-centred ideology. Cas Mudde referred to this reasoning when providing a definition of populism in his seminal article (Mudde 2004) as well as in his later book where populism was featured as a part of a definition of the party family of the populist radical right (Mudde 2007). For Mudde, populism is ‘a thin-centred 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 2007, 23). Mudde’s approach assumes three concepts to be present in the ideological core of populism: ‘the people,’ ‘the elite’ and ‘popular sovereignty.’

Further, drawing on Freeden, Ben Stanley elaborated on conceptualisation of populism along the same lines, but in greater detail. He defined the thin core of the populist ideology by pointing out its following ‘four distinct but interrelated’ concepts:

- (1) ‘The existence of two homogeneous units of analysis: ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’
- (2) The antagonistic relationship between the people and the elite
- (3) The idea of popular sovereignty
- (4) The positive valorisation of ‘the people’ and denigration of ‘the elite’” (Stanley 2008, 102)

Stanley argues, and I subscribe to this argument, that an interaction of the four core concepts of populism results in a distinct, yet incomprehensive, *interpretation of the political*. The core concepts depict the structure as well as logic of the populist political. As those concepts can be identified in messages of actors across many temporal and territorial instances of the populist politics, and they manifest a quality of an exclusive thought-pattern, it is reasonable to assume that populism qualifies for being considered an established and distinct ideology.

Consequences of conceptualization

Compared to grand narratives such as socialism or liberalism – which we conventionally consider the ideologies – the slim ideology of populism, with its restricted conceptual core, can not achieve what grand ideologies do: (1) to define an anthropological conception of man; (2) to provide justification and blueprint for an institutional structure of the [complex] polities; and, (3) to give reason for policy preferences and supply the set of policies for (modern) societies. Rather than providing all those nice things, populism, instead, quite monotonously reiterates **that the people has been denied is legitimate place in politics by the elite, that this aberration has to be put right, and that politics should be an expression of the popular will**. Therefore, a very frequent consequence of the conceptual thinness of populism is that many observers and scholars refuse to consider it an ideology and regard it as the political style at most. This lone ambition of populism to argue in favour of restoring the legitimate place of the people also makes a search for distinctive political institutions of populism – even the proverbial referenda and other instruments of direct democracy – a rather futile enterprise.

Another consequence thereof is *combinability*, meaning that the thin and largely impractical ideology of populism almost never stands alone and it willingly and, frankly, inevitably combines with elements of other ideologies in party messages. When looking for populist appeals, we typically find them in conjunction with various ‘host-vessels’ [the term taken from Freedman]. (The primary example of this feature of populism is Mudde’s analysis of the empirically prevailing instance of populism – the party family of the populist radical right [Mudde, 2007]. This feature, however, also makes this approach to populism amenable to comparative political research.

In practical terms then, treating populism as a distinct yet highly combinable ideology means attempting in analysis:

- (a) to recognise the presence of its core concepts in the messages of parties and leaders;
- (b) to identify the forms those concepts may assume;
- (c) to assess the relative weight they are assigned in those appeal (some may be ‘more populist than anything else’, others ‘more anything else than populist’);
- (d) to disentangle their interplay with components of other ideologies present in party messages.

By the same token, spotting the manifestations of the core concepts of populism in party messages facilitates analytical treatment of diversity within populism (or among populisms). Variety which the core concepts themselves may exhibit gives a promise of successfully accounting for an array of real-life cases of populism. While all ‘populisms’ have to be similar in sharing the basic concepts, they may (and indeed will) differ in their manifestations and relative weight. Explaining the array of ‘populisms’ means also taking into account that populist arguments will be at variance as to how they define ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’ (who belongs to it, who does not, and why so), and what are the exact forms, and manifestations of their antagonistic relationship (how the elite harm people). Tracing variance should also include the recommended means for restoring the primacy of the people in the political realm (even though here the responses can be rather obscure).

A viable comparative strategy can be then conceived based on these assumptions as indicated, for example, by Stanley’s thoughts regarding the expectations of such research:

‘At any given point, certain parties and social movements will be ‘more populist’ than others, in that populism is a more salient aspect of their appeal. Some may retain over time a consistent combination of populism and another, full ideology. Others may hitch their populism to a variety of passing ideological bandwagons. Still others may keep to a consistent full ideology with a waxing or waning populist element. Finally, in some cases they may exhibit no particular ideological consistency, thin or full. Amidst all these divagations, the identification of populism will continue to be a demanding and controversial task, but no less important or relevant for all that’ (Stanley 2008, 108).

Conventional notion of populism

Before proceeding to populism in Slovakia, it will be useful to compare the above scholarly definition with a conventional notion of populism, which – being a child of the conceptual stretching and moralistic outrage – (1) is heavily moralistically charged, often elitist, and marked by economist reductionism and technocracy; (2) tends to consider populism a style rather than ideology; and, (3) judges populism based on its host ideologies or their flagship policy preferences rather than on populism's own merit.

In its conventional notion, populism is treated as the wrong and illegitimate – factually, but mainly morally – [way of doing] politics carried out by wrong and illegitimate actors. Populism is portrayed as the wrong way of obtaining popular support by, for example, courting the public mood and giving irresponsible promises. The [alleged] populists are criticised for turning to the people and speaking on its behalf – as if democratic politicians had any more urgent and important task than that – or, in more sophisticated accounts, doing these things in an illegitimate way. This is the essence of populism as an elitist epithet and a *politically correct term of abuse*.

The deprecation of populism as the legitimate way of doing politics also typically rests on judgement of the 'host vessel's' populism, often combined with – notably in the case of nationalism – the proposed policy positions, such as immigration control, which are, again, often formulated by these host ideologies rather than by populism itself, which tends to be just a voice in service of such arguments.

So, in its conventional usage populism became a stigma for various kinds of criticism of establishment, namely:

- nationalism;
- 'Euroscepticism';
- new challengers (party- as well as movement-based), such as
 - anti-establishment reform parties; and
 - movements demanding accountability.

What the term 'populism' in Europe describes in the first place is the populist radical right, the em-

pirically prevailing form of radical nationalism. In the second place the term absorbs practically any form of the challenge to the established actors, ideas, practices and institutions on the level of the nation state. On the level of EU it in addition denotes 'Euroscepticism,' that is any criticism of the mainstream conception of the European integration – its nature, direction, pace, speed, range, and procedures involved – or, any objection against the fact that established powers in Europe are eligible to define the future nature of the integration without making a detailed plans or obtaining a prior legitimacy from the European peoples. The vulgar journalistic version of the conventional notion, finally, sees populism as a synonym to the potentially violent extremist politics of the right.

To sum up, the contemporary prevailing conventional notion treats populism as elusive *but at the same time* clear and present threat to democracy. At best it concedes that under certain conditions populism could be a litmus test, an indicator of the health of democracy.

Although most of the assumptions of the conventional treatment are wrong – especially when judged from the position of scholarly rigor – the notion itself is understandable as a result of the widespread demand for a *single* word – rather than a complicated scholarly definitions full of caveats – denoting the motley crew of *all* 'problematic' actors in contemporary democracies and justifying 'we recognise it when we see it' approach to stigmatisation of an opponent. A hybrid of a methodological mistake and a deliberate political calculus, the conventional notion of populism also satisfies the demand for the politically correct term of abuse applicable to the political rivals, namely the newly emerging challengers.¹¹

Populism in Slovakia

Slovakia is no exception from a general rule of the overstretched and deliberately misused concept; after all, practically all of its relevant parliamentary parties were at one point or another accused of populism. In reality, the incidence of populism in Slovakia is lower than one would expect and it is a subject to a remarkable variation in 'intensity.'

¹¹ The scholarly equivalent of the conventional notion of populism is an effort to construct a single populist family; given the nature of its conceptual core, it is practically impossible for populism to constitute a distinct party family.

In general, when it comes to the most articulate instances of populism in the country's politics, it has been combined with nationalism (and authoritarianism) in two cases (Slovak National Party and the politics of Vladimír Mečiar) and with the non-ideological or generically leftist ideological outlooks in one case (Robert Fico).

The radical right politics of the Slovak National Party (SNS)

SNS is a member of the populist radical right family as defined by Mudde (2007). As the politics of radical nationalism it combines in its ideological core the triad of nativism (the belief that states should be inhabited by the natives and that the non-native elements constitute harm), authoritarianism (belief that the society should be hierarchically organized and transgressions against authority should be punished) and populism (in the sense of definition above).

The nature of nationalism of SNS – and of other East Central European radical right parties, for that matter – differs from the nationalism of their Western counterparts. It is marked by the different historical experience and includes the remnants of various historical traditions of the Slovak nationalism of the nineteenth and twentieth century (romanticising national emancipation movement under Hungary and the autonomy movement under Czechoslovakia respectively).¹²

The wrath of SNS nativism has been aimed mainly against the local Magyar-speaking minority – and the Czechs before that – which have been depicted as foreign elements harmful to the Slovak nation. Verbally, however, the Slovak nativist are also well versed in 'western' nativist topics such as damaging impact of immigration and the counter-Jihadist themes, regardless of the lack of both immigrants and Islamist radicals in the country.

SNS as one of the oldest parties in Slovakia, formed in March 1990 as a general nationalist party with articulate separatist tendencies which advocated Slovak national sovereignty within – but increasingly outside – of the Czechoslovak federation. After the crisis in 1993 and 1994 the

party's moderate national conservative element deserted and merged into the nascent mainstream right while SNS became the populist radical right party.

SNS participated in governments three times – two times as a junior coalition partner for Mečiar and once for Fico. While its support potential remained stable – around 10-12 per cent – the party went through ups and downs in the form of damaging disunity and splits which prevented it from parliamentary participation in 2002 and probably also in 2012.

The distinguished feature of SNS political conduct was the peculiar way in which it tamed its nationalist animosities and suppressed expressions of the nativist wrath for the sake of government acceptability and related consumption of spoils. In general, SNS is considered to be a very corrupt party, a sort of a business brotherhood selling nationalism to interested constituencies and cashing enormous political but mainly materials gains. In the aftermath of the recent electoral demise of the party and resignation of its long-time leader Ján Slota, concerns emerged that the end of SNS as Slota's 'political Ltd' and resulting waning of pragmatic impediments could lead to party's radicalization or a shift of its supporters towards the more radical and previously less popular formations of the radical right that have been resenting SNS opportunism for a long time now.

The social populism of Robert Fico

Even though Robert Fico, skilful demagogue and popular communicator, originates in the (nominally) social democratic Party of the Democratic Left (SDL) – and previously in the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) – the beginnings of his party *Smer* (Direction) were marked by a great deal of the non-ideological 'common sense' pragmatism and distancing from the traditional ideological politics.

Smer appeared in the late 1990s, as a general anti-establishment party benefiting from the resentment of the part of electorate over the culminating ideological war between Mečiar and rising

¹² In general, the current ideology of SNS – as well as of other, less successful incarnations of the radical right in Slovakia – can be characterised as a modernised version of the *ludak* ideology. The *ludak* nickname stands for the political outlook of the members of the Hlinka's Slovak People's party of the 1920s and 1930s, which acted as semi-loyal opposition and the dominant representative of the Slovak autonomist movement in interwar Czechoslovakia. The party's ideological outlook was generally Christian conservatism with authoritarian leanings and its many wings included Christian socials, Christian conservatives – the mainstream faction of admirers of Salazar and Pilsudski (rather than Hitler) – as well as indigenous Fascists and tactical allies of the German Nazism.

anti-Mečiar opposition. It came up with eclectic appeals ranging from invocation of non- or anti-ideological, 'no-nonsense' solutions to tough stance on law and order issues actually resembling more the attitudes of radical right than liberal left. After 2002 elections the party transformed its anti-establishment appeal – moving inside the mainstream politics – and moved to the left. After the short period of flirting with the (particularly interpreted) concept of the Third Way, the party decided to attach its aspiration to the mainstream ideology of the European social democracy.

The often mocked and challenged process of social-democratisation took place, which brought ideological as well as organisational changes. Ideologically, the party in opposition (2002-2006) defined itself as the 'radical social alternative to the anti-social right-wing government.' *Smer* also endeavoured to attain the membership in the transnational Party of the European Socialists (PES) and the Socialist International (SI). Against certain odds caused by the international reaction to joining coalition with Mečiar's ĽS-HZDS and Štola's SNS, the declaratory allegiance to the European social democratic mainstream proved to be a successful strategy. In organizational terms, even before its electoral victory in 2006 *Smer* managed to absorb practically all small parties tending towards social democracy thus monopolizing the entire left-of-the-center space of the political spectrum.

Since then the political competition in Slovakia became reduced to the contest of the two alternatives: one of them is *Smer* with its potential – but increasingly electorally feeble – illiberal partners, i.e. ĽS-HZDS and SNS. Another one is composed of the traditional parties of the mainstream right (SDKÚ-DS, KDH, Magyar minority party – this time Most – Híd) occasionally complemented in fragile and unpredictable alliances by the newly mobilized anti-establishment groupings of the right-of-the-center origins (SaS, OĽaNO). It was probably only the absolute majority of seats obtained by *Smer* in early elections of 2012 that precluded – or just postponed? – another landmark development in the Slovak politics taking place: that of the mainstream party of the right crossing the line and joining forces with *Smer* in the governing coalition.

Regarding *Smer's* and Fico's populism, it has always been distinct and different from the other populist actors. Even though Fico's appeals has not been recently free from instrumental nation-

alism (see Učeň 2011), compared to the radical right and Mečiar his populism was always milder and primarily appealing to different emotions. Practically since 2005, the essence of Fico's appeal has been the 'subtle populist promise of reuniting the people and the politics.' As much as Fico successfully united the camp of people who did not feel comfortable in the socio-economic and psychological regime of the two Dzurinda's governments (1998-2006) policies of which were, in general, informed by the neo-liberal logic (Učeň 2011, 81-2), he also managed to come up with the 'positive appeal':

'Fico's challenge to the 'SDKÚ world' took the form of a 'strong social state' which integrated explicitly welfarist, but also other kind of assumptions and offers. Prima facie, this alternative world included a promise of a welfare state that would be equally – or more – extensive, just as available, and strong (ready to pay greater allowances). But it went further and deeper by offering the hope of different treatment of people also on 'non-welfarist' plane. While the concept implicitly hosted an offer that the national identity and the 'national interest' are taken care of, it also included an appeal to the alienated via a promise of being treated in a dignified way regardless of their actual socio-economic status. The anti-establishment aspect of Fico's appeal – blaming elite conduct for the misery of the people – was supplemented by a subtler populist pledge of reuniting the people and politics. It was to take the form of a relationship in which nobody was left behind any more and somebody interested in ordinary people's problems was always available to take care of them and lift their burden. This was cleverly juxtaposed with the 'cold,' technocratic and individualistic nature of the 'SDKÚ world' in which, allegedly, it was inevitable that somebody could – or, indeed, was meant to – be left behind.' (Učeň 2011, 82).

Also, in spite of the mentioned drift towards the mainstream, the nature of *Smer's* social democracy has remained different from the EU mainstream, in that it underemphasizes the topics of liberal freedoms (the minority rights, namely the life style minorities, including the sexual ones), and tends to interpret the mission of a social democratic party as primarily social defence and taking care of the 'bread and butter' issues of the working people. All in all, even though the form of Robert Fico's populism has changed and evolved over time, it is probably still more adequate to

classify the party as the populist radical left or the social populist (see March and Mudde 2005; March 2012) rather than a social democratic party (with the rich populist genetic legacy).

Nationally charged populism of Vladimír Mečiar

Vladimír Mečiar was the populist actor of the Slovak politics. He emerged in the aftermath of the 1989 regime change within the nominally liberal democratic camp as a pure populist. He used his populist skills to incite the opposition within the Slovak anti-Communist movement and assume the position of the leader of the dominant political force built on its ruins.

He soon made the shift of focus from 'the people' to 'the Slovak people' thus becoming a populist nationalist. He carried on the successful opposition strategy into the political program and, according to some, even to the ruling regime. He ended up as populist nationalist with authoritarian leanings, which became unequivocally pronounced in the late 1990s effort to defend his power position and to pre-empt its inevitable decline. So, he started as the champion of the idea that politics should be an expression of the will of the people and ended up as a schemer trying to obscure and constrain the revelation of the very same popular will. *Mečiarism* then represents a peculiar combination of populism and nationalism which should not be confused with that of the radical right SNS – the nature of Mečiar's nationalism was different than nativism of SNS as was different his populism and their mutual entanglement.

The key aspect of Mečiar's politics and appeals were that by use of majority rule he tried to hollow out the underdeveloped Slovak liberal democratic polity of its liberal elements. It took the form of encroachments on institutions of horizontal accountability (and in one case also attack on the popular sovereignty core of Slovak democracy).

Regarding his nationalism, he managed to unite practically all forms of nationalist sentiments in the country – with the exception of the radical nativism of SNS – and to reliably cement the affinity between the preference for the Slovak nation(alism) with the vote for his Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) party (Deegan-Krause, 2004). When it comes to his populism,

it was stronger and more articulate than that of SNS or Robert Fico. It was also more directly connected to the post-transition economic hardship and the concerns regarding the national identity and the position of Slovakia in the international environment:

'In general, Slovak opposition... reacted both to social deprivation (SDL) and to a perceived unfairness of the form of the state (SNS, KDH). But it was Vladimír Mečiar, heading the opposition within the (nominally) civic liberal camp, who mixed the "remedy" of national populism for all Slovak ails. First, he successfully combined the social and the national aspects of the Slovaks' disillusionment with the new order in his (party's) appeal to the people making the national interpret the social. Second, he added a strong populist ingredient to the movement by both defining the people (members of the Slovak nation affected by the post-transition deprivations) and pointing out the harmful elite which, ill-serving or betraying the people was to be blamed for those deprivations. Finally, he provided a suggestion for a solution (a "bearable transition") appealing to a noteworthy number of Slovaks, that meant taking (some) economic and political power to "Slovak hands", those hands being the hands of people that understood the needs and would not fail the people – Vladimír Mečiar himself and his Movement for Democratic Slovakia.' (Učeň 2010, 28).

More concretely, his populist skills and understanding of popular frustrations and predicaments enabled him to convincingly define his – ethnically Slovak – opponents as a *privileged* and *anti-Slovak elite*. He 'characterize[d] Slovakia's political competition as a *fundamental* conflict about the future of Slovakia fought between the Slovak people and the *anti-Slovak elite*' (Deegan-Krause 2012, 188, original emphasis). He mobilised a relative majority of voters on this message and maintained it for several years. 'Mečiar's most notable success lay in his ability to sustain the image of the underdog fighting against a unified elite even while he exercised the full power of the state' (Deegan-Krause 2012, 187).

His rule and influence was brought to the end only when authoritarian excesses endangered country's prospects for integration into the European Union and his many former supporters had to make their mind as to which option they preferred.

Conclusion: populist prospects

Mečiar's party as well as the politics it represented is dead. It has long become an ideologically empty political vehicle serving solely the purposes of its leader and owner. Since it failed to make it to the parliament in 2010 and 2012 elections, it even ceased to fulfil that function. With the caveat that it is difficult to tell the impact of populism from that of its 'ideological companion,' i.e. nationalism, the legacy of Vladimír Mečiar has been twofold: First it indicated to the populist hopefuls that many avenues for populist mobilisation are potentially open, be they based on nationalist or other fundaments. The second lesson was that populist success has a price. Therefore, another upsurge of populist mobilisation comparable in scope to that of Mečiar – and other than current 'subtle populism' of Robert Fico masked as the perfectly mainstream politics – is most probably conceivable only as a part of a process of the grave deterioration of the constraining capacities of the EU.

When it comes to the radical right populism of SNS, it seems currently to be in crisis. It has recently faced the split and the drain of votes towards Fico's party, and it is hypothesized that it could be confronted with the similar challenge vis-à-vis its so far less successful radical right

rivals. Namely the People's Party – Our Slovakia (ĽS-NS), a small but conceivably more radical movement suspect of being open to cadres and ideas of the neo-Nazi kind of extremism, could pose such challenge. The 10-15 per-cent electoral potential for the nativist politics is, however, here to stay. The only unknown is by whom it is going to be mobilised.

Finally, the only relevant populist force that will continue to influence Slovak politics is Robert Fico and his *Smer* party. It will have to tackle the predicaments of public policies that will at the same time try to fulfil EU's requirements for balanced budgets and persuade local population that its standards of living are not going to be compromised by such policies. This can prove to be extremely difficult. Fico's 'subtle populist promise' is suitable for all but explaining to people that they have to suffer further sacrifices for the sake of the 'system' and its future prosperity. (This represents after all the very situation which Fico masterfully used to challenge the 'neo-liberal' word of his predecessors.) Haunted by the fear of failure and afraid of a challenger that could outbid Fico in populism, the success of *Smer* in this formidable task will determine its future development – towards the mainstream or towards the revived and transformed populism.

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CZECH REPUBLIC

Populism in the Czech Republic

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Introduction

In past two decades the term 'Populism' has been almost constantly present in political debates both in Western and Central-East Europe. And it seems that the more it is being used, by various actors and in various contexts, the more difficult it is to comprehend the real meaning of the word. As professor Musil once pointed out 'the phenomenon of populism is, no doubt, a very diverse one which has taken numerous historical and regional forms, is constantly changing and has

never been precisely defined. Moreover, the term is starting to be used more often in our political struggles as a semiotic weapon. If a political party or politician wants to adroitly and effectively criticize the opponent, it is enough to use the label "populist" - even though it is, very often, not clear what this term means exactly' (see Musil 2007). This paper provides a very short overview of one basic definition of populism, which then serves as a point of departure for a description of the two most visible examples of Czech populism.

Defining populism for comparative purposes

In this short discussion post on Czech populism I will build on a minimal definition of populism, which follows the works of Canovan (1999) and especially Mudde (2000, 2004, 2007).

Margaret Canovan offers a minimalist structural definition of populism. Populism, according to her, in modern democratic societies it is best seen as an appeal to 'the people' against both the established structure of power and the dominant ideas and values of the society. Within democratic systems that often means an attack on the established parties. But anti-system mobilization is not enough by itself, Canovan says, to identify populist politics, for that description would also take in the new social movements, generally acknowledged to be something else. The crucial difference is that while both are anti-system, populism challenges not only established power-holders but also elite values. Populist animus is directed not just at the political and economic establishments but also at opinion-formers in academia and the media. It is a challenge to democracy (as it works) in the name of democracy (as it is imagined). This structural feature in turn dictates populism's characteristic legitimating framework, political style and mood.

Cas Mudde follows Canovan's crucial people/elite antagonism but understands it as an ideational rather than structural division. He defines 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. As a distinct ideology, however, populism does not possess the same level of intellectual refinement and consistency as, for example, socialism or liberalism. It is only a thin-centred ideology (see also Stanley 2008), exhibiting a restricted core that, at the same time, can be easily combined with (very different) other ideologies (Mudde 2004). Populism, thus, can have different contents depending on the establishment it is mobilizing against (Canovan 1999; see also Mudde 2000).

From these different kinds of populism this paper will concentrate on the two forms that are prevailing in current political life in Czech republic: (old) radical right-wing (or national) populism and (new) neoliberal (or centrist) populism.

One of the most cited definitions of radical right-wing populism is provided by Mudde (2007). In his work Mudde defines radical right-wing populism as an ideology based on three core elements: nativism, authoritarianism and populism (as defined above). Radical right-wing populism was at the center of interest of political scientists working in the field of populism throughout the last decade, and it is still (for its empirical and theoretical relevance), dominant today. On the other hand, Učeň (2007) points out, that the distinction must be made between this old authoritarian right-wing populism and the new form of neoliberal or centrist populism which focuses its enthusiasm against established power structures towards partisan platforms of government accountability and transparency, and which begins to prevail in the real-life politics after the turn of the millennium. The new populism is an ideology in the service of a political strategy aimed solely at gaining power. It is anti-authoritarian and economy-centred, but it shares the populist appeal to the ordinary people against the corrupt and ineffective elite with its radical right-wing counterpart.

Czech radical right-wing populism: Worker's Party

The Worker's Party (Dělnická strana) is currently the most visible and electorally most successful radical right-wing populist party in the Czech political scene. Despite the party not winning enough votes to enter national or European parliament bodies in any of the previous elections it participated in, it was able to significantly influence political life in the Czech Republic.

The Worker's Party was established by the former members of another radical right-wing populist party Association of the Republic – The Republican Party of Czechoslovakia, later known as the Republicans of Miroslav Sládek, which was fairly successful especially in the first half of the 90s. It was officially registered by the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic in December 2002 under the name 'New Power'. Few months later, in January 2003, the party changed its name to Worker's Party which it preserved until it was dissolved under the decision of the Supreme Administrative Court in February 2010 (Vejvodová 2011). After the dissolution, members of the party continued to operate under new label 'Worker's Party of Social Justice'.

In the first years of its existence, the Worker's Party presented itself mainly as an advocate of all Czech employees. Employment policy and social issues, topics otherwise typical for standard left-wing parties, was the core of its political agenda and its program was focused chiefly on exploitation of employees, increasing unemployment and support of the right to strike. It also opposed the then-ongoing process of accession of the Czech Republic to the European Union (Mareš, Vejvodová 2010).

From about the year 2007, the Worker's Party started to radicalize both its program and its public appearance. The party shifted to ethnic issues, the Roma (gypsy) problem, immigration, xenophobia, and anti-gay-rights activism. General critique of political establishment and government policies also became an important part of party's agenda. In particular, the Roma issue became crucial for the party, later on overshadowing all other issues. The party thus effectively used the generally very negative attitude of Czech majority towards the Roma population to gain more visibility and media attention.

The Worker's Party's program is characterized by three issues shared among many other radical right-wing populist parties: immigration (and national minorities); security; and corruption. Typical claims that illustrate the party's affinity especially with exclusive nationalism and racism was their proposal to change the Constitution in order to enable determination according to nationality, which should be stated on personal identification documents (Vejvodová 2011; Černoch et al. 2011).

They do not refer to themselves as being either a left or right-wing political party, stating that this is an obsolete concept. Instead they divide political parties under either liberal or popular headings. The party then presents itself as popular and national opposition against the corrupted regime.

Throughout the radicalization process the Worker's Party became very active in the streets, organizing public demonstrations, which were widely attended by members of neo-Nazi scene. This 'fight for the street', inspired by the German Nationaldemokratische Partei (NPD), was seen as a significant tool to increase party's presence in the public space and to mobilize young activists (Mareš, Vejvodová 2010). NPD was also important source of inspiration for the Worker's Party in other aspects of building its new radical

identity. This led to intensified contacts and cooperation with NPD along with the Worker's Party's traditional ally, The Slovak Togetherness.

Another element of the party's public activities was the creation of the so-called Protection Forces of Worker's Party, a paramilitary organization created for the sake of 'protection of party representatives and helping citizens with various problems' (Mareš, Vejvodová 2010). In this they took inspiration from Jobbik in Hungary, a fact often mentioned by the representatives of the party. The most notorious of Protection Forces' actions were Gay Pride march in Brno and the so-called 'fight for Janov', a violent clash with police in the excluded Roma community housing estate Janov in the northern-bohemian city of Litvínov.

The openly racist program, public appearances and violence finally led to above-mentioned dissolution of the party under the decision of the Supreme Administrative Court in February 2010. The court stated that the Worker's Party is controlled by militant racists and confirmed its connection to neo-Nazi groupings National Resistance and Autonomous Nationalists. The Court further stated that the party seeks to remove the foundations of the democratic state and the rule of law and highlighted xenophobic, racist and chauvinist aspects of the party's program (Nejvyšší správní soud 2010).

'New' Czech populism: Public Affairs

Public Affairs (Věci veřejné) represent different kind of populism than the radical right-wing Worker's Party. Their version of populism is not xenophobic, nor authoritarian, but (or at least was) an electorally much more successful one.

Public Affairs started as a civic association active in Prague 1 municipality in 2001 and in 2002 they were transformed into a political party, officially registered by the Ministry of Interior. At first they were focused primarily at Prague's communal policy, trying to eliminate common problems of local importance such as rent deregulation, noise in the city or difficult communication between citizens and the municipal authorities (Havlík 2010).

Around 2006 the nature of the party changed significantly. This was caused by a growing influence of a business sphere on the party's affairs. Public Affairs became personally and financially interlinked with the Committed Businessmen Club,

including Vít Bárta – *éminence grise* and later the official leader of the party, which interpreted its activities as an effort for transparent sponsoring of political parties. As a reaction to this many of the previous civic activists left the party.

The first step towards a higher public profile for the party was the 2009 European parliament election. Although they did not manage to enter the parliament, thanks to an extensive electoral campaign they were able to gain wider public and media attention on the national level for the first time, and also get support from several public figures, e.g. former journalist and writer Radek John who eventually became a chairman of the party. The first real electoral success came in the 2010 national elections. Public Affairs made use of a dissatisfaction of former voters of the two largest parties – Social Democrats and Civic Democrats – and gained nearly 11% of the votes and, thus, entered the Chamber of Deputies (the lower chamber of the Parliament of the Czech Republic). Afterwards the party became a member of the center-right government coalition, led by liberal-conservative Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana) (see Černocho et al 2011).

Public Affairs characterize themselves as an explicitly centrist party and refuse a clear attachment to the traditional right or left. Their program is eclectic, concentrated on bringing (often simplistic) solutions to concrete problems, without any obvious ideological affiliation. The only distinguishable slightly coherent focus of the party is their anti-establishment and anti-partisan appeal, represented by a demand for the deepening of democratic tools, more direct democracy and no corruption in public funding. Their main slogan in 2010 electoral campaign was 'remove all the old dinosaurs from politics' – a claim for the personal exchange within political structure (Černocho et al. 2011).

Public Affairs emerged in Czech political scene as a party with very strong anti-corruption appeal and actually, as members of government, they

also drafted some anti-corruption bills. Yet, paradoxically, it was they who turned out to engage in many of corruption scandals of the current Czech government. In the most notorious case, the party leader Vít Bárta was convicted of bribery and conditionally sentenced to 18 months of imprisonment in April 2012. As a result the party effectively broke up, with some members of Public Affairs leaving the party and starting a new, similarly populist, parliament faction called 'LIDEM' (For the people) which remained as a member of the government coalition. The rest of Public Affairs is currently in opposition.

Conclusion

Populism in Czech party politics takes the two most visible forms with different impacts on Czech political life. On the one hand it is the radical right-wing populist Worker's Party (of Social Justice), openly xenophobic, racist and authoritarian party which presents itself as a true advocate of common working people (of Czech nationality) against a corrupt establishment and inadaptably layabouts and criminals. Although the party has never gained enough votes for parliamentary representation, thanks to organizing controversial public demonstrations with high police and media attention and misusing a generally bad attitude of Czech public towards Roma population, they are able to significantly influence public discourse on dealing with the so called Roma problem. On the other hand it is the new populist protest party Public Affairs, making use of the general dissatisfaction of the Czech public with the political establishment and the 'old' parties. Public Affairs are not racist, nor authoritarian but they share anti-elitist and anti-establishment populist appeal with its radical right-wing counterpart. As members of the government coalition after 2010 elections, Public Affairs had a serious potential to influence Czech politics but after a series of corruption scandals and break-up of the party, their current role in the political system is rather limited.

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HUNGARY

Populism in Hungary: Conceptual Remarks

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Populism is one of the favorite buzzwords and rhetoric trumps of politicians, journalist and pundits from all across the political spectrum. In the major English language dailies, the term has in the past week been used in relation to American President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden (for their promises to strengthen welfare provision and increase the level of redistribution); the Lithuanian Labor Party and the Order and Justice (for their anti-establishment electoral campaign); Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez (for his socialist rhetoric); Alexis Tsirpas, leader of the Greek radical left-wing SYRIZA (for his anti-

capitalist messages); and Arthur Mas, leader of Catalonia's nationalist party (for his promise to seek secession from Spain). If we wanted to guess the meaning of the term on the basis of contemporary public discourse, we would most probably find that it is often used as a synonym for 'demagoguery'. The Greek word 'demagogue' is the combination of the words 'demos' (people) and 'agogos' (leader), and is used to denote political agitators and entrepreneurs who without qualms rely on prejudice, and excite hatred and irrational emotions in order to entrench their power. But while 'demagoguery' has from the ancient times been

used as a pejorative adjective, populism until recently had no negative connotations. Populism as a political concept originates in the late 19th century.¹³ It was used by the US Populist Party, an agrarian party demanding state funded loans for farmers and advocating the privatization of railroads. The anti-establishment and protectionist Populist Party, which stepped up against crony capitalism and political elites, borrowed its slogan ('candidates of the people, by the people and for the people') from Abraham Lincoln. At the same time in Russia, the Narodnik movement followed similar agrarian populist principles.

Historically, populism can be identified with anti-elite rhetoric framed as democratic politics. In this regard, American Presidents including Andrew Jackson, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt (for his declared pride in representing the opinions of everyday Americans) can be labeled populist, as well as Jimmy Carter, who once proudly declared himself a populist, rather than identifying either as a liberal or a conservative.

In the Hungarian context, three prevalent uses of populism can be traced in public discourse. First, between 2005 and 2010 the governing left-wing Socialists and the liberal Free Democrats have been criticizing the campaign promises of Fidesz by calling them populist demagoguery. The center-right party while in opposition advocated anti-establishment measures and announced that it wanted to protect the interest of everyday Hungarians. Since its landslide victory at the 2010 parliamentary election, the Fidesz government translated the campaign rhetoric into government policy. The center-right government initiated a large scale nationalization program, which included the renationalization of private pension funds, the main gas provider (MOL), and the Rába automotive company in order to make sure that, as the government claims, these firms will further national interests instead of serving the interest of foreign investors. As a cornerstone of policy, the government levied surplus taxes on energy suppliers, telecom companies, banks and international retail chains, which, according to the government is the alternative of tax hikes and austerity measures. PM Viktor Orbán declared that his government waged a freedom

fight to defend Hungarian national sovereignty against foreign speculators and international organizations including the EU and the IMF. All these measures have been labeled populist by the pro-market opposition parties.

Second, 'populist' is the common ornamental epithet of the far-right Jobbik party for its racist, anti-Semitic, anti-Roma messages, protectionist and statist economic principles, law and order rhetoric and open EU-skepticism. Interestingly, the left wing liberal opposition parties as much as the center-right Fidesz likes to label the Jobbik as a populist party, while they accuse each other for its emergence. Fidesz claims that the radical anti-establishment Jobbik gained ground as a result of the harsh neoliberal policies of the former Socialist-Liberal coalition, while the left contends that Jobbik only offers an even more extreme populist version of Fidesz' rhetoric, and thus ideologically the center-right party paved the way of Jobbik to Parliament.

Third, the Socialists (MSZP) have also been criticized for their populist welfare policies by Liberals.

It is not at all unique that in public discourse political concepts are used without clear definitions or in a theoretically completely confusing and incoherent way. It is, however, far more intriguing and surprising that the same confusion regarding the meaning of the term is present in political theory as well. Three distinct meta-approaches can be identified in the study of populism. First, as a consequence of its ambiguous use in public discourse, some scholars propose that we should not see populism as a singular political idea. Peter Wiles considers populism as a syndrome, rather than as a coherent political doctrine.¹⁴ In a similar fashion, Isaiah Berlin pondering the elusive nature of the term compared populism to Cinderella's shoes: it can be forced on a number of different political ideas, but fits none exactly.¹⁵ Ernest Gellner contemplating the theoretical debates around populism remarked that scholars seemed to agree only in that populism is a dangerous political concept – whatever it may eventually mean.¹⁶

A second possible approach is exemplified by Margaret Canovan's efforts to construct a nuanced

13 Canovan, Margaret: *Populism*. New York: Junction Books. 1981.

14 Wiles, Peter. A Syndrome, not a Doctrine: Some Elementary Theses on Populism. In: Ionescu, Ghița – Ernest Gellner (eds.). *Populism. Its Meanings and National Characteristics*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson. 166-179.

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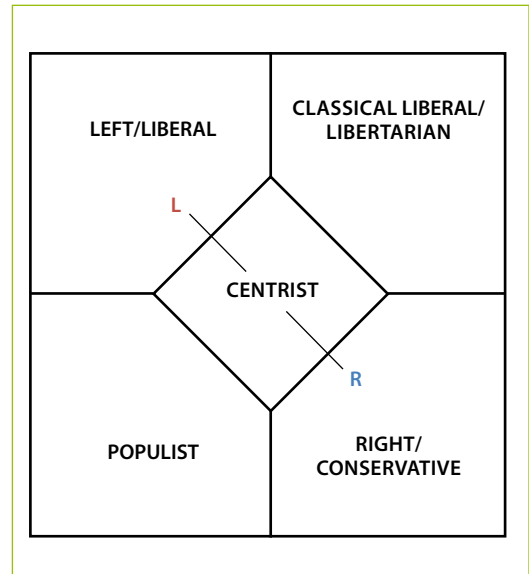
16 Ionescu, Ghița – Ernest Gellner (eds.). *Populism. Its Meanings and National Characteristics*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson. 1.

typology to analytically investigate different currents of populist politics.¹⁷ She distinguishes four main types: agrarian, dictatorial, democratic and reactionary populisms. Although Canovan's interpretation is well-thought and goes beyond the hopeless efforts to find the core doctrine of populism, it has some serious practical shortcomings. Just to briefly mention the most important one, even without offering an in-depth analysis of this typology, it is clear that Canovan uses 'populism' as an umbrella term. If populism can take both dictatorial and democratic forms, one wonders if we can indeed find commonalities which can meaningfully be called 'populism' and whether we should at all use a single term to refer to such different political strategies.

Third, some scholars argue that populism should be seen as a radical version of democracy. As Peter Worsley pointed out, every regime, party and political movement in the developed world since the beginning of the 20th century had to a certain extent been populist in the sense that they claimed to represent 'the people' and tried to gain legitimacy by popular support.¹⁸ Following this line of argument Ralf Dahrendorf noted that it did not make sense to distinguish populism from democracy. The two terms denote the same thing, the difference lies only in the eye of the beholder: "*one man's populism is another's democracy, and vice versa*".¹⁹

Taking all this into account, it seems that it would be futile to try to define populism as a single and coherent political doctrine. On the other hand, it is also fruitless to attempt to view it as a specific mobilizing tool, since then it could not be distinguished from democracy. This, however, does not imply that populism cannot be used as a legitimate analytical category in political analysis. One can offer a working definition for populism and apply the term accordingly in a specific context without assuming the generalizability of the concept. For the sake of simplicity, I would propose that in the Hungarian context, the populist label is reserved for socially conservative nationalists advocating anti-market protectionist measures in the economy. In terms of the somewhat modified Nolan Chart (see figure), populism is marked

by restrictive policies both in terms of the economic freedom and personal freedom.



By narrowing down the scope of the term, in the Hungarian context the label populist could be reserved for the Jobbik party. By doing so, we could single out the most important Hungarian party, which shares the most commonalities with Western European populists. Although Jobbik is often referred to as a far-right or radical party, in the Nolan Chart could not be called a genuine right-wing party. In the Nolan Chart, the left-right axis is reserved for economic policies, in which regard the Jobbik clearly is on the far-left end of the scale. Jobbik staunchly criticizes what it calls neoliberal economic principles and promises to significantly restrict the rights of foreign investors (whom they consider 'speculators') and banks in order to help indebted Hungarians suffering to service their debt accrued in foreign currencies. Jobbik also promises to significantly increase welfare spending and renationalize strategic sectors, including utility and energy providers (aims that are also dear to the current center-right Fidesz government). As an important symbolic measure, Jobbik would restrict the rights of foreigners to acquire land and buy real estate in the country. As for personal freedom, Jobbik supports an authoritarian ideology. Anti-Semitic and anti-Roma slurs and hints are regular themes

¹⁷ Canovan *ibid.*

¹⁸ Worsley, Peter. The Concept of Populism. In: Ionescu, Ghița – Ernest Gellner (eds.). Populism. Its Meanings and National Characteristics. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson. 212–250.; see also Mudde, Cass. The Populist Zeitgeist. Government and Opposition. Volume 39, Issue 4, pages 542–563, Autumn 2004 and Taggart, Paul. The New Populism and the New Politics: New Protest Parties in Sweden in Comparative Perspective. New York: St. Martin's Press. 1996.

¹⁹ Dahrendorf, Ralf. Acht Anmerkungen zum Populismus. In: Transit. Europäische Revue. 25 [2003]. 156.

for the party leadership and Jobbik MPs. Jobbik endorses harsh law and order policies, including the restoration of gendarme and the death penalty. Similarly to other East Central European and Western European populist parties, Jobbik opposes European integration fearing that it would severely restrict national self-determination. Luminaries of the party have suggested that once they get into power, they initiate that Hungary quits the European Union. In addition, Jobbik is an ardent supporter of the inclusion of ethnic Hungarians living in the neighboring countries. After the Fidesz government in 2010 opened up

the possibility for non-resident ethnic Hungarians to apply for Hungarian citizenship without residence in the country, Jobbik suggested that this should be the first step in the reunification of Greater Hungary by the reincorporation of the territories which were annexed to the neighboring states by the 1920 Paris Peace Treaties. Borrowing one of the main themes of Western European xenophobic populist parties, Jobbik also staunchly opposes the immigration of non-Hungarians, although Hungary is not considered as a popular destination for trans-migrants.



AFTERWORD

Populism in Central Europe – challenge for the future! Europe Facing the Populist Challenge

Afterword article by Prof. Dick Pels, PhD (De Helling, The Netherlands)

In our book *Populism in Europe* we emphasize, firstly, that the new rightwing populism is not the rehearsal of something old but represents a *new* political phenomenon, and secondly, that it is not an unfortunate incident or accident but is *here to stay*: as a stable addition to or extension of the current landscape of European politics. If so, populism offers a much more serious challenge to the theory and practice of liberal democracy than is often acknowledged, not solely in terms of its media-political and organisational style, but also in terms of its ideology. The new rightwing

populism is not alien to our political traditions, but comes closer than expected, forcing us into serious self-criticism and towards a reinvention of our own ideals of liberty, democracy, identity and tolerance. It offers a special challenge to us Greens since, as will be illustrated below, the green and populist movements are interconnected in unexpected ways, representing adversarial sides of the same cultural politics which (in the West) has emerged since the educational and meritocratic revolution of the 1960s and 1970s.

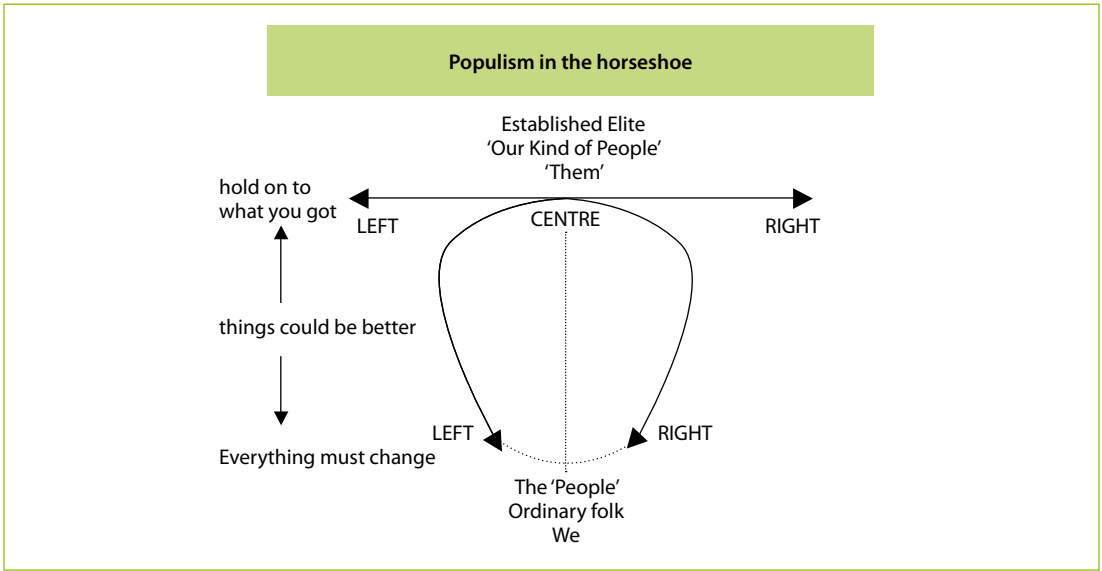
After more than three decades, we cannot but notice that the new nationalist populism has settled securely all across Europe. As of June 2011, populist rightwing parties were represented in almost half of the 27 national parliaments. Currently at a 15-17% high, averaging 13% across Europe, they muster almost twice as much electoral support as the green parties. Instead of presenting an anomaly or a form of pathology, populism has entered the political mainstream, changing the content and tone of political competition in many countries. Rather than assimilating it to the historical movements and parties from the thirties, we need to situate it in the novel context of a much more securely settled democratic culture, a media-saturated political landscape, and the collective framework built by more than 65 years of European integration. As a pan-European phenomenon, it represents the severest internal challenge to and test for the viability of the European project that has emerged to date.

By way of definition, let me settle upon a minimal characterization, which focuses upon three closely interdependent features: nativism, authoritarianism, and popular sovereignty (Mudde 2007). Nativism is a weaker variety of nationalism, which nevertheless demands that states should be inhabited exclusively by natives or the in-born, while non-natives or foreign-born should be seen as fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous community. This presumption of homogeneity implies a penchant for authoritarianism: the belief in a morally cohesive and strictly ordered society. The same presumption of popular unity or homogeneity translates into the notion of a dominant political division between a 'pure' people and

a corrupt elite, the demand for direct popular rule, distrust of party competition and professional politics, and the precedence of popular common sense (and hence majority opinion) over minority opinion and 'elitist', including scientific, expertise. In this perspective, populism is not anti-democratic but rather radicalizes the democratic principle by taking it literally (directly).

Three Distinctions

It is crucial to draw a few distinctions, which at once 'break up' this encompassing definition: 1. That between leftwing and rightwing populism; 2. That between first and second generations of populist movements, and 3. That between Western and Eastern European varieties of populism. The first distinction implies that populism also features a strong leftwing tradition, including significant similarities between left and right (among which count a strong anti-elitist, anti-party and anti-bureaucratic sentiment, as well as a penchant for direct democracy). Indeed, in a number of European countries, one may currently discern a shift in the populist protest vote from right to left, while the traditional mainstream parties continue to crumble (cf. Greece, where the political middle barely holds, the rise of the Piratenpartei in Germany, the success of Beppe Grillo's Cinque Stelle movement in Italy, the Socialist Party in the Netherlands and perhaps also the Palikot movement in Poland). This increased traffic between the radical right and left can be fruitfully charted by replacing the traditional one-dimensional 'wing' model of the political spectrum by an alternative two-dimensional 'horseshoe' model:



The second, generational distinction appears to overlap to some extent with the West-East distinction. First-generation parties such as the Front National (founded 1972), the Flemish Block (founded 1979), the FPÖ (which became a significant political force from 1986 under Jörg Haider's leadership) and Lega Nord (founded 1991) tend to root more strongly in the radical nationalist, anti-semitic and homophobic past. This applies with even less restriction to parties such as the British National Front, the German NDP, Ataka in Bulgaria, the Slovakian National Party, Jobbik in Hungary and Golden Dawn in Greece.

But there has emerged a second generation of populists who are careful to take their distance from this disreputable 'brown' past. More recently established parties such as the Dansk Folkeparti (founded 1995), the True Finns, the Sverige Demokraterna (under new leadership since 2000), the Dutch LPF (Pim Fortuyn's party, founded 2002), Geert Wilders' Freedom Party (founded 2005) and the New Flemish Alliance in Belgium, have all adopted a more civic, centrist and liberal-democratic face, having emerged in quite a few cases as offshoots of established liberal parties. In France, this generational shift is perhaps literally performed in the recent succession of Marine Le Pen to the leadership of FN. The biological racism (especially antisemitism), militarism and territorial nationalism of the older movements is displaced by a softer cultural nationalism, which urges the defence of an indigenous 'lead culture' and national identity against a generalized Other which is often (but not necessarily) identified as Islam.

The Netherlands, Austria, Belgium

Before exploring the West-East divide, let us take a closer look at three cases, which may illustrate this generational shift: the Netherlands, Austria and Belgium. The Dutch electoral revolt of 2002 and the rise and tragic demise of Pim Fortuyn perhaps offers a paradigmatic example of this softer, more liberal and democratic populism (Pels 2003). Fortuyn's assassination on 6 May 2002 provided the dramatic intensity which inescapably drove home his political message: an unprecedented cocktail comprising anti-islamism, nationalism 'lite' and the defence of the libertarian values of the sixties ('I don't want to do the emancipation of women and gays all over again'). His successor Geert Wilders has similarly mixed anti-islamic, liberal-democratic and

nationalist themes into a kind of 'national individualism' (Pels 2011a; 2011b). Crucially different from the collectivist temper of the thirties ('Du bist Nichts, dein Volk ist Alles'), it tends to identify the people as a 'people of individuals' (or even individualists). The ideal of individual self-assertion (the consumerist 'me first') and that of national self-determination and cultural preference ('my people first') do no longer contradict but complement each other. This liberal populism is primarily about 'holding on to what you've got', both as regards material wealth and in terms of cultural and national identity.

In the recent national election campaign, Geert Wilders has interestingly 'swapped enemies', substituting Europe for Islam and Brussels for Mecca as his main symbolic targets of attack. Turning away to some extent from defending Dutch national culture and identity against the threat of islamization, he currently focuses upon the excessive funding by hard-working Dutch taxpayers of 'lazy' and 'corrupt' Southern countries such as Greece, Italy and Spain. Wilders' new anti-European campaign hence implies a much more banal, economically self-interested view of national sovereignty ('our money first' rather than 'my people first'). This policy move has brought the Freedom Party closer to the more traditional conservative liberalism of the VVD, generating disappointing results in the national ballot of 12 September 2012 (but still maintaining itself at 10% of the electorate).

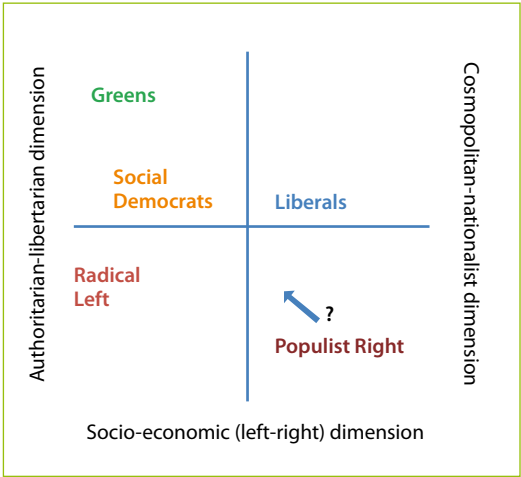
Let us also briefly look at the Austrian case. While Haider's FPÖ never entirely escaped the suspicion of cultivating ties to the national-socialist past, the current leadership under Heinz-Christian Strache appears to favour a cleaner and more moderate profile. However, while the FPÖ still presents itself as a conservative patriotic force protecting Austrian national identity both against immigrants and against European integration, its rival the BZÖ (founded in 2005 by Haider in a split-off from the FPÖ) more prominently adopts the liberal and meritocratic terms of a tax cut party defending the interests of hard-working Austrians. This liberal tendency is even more pronounced in the movement led by the Austro-Canadian billionaire Frank Stronach, which likewise mixes the ambition to 'clean out the political stables' with economic liberalism, patriotism and Euroscepticism, entirely avoiding racist prejudice and anti-immigrant language.

However, the most dramatic example of this generational shift is offered by the recent Belgian municipal elections, in which the New Flemish Alliance led by Bart de Wever gained around 30% of the vote (37.7% in Antwerp), all but replacing (if not sucking empty) Filip Dewinter's Vlaams Belang. The N-VA proclaims a 'humanitarian nationalism' as part of its master plan to split Belgium and have Flanders enter as an independent member state into the European Union. Islamophobia no longer plays a prominent role. Neither does Euroscepticism, which turns the N-VA into a quite exceptional case in the broader family of populist nationalisms. All evils are projected upon the Belgian federal level: excessively high taxes, a rampant social parasitism, the open borders policy which permits too many 'passive' immigrants to enter, but especially the excessive transfer payments made by hard-working Flemish to the ungrateful and lazy Walloons. In this fashion, Belgium represents a miniature version of Europe, emphasizing an unbridgeable cultural and economic gap between a thrifty, hard-working and honest North and a lazy, parasitical and mendacious South.

A Materialist Turn

Hence populism, at least in Western Europe, appears currently to take a materialist, liberal-economic turn, softening the cultural polarization around issues such as immigration, Islam and national identity. While political debates during the noughties were dominated by the impact of 9/11 and other religiously inspired terrorist attacks, the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century is governed by the bank insolvency and state debt crisis, which has meanwhile turned into a full-scale euro crisis which jeopardizes the entire European project. As a result, a general shift in attention has occurred from cultural to economic issues and from cultural to economic chauvinism. While it would be exaggerated (and perhaps a product of wishful thinking) to claim that the polarization around Islam is over in Western Europe, it has nevertheless died down to a certain extent, having been demoted in favour of more traditional left vs. right issues. The populist defence of national sovereignty has accordingly shifted from the *Kulturkampf* against Islam towards the economic struggle against the costly euro and the undemocratic transfer mechanism, which is called the European Union.

This picture of the shifting balance between cultural and economic axes of conflict may gain some depth by introducing what many researchers take to be a newly emerging political matrix in European politics (e.g. De Lange, Van der Brug & Baller 2011: 53, 62). It combines two axes of polarization, socioeconomic and cultural (or materialist and post-materialist), which are positioned at right angles to one another, dividing the political spectrum into four quadrants or fields which allow us to distribute the relative positions of various political movements and parties. The horizontal division addresses socioeconomic themes such as the relative role of state and market and/or income distribution, while the vertical division covers value-oriented themes such as immigration and integration, law and order, climate change and ethical issues around abortion and euthanasia. Populists typically activate the vertical axis while downplaying the division between left and right, while mainstream social-democratic and liberal parties typically focus upon the left-right opposition and tend to view cultural divisions as derivative or secondary. The political conflict hence rages to a large extent over the power to define which fault line is the dominant one.



The four-square table has the added benefit of alerting us to the historical co-emergence and structural conjunction of populist and green parties. It is intriguing to notice that green and brown parties have risen together, the first group emerging during the 1970s, often from left-wing populist beginnings, while right-wing populist parties started to emerge a decade later. The upper left or left libertarian quadrant constitutes the heartland of the green party family. Radical right-wing populist parties are located in the opposite lower right quadrant of the graph. In

taking opposite positions along the vertical axis, these ideological adversaries hence represent two faces of a new cultural polarization, which is closely connected to the rise in the general level of education in Western societies. However, the increase in meritocratic educational mobility has also opened up a new sociological divide between higher and lower educated groups, which has to some extent absorbed the traditional socio-economic class division. Horizontal 'class voting' has to some extent given way to vertical 'cultural voting', resulting in an unexpected inverse electoral movement between working class voters shifting to the populist right, and (new) middle class voters tendentially shifting to the libertarian left (Houtman, Achterberg & Derks 2008).

Indeed, authoritarianism and xenophobia appear not so much to emerge from low income conditions but from low levels of education, hence not from a lack of economic capital but from a lack of cultural capital. While higher educated voters generally display higher levels of trust in the established system of political representation, lower educated voters tend to have a lower trust in political institutions, especially in mainstream political parties. While the higher educated are more sympathetic to sustainable development, climate protection and responsible lifestyles, lower educated groups are more prone to climate skepticism or outright 'climate denial' and to materialistic or hedonistic lifestyles. While the former embrace European integration, the latter tend towards Euroscepticism, the defence of national sovereignty and a return to national currencies. While the former support multi-ethnic and multicultural ideals, the latter favour a substantial decrease in the number of immigrants, if not the actual closing of the frontiers to them.

Differences and Convergences

Perhaps this two-dimensional typology may help to explain some of the differences between the Western and Eastern European varieties of populism. What is the relative salience, in Eastern European societies, of socioeconomic and cultural conflict lines? Have post-1989 marketization and neoliberal modernization reintroduced more traditional capitalist class divisions, e.g. between rich and poor? To what extent has the rise in levels of education promoted the emergence of a new meritocratic middle class and the spread of post-materialist values? In other words, are Western and Eastern European pop-

ulisms essentially different, or may we discern the beginnings of a social, political and cultural convergence, of a veritable Europeanization of the populist challenge?

Without being able to answer these questions, let me offer a few suggestions for further reflection and discussion. First of all, populist parties in CEE countries appear more strongly rooted in pre-modern agrarian-based and religion-infused traditionalism, while religious divisions in the West have generally faded as a result of the rise of secular individualism and urban lifestyles. While individualist modernism has become a major element of national identity in (at least some) West European countries, to be defended against religious and other forms of conservative collectivism, in East European countries it is instead considered an enemy of the people. Populism in these countries tends to gravitate towards more reactionary types of nationalism and xenophobia, which are closer to the first than to the second generation of populism, if they do not hark back to the revolutionary nationalisms of the thirties. Since liberal modernity, democracy and secularization enter through the door of European integration, resistance against liberal, free-thinking and secular values inevitably takes the form of anti-Europeanism and the defence of conservative Christian traditions. But there are also first inklings of a more liberal polarization around cultural issues, as is exemplified by the individualistic, secularist and Europhile Palikot movement in Poland.

Secondly, we must signal and account for the greater incidence of governmental populism in East European countries. Whereas rightwing populist parties have participated on governmental levels in Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Denmark and the Netherlands, a number of Eastern European countries have elected governments which were entirely dominated by national-populist parties. One example is the regime of the Kaczynski brothers in Poland from 2005 to 2007, where at one point three populist parties participated in the coalition government (Bachmann 2006). A more serious example is the majoritarian single-party regime of Fidesz in Hungary, while also the former Mečiar governments in Slovakia and the Klaus presidency in the Czech Republic exemplify features of governmental populism. One explanation for this high incidence might once again be found in the political weight of a still overwhelmingly rurally based, lower educated population which fears the transition

towards a modern internationally oriented knowledge economy and the attendant rise of an educated, individualistic and cosmopolitan urban class.

Thirdly, the shift from islamophobia towards Europhobia in Western populist parties (with the exception of the Flemish N-VA) not only exemplifies a turn from cultural towards economic self-interest, but also demonstrates the essential flexibility and substitutability of the populist 'enemy image' and the practice of scapegoating. Depending on the local context, the enemy of the people (the stranger, the foreigner) can be identified in many different ways, ranging from anti-semitism and anti-islamism through hatred of Roma, 'boat people', lazy Southerners, Walloons or, as in the case of the Polish Law and Justice party, traditional neighbours such as Germans and Russians.

Resistance to European integration and to the local elites which promote it, increasingly appears to emerge as a point of convergence for movements and parties across the East-West divide.

Summing up: nationalist populism, both in the West and the East, has become the most acute challenger of the European integration project. Everywhere we encounter a conservative and nationalist backlash against Europe as a modernizing, civilizing and liberalizing force. In many member states, populist parties target Europe as both a cultural and an economic threat, favouring a return to national self-determination. The hopeful paradox dwelling in this populist convergence is that, if successfully resisted, this Europe-wide anti-Europeanism may actually further European integration.

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