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Populism, the new zeitgeist?

The situation of European populist parties in 2015

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- Study -

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this essay from Policy solutions and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, we aim to clarify the notion of populism in Hungarian public discourse and investigate the trends in support, which characterize populist political powers in Europe in recent years. We would like to emphasize that our interpretation considers only populist parties outside the establishment. We do not focus on contamination of mainstream parties with populism.

The concept of populism

The absence of a clear definition of populism means that the concept is used cautiously in academic discourse. The same caution, however, is not applied in popular language, where the term is used more liberally, whether in Hungary or elsewhere in Europe. Politicians, journalists and the general public freely use the adjective for different phenomena, typically with a pejorative connotation. The use of the term "populist" in public discourse is rarely based upon a clear concept, but rather, betrays the perspective of the speaker, demonstrating what he considers to be demagogy, empty rhetoric, or irresponsible or extreme positions. In European lay language, particularly in the media and amongst the left-leaning intelligentsia, populism has a bad reputation. It is usually connected to far right, euroskeptic parties or notorious, discredited historical personalities. The present and growing trend of populism in European politics is concerning for intellectuals, because it endangers the European integration project, strengthens the currents of xenophobia and potentially paves the way towards autocratic tendencies, particularly in countries in which democracy is yet to be fully consolidated.

In contrast to liberalism, social democracy or conservativism, populism is not a complex ideological system upon which a fully fledged social structure could be based. On the contrary, it is widely described as a "thin ideology"[1] with a reduced kernel connecting to a small sphere of political concepts[2]. At the level of policy, this means that no consistent approach to healthcare, education or tax arises logically from populist thinking. While a populist can obviously relate to these topics, it is not the ideological relation which connects him with other populists, and it is not the opinion regarding different policies which distinguishes him from non-populist actors. Resulting from the narrow boundaries of populist ideology, the division between populist and non-populist cannot be interpreted in the traditional left-right framework. Consequently, it is possible that on the international arena, one populist party fights for social equality and inclusion, whereas the other fights for a flat personal tax rate, for leaving the EU and for marginalizing minorities.

Most scholars of populism agree that its ideological basis stems from the juxtaposition of a corrupted elite against a voiceless people. While this is not the sole defining characteristic,

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[1] Stanley, Ben. The thin ideology of populism. Journal of Political Ideologies, Volume 13, Issue 1, 2008, Page 108
[2] Michael Freeden. Is Nationalism a Distinct Ideology? Political Studies, 46: 4, 1998, Page 750.

the overwhelming majority of scholars agree that it plays a major role. In his widely-cited paper, *the popular zeitgeist*, one of the most important works of contemporary populism research, the Dutch researcher, Cas Mudde, sums up the phenomenon as follows "populism is an ideology which states that society splits up into two antagonistic groups- the rotten elite and the pure masses. Populists think that politics should represent the general will of the people"[3]. Kriesi & Pappas believe that on the level of communication, populism as an ideology articulates itself in clear-cut discursive clichés, serving to define the enemies and strengthen the community of the friends[4]. Finally, populism as a strategy is a method in the hands of charismatic leaders to grab power.

Since populism orients itself against the elite, it necessarily communicates in an oppositional or revolutionary mode, since it is always antagonistic to the ruling power. This permanent oppositional attitude clearly becomes problematic as soon as a populist party forms part of a government. Particularly when in power for a prolonged period, its posture against the ruling order becomes increasingly strained by a confrontation with reality. In these situations, some populist parties integrate into the system, finally adopting the rhetoric and policies of mainstream political actors. Alternatively, however, for the populist to retain an anti-elite attitude and underdog status, it is necessary to construct a new, cryptic, ruling power or external enemy to set up in opposition to. This enemy acts as a substitute for the role of the elite, arrogantly oppressing the opinion of the people. Thereby, the populist, despite being in a position of power can continue to portray themselves as representing the true voice of the people in opposition to a disinterested power structure.

Populism generally rises in response to the failure of democratic politics and in an ideal case, can compensate for that failure. Reasons for the failure of democratic politics are often simple: the democratic system may perform well, but fail to communicate well, alternatively, the problem may be more fundamental; a situation may arise where the interests and/or opinion of certain social groups are excluded or where, in the handling of some important social or policy problem, mainstream politics has failed, despite good intentions. In the overwhelming majority of cases, those who support populist movements do not vote in opposition to democracy per se, but are rather motivated to catalyze a democratic renewal in response to a perceived deficit, attempting to act as a catalyst for the democratic forces to solve the problem. In this way, populism can act as a canary down the mine, highlighting democratic deficits and functioning as a corrective mechanism for the elite of representative democracy, alerting them to situations in which they must care more for their voters and their daily life experiences and problems. If the traditional political parties cannot renew themselves quickly enough, however, populist powers will take over.

Populism in Europe today
Rather than an isolated phenomenon, the presence and growing strength of populism in Europe today is widely distributed. This is evident from the telling fact that in 24 out of 28

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[3] Cas Mudde. The Populist Zeitgeist. Government & Opposition, 39.3, 2004, Pages 541-563.
[4] Hanspeter Kriesi and Takis Pappas. European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession. ECPR Press, 2015.

EU member states, populist parties polled in significant numbers. That is, in four fifths of the member states of the European Union, there are populist party formations independent of geography or economic situation. On the basis of the newest polls, it is only Estonia, Croatia, Malta and Slovenia where such political organizations have no significant support.

In the last year, in 17 out of 24 member states, the support for populist parties, as recorded in opinion polls, grew in comparison with the results of the European parliamentary elections in May 2014. Meanwhile, support for populist parties has diminished in only seven of the 24 member states in comparison with the European parliamentary elections of one and a half years previously. This change is not evenly distributed across all the member states. If we consider a change of less than 2% as a stagnation, then support for populist political parties grew in twelve, reduced in four, and remained static in eight member states. On the basis of this, we can say that, over-all, there has been a trend towards a strengthening of populist parties in the European union in the last year and a half.

As a comparison, between the last two European Parliamentary elections of 2009 and 2014, support for populist parties grew in 17, whilst retreating in eight member states. If we, however, again exclude changes of under 2% from this analysis, then support grew for populists in 15 countries, while reducing in six member states over the five year period. In light of this data, the growth observed between the European parliamentary elections of 2014 and the opinion polls taken in 2015 can be viewed as a continuation of a trend that has been evident since at least 2009.

During the European parliamentary elections in May 2014, an average of 17.7% voted for populist parties. Representative polls predict that this proportion would currently sit at 19.1%, were elections carried out today. In one and a half years, therefore, support for populist political parties in the European arena grew by 1.4 percentage points. While at first glance, a growth of 1.4 percentage points across the 28 member states seems to be marginal, if we consider that between the European parliamentary elections of 2009 and 2014, support for populist parties grew from 13.9% to 17.7%, a 3.8 percentage point rise over a five year period, then the change of the last one and a half years begins to tell a different tale. The overall trend shows a growth of support for populist parties from 2009 to 2014, with this trend accelerating in the past year.

There is only a single populist party in Europe outside of the established party families, which has a support base higher than 40%: the Polish conservative Law and Justice Party (PiS), the strongest populist party in Europe. Two other populist parties have proved themselves capable of cornering over 30% of the vote share: the Greek Syriza, which won the elections in September, and the Cypriot Progressive Party of the Working People (AKEL), with a vote share of 38.5% and 30.8% respectively.

The Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), the French, Front National, and the Hungarian Jobbik, belong to the elite of European populist parties, each with a support of 26%. Overall, nine European populist parties have a support higher than 20%. Alongside those already

mentioned, the Italian Five Star Movement (M5S) has 22%, Sinn Fein has 21%, the right-wing, populist Danish People's Party has 21%, the Sweden Democrats 20% and the Spanish Podemos 16,5%, the Latvian National Alliance 15.4%, the Italian Lega Nord 16% and the party of the Finns 14%. These parties form the frontrunners of populist parties in Europe.

THE COUNTER-POPULIST STRATEGIES

As much as there is no single successful populist strategy, since the success of populism depends upon the capitalization of a real democratic deficit, neither is there an exclusively successful anti-populist strategy. In the molding of these strategies, different aspects play a role. The democratic deficit, i.e. the problem left unarticulated by the mainstream parties, but articulated by the populists, its acceptance in society, its radicalism, the election system, the reaction of the other parties, the attitude of the media and so on. The most typical reactions on the challenge of populism are the following:

Ignoring/Quarantine

In recent decades, populists and the problems they have articulated were often written off as a transitory phenomena, although their recent success has forced a reassessment of this attitude. Concerning the electoral success of populist parties, the strategy of ignoring seems unpromising. Considering that populists generally articulate real problems with over simplification and doubtful elements, ignoring them seems not only to be strategically foolish, but also rather ignoble. Ignoring the populist party can alternatively be substituted by a policy of imposing a political quarantine; when mainstream political parties decide that they don't accept the populist party as a legitimate member of the political discourse. For this to be successful, the populist party must represent some radical standpoint. The mere fact that they are anti-elitist cannot be reason enough for a political quarantine. Neither the rejection of inequality or of austerity, nor the will to reduce immigration can, in themselves, be considered radical or extreme, unless they are coupled with instigating rhetoric or by the negation of democracy.

The success of a quarantining strategy is dependent upon the co-operation between the mainstream parties. The quarantine cannot be upheld if one or more political parties of the mainstream do not participate in it, and instead, admit the populist party as a member of the mainstream democratic competition. In order to be successful, the quarantine must also be supported by the mainstream media. Furthermore, it is clear that the neglecting of real problems is likely to strengthen the reaction which fuels populism. The quarantine can often act as a displacement activity, obscure the problem articulated by the populists. In the long-term, this can be counter-productive, even if the quarantine proves to be successful politically in the short-term. Another problem with the quarantine strategy is the danger of legitimizing the victim-status of populists, emphasizing the picture of the elite as arrogant and fueling the fire from which populism emerges.

Mainstreaming the topics of the populists- the populization of the mainstream

Another solution available to mainstream party for dealing with a surge in support for populist parties if for the mainstream party or at least the most influential, to co-opt the themes and translate the problems articulated by the populists into their own rhetoric. If this communication seems to be credible, populists will find it more and more difficult to argue that the elite is indifferent to the real problems of the people or that the elite is too high brow to understand the problems. The populization of the mainstream however, carries manifold risks. It bears the risk that by accepting the problem, populist solutions become part of the mainstream, or that for political expediency, mainstream parties adopt the often sectarian, xenophobic or simplified attitude of the populists.

Adopting the populist rhetoric or communication can be especially dangerous if it isn't accompanied with a genuine political will, which symbolizes that the mainstream political party considers the problem serious. While a party in opposition has some leeway, in the long-run, it can be counter-productive for a party in government to adopt the rhetoric, without delivering solutions. The biggest risk, politically, lies in the following: an unmanageable problem is placed in the centre of political discourse for a short-term political gain and is then neglected or solved too slowly, widening the gap between communication and reality, legitimizing the populists and broadening their electoral base.

Handling the problem in an offensive manner

The solution which is most harmonious with democratic principles is when the existing problem, articulated by the populists, is admitted and active discussion with the populists pursued. This way, the populist argumentation is confronted with reality and their exaggerations corrected, while policy solutions are developed. This idealistic approach, however, cannot be used simply in practice and it absolutely not certain that the political elite are capable of handling such a situation properly. Although the populists have loud and usually radical slogans, they are less likely to be capable of solving the problems themselves, than mainstream parties. Unfortunately, however, the critical test of their competence comes only in their participation in government. Whatever Jobbik says in Hungary, the question of Roma integration cannot be solved only by policing. Whatever AfD says in Germany, the Euro cannot be phased out cautiously and its phasing out would probably solve less problems than the party imagines. Active discussion and the dismantling of false promises coupled with the development of serious solutions is the most noble exercise and, if it is being taken seriously, seems the best, and for without question the most democratic strategy against populism.

INTRODUCTION

Populism has become one of the most widely used political concepts in recent years, both in academia and daily politics. Since a precise definition of populism is yet to be clarified, the concept is used cautiously in academic discourse. The same caution, however, is not applied in popular language, where the term is used more liberally, whether in Hungary or elsewhere in Europe. Politicians, journalists and the general public freely use the adjective for different phenomena, typically with a pejorative connotation. The use of the term "populist" in public discourse is rarely based upon a clear concept, but rather, betrays the biases of the speaker, demonstrating what he considers to be demagogy, empty rhetoric, or irresponsible or extreme positions.

This paper aims to clarify the concept of populism in general speech in Hungary and investigate the trends in support which have characterized populist political powers in Europe in recent years. We would like to emphasize that our analysis concentrates on parties outside the establishment. It should not be taken from his, however, there are no parties with a populist ideology or strategy in the mainstream party families (there are examples in the European people's party, as there are also in the group of the socialists and democrats). But we focus our analysis here, on parties which attack the mainstream from outside. Our study does not analyze the grade of populist contamination of the mainstream party families.

This paper consists of three parts; in the first step, we analyze the concept of populism, overviewing the definitions most often used by experts on the topic and general principles and characteristics which combine populist parties, independent of their value system. After clarification of the concepts, we further ask what positive and negative effects the appearance and strengthening of populist parties can play for democracy. In the next step, based on polls from 2015, we analyze the situation of the populist parties in the European union. We will analyze the trends between the last two EP elections and will also focus on the period from the 2014 EP elections until now. In the third part, we will ask what reactions are most often given by mainstream parties against populism and how successful these reactions are.

1. WHAT IS POPULISM

Isiah Berlin, the great philosopher, spoke at a conference in 1967 on the 'Cinderella complex', regarding populism. The essence of which is that "although somewhere there exists a shoe representing populism, there is no foot to be found which fits the shoe"[5]. In Berlin's metaphor, the prince (in our case the analysts and scholars), search populism with the shoe in hand, but the search for this platonic concept is futile. He will never find what he searches for[6].

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[5] Ivan Krastev. Populism Today. Aspen Institute, 2008, pages 22-23.
http://www.aspeninstitute.it/en/system/files/private_files/2010-07/doc/Asp35_krastev_e.pdf
[6] Ernest Gellner and Ghita Ionesco. Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics. New York: Macmillan Co., 1969, page 34.

Stijn van Kessel says that although clichés are sometimes wrong, it is not by chance that they exist[7].

An overwhelming majority of academic papers on populism usually accept with resignation that the notion cannot be defined exactly, and that even after many decades of research, it resists a clear-cut definition. Gellner and Ionescu formulate the dilemma in their classic volume as follows"[8].

The answer to this question is in most cases a negative one, One of the most famous researchers of the topic, Margeret Canovan, came to the conclusion that it is not possible[9]. This hinders scientific research, since[10].

The absence of a clear definition of populism means that the concept is used cautiously in academic discourse. The same caution, however, is not applied in popular language, where the term is used more liberally, whether in Hungary or elsewhere in Europe. Politicians, journalists and the general public freely use the adjective for different phenomena, typically with a pejorative connotation. The use of the term "populist" in public discourse is rarely based upon a clear concept, but rather, betrays the perspective of the speaker, demonstrating what he considers to be demagogy, empty rhetoric, or irresponsible or extreme positions.

This terminological sloppiness causes problems if one wants to analyze the phenomenon more deeply. Academics who have dwelt upon the topic in recent years have invested much energy in the scientific founding of their approach. If we imagine a concept as a platonic ideal object, then the two most important preconditions of a useful definition are that it shouldn't draw the borders of the concept too narrowly. On the other hand, neither should the definition be too broad. In the following we will show the elements on the basis of which social scientists seek to define populism. Further, we will take a standpoint as to which definition has the greatest utility.

1.1. Movement, politician or party?

From the outset, we must decide who the subject of populism is. This decision can be made only in the actual analysis since populism cannot be restricted to a single type of actor. Populism may take the form of a movement; although they act politically, they do so outside a traditional framework. Examples for this are the tea party in the United States, the occupy movement or the German anti-Islam movement, Pegida. Incidentally, there is no consensus regarding the question of whether a movement can be populist or not. Nadia Urbinati, for example says that populism cannot function without a traditional leading structure, and for that the tea party is **"**a movement with ideology and rhetoric involving a lot of populist

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[7] Stijn van Kessel. Populist Parties in Europe. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, page 2.
[8] Gellner and Ionesco, 1969, op. cit., page 1.
[9] Margaret Canovan. Populism. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1981, page 133.
[10] Stanley, Ben. The thin ideology of populism. Journal of Political Ideologies, Volume 13, Issue 1, 2008, page 108.

elements, but short on vertical or homogenous structure […] quintessentially populist"[11]. We quote Urbinati here, to show the broad spectrum of interpretation of the phenomenon, however, we do not agree with her, since we do not consider it a prerequisite of populism to have a hierarchical structure. Moreover, populism necessarily has a certain movement or background, by which it opposes itself to the main institutions of representative democracy and of hierarchically organized parties; we will return to this argument later. The adverb "populist" can be used for individuals. Moreover, without populist individuals and leaders, one cannot imagine a populist organization. A non-populist political organization, however, can exist with populist politicians.

In the framework of this analysis, we will concentrate on parties, and not by chance, since "concerning democratic representation, parties are still the key figures of the current European politics."[12]. Political decision-making can be influenced by movements only indirectly and the institution which can influence relevant decision-making is the party. A basic political change can be reached in the long-run, only through parties in Hungary, where the oppositional attitude articulated has itself in recent years, rather in different movements which were not able to translate their activity to the language of party politics (or they were not able to channel their energy into party politics as Milla or the wave of protest against the internet tax). The same holds true for the influential tea party and occupy movements.

1.2. Means of communication, strategy or ideology

Another basic question is whether populism is simply a means of communication, or strategy for realizing power and/or ideological goals, or whether it is an ideology in itself. The answer again is that these components exist independently. Put in another way, it is conceivable that non-populist actors (parties, politicians or movements) use populist communication methods or strategies. It is obviously difficult to imagine that a populist party be interpreted only in its ideological dimension. That is, that a party identifies itself with the basic principles of populism defined by social sciences, however, it doesn't propagate this with non-populist elements. We envisage the notion out of an ideological standpoint, however we also think that communication, strategy and ideology are harmonized in the case of populists.

We concentrate on the ideological questions because we believe that it is in this dimension that actors who could be called "professional" populists can be separated from "occasional" populists; that is, actors who sometimes use populist elements (all this holds true, by seeing the fact that the populist-non-populist ideological border is constantly being transgressed, however, this transgression has a different dimension than the utilization of populist elements or strategies, a phenomenon which sooner or later will happen with all democratic parties or leaders)[13].

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[11] Nadia Urbinati. The Populist Phenomenon. Script submitted for a University of Chicago Political Theory Workshop, 2014, page 3.

[12] Van Kessel, 2015, op. cit. page 1.

[13] Good review on this topic Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikowski Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda c. study (Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, No. 13-0004, 2013). See especially pages 5-17.

In contrast to liberalism, social democracy or conservativism, populism is not a complex ideological system upon which a fully fledged social structure could be based. On the contrary, it is widely described as a "thin ideology"[14] with a reduced kernel connecting to a small sphere of political concepts[15] . At the level of policy, this means that no consistent approach to healthcare, education or tax arises logically from populist thinking. While a populist can obviously relate to these topics, it is not the ideological relation which connects him with other populists, and it is not the opinion regarding different policies which distinguishes him from non-populist actors. Resulting from the narrow boundaries of populist ideology, the division between populist and non-populist, cannot be interpreted in the traditional left-right framework.. Stejn van Kessel says "populism is usually identified with xenophobia and radical right-wing politics and is therefore considered dangerous. It is very unsurprising when taking into consideration that in western Europe that populism is practiced by nationalists and culturally conservative political parties, that they often express anti-migration viewpoints and rejection of mutli-culturalism […] Outside Europe, however, populism can be associated with very different politicians, parties and political movements.[16] Analysts of populism in South America say about thin ideology that "the parties with populist leadership have never had clear ideological profiles. They were against oligarchy and imperialism, but concerning the direction of general reforms, they listen to their leaders."[17]. Whereas successful populist parties in Europe tend to be of the far right (Front National in France, the Danish Peoples party, the ÖFP of Austria and the British UKIP), in South America, one finds rather left-wing populist parties, like the United Socialist party in Venezuela (Hugo Chavez's party) and the Ecuadorian PAIS, which supports the president. Similar left-wing populist parties include the already prohibited Rock Thai party of Thailand or the increasingly influential left-populist parties in Europe, like the Greek Syriza, the Spanish Podemos or the Dutch Socialist party, which are all enjoying increasing popularity. Internationally, it can be imagined that one populist party fights for equality and social inclusion while another fights for a flat-rate personal income tax or the segregation of minorities.

1.3.   In search of a definition

As we have seen, populism covers a broad ideological span. But then what connects the populist parties? Most scholars of populism agree that its ideological basis stems from the juxtaposition of a corrupted elite against a voiceless people. While this may not be the sole defining characteristic, the overwhelming majority of scholars emphasize the importance of this element. In his widely-cited paper, *The Popular Zeitgeist*, one of the most important works of contemporary populism research, the Dutch researcher, Cas Mudde, sums up the phenomenon as follows "populism is an ideology which states that society splits up into two

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[14] Stanley pages 5-17.

[15] Michael

[16] Van Kessel, op. cit. page 2. See also Paul Taggart: The Populist Turn in the Politics of the New Europe. Paper prepared for presentation at the 8th Biannual International Conference of the European Union Studies Association conference, Nashville, 2003. March 27.

[17] Evelyn Huber and John D. Stevens. Democracy and the Left Social Policy and Inequality in Latin America. The University of Chicago Press, 2012, page 29.

antagonistic groups- the rotten elite and the pure masses. Populists think that politics should represent the general will of the people" [18]. This is a precise definition, which fulfills scientific preconditions. While this doesn't necessarily mean that the definition is exclusive, it has a certain utility, in that it is concrete enough for a certain circle to be defined, within which some parties fall, but the circle is not so broad that too many parties fall within its radius.

Mudde's definition is currently very popular in populism research, however, he was not the first to emphasize the people versus elite juxtaposition, central to populism. Edward E Shils wrote in as far back as in 1956 that "Populism is influenced by the concept that people are not only equal to those in power, but are ethically superior and are also better than the classes identified with the controlling elite (the urban middle class)". [19] The British scholar Peter Wiles defined populism in 1969 in a very similar way: "Virtue lies in the simple people who form the majority of the society, and also in their collective traditions."[20] Amongst contemporary academics, the already quoted van Kessel emphasizes the central importance of this juxtaposition in populism "Populism is usually identified with the concept of the society divided between the good 'people' against the 'corrupted' elite" [21].

In a 2003 publication, Paul Taggart proposes a six- point definition of populism which extends beyond that put forward by Mudde. Two of Taggart's six points effectively repeat those of the Dutchman's central elite versus people juxtaposition. He further argues, firstly that that populism rejects representative politics, it being the major bastion of the elite. Secondly, in opposition to Margaret Canovanre, who we have also cited in this paper, Taggart rejects the notion that the "people" are at the centre of populism[22]. Taggart puts forward the concept of a "heartland"; defined by the ancient traditions and real values of the people. Taggart's criticism of the notion of "the people" is due to the idea that it is difficult to define and this diffuse interpretability can be seen also in the populist's nebulous referrals to the people.

So one cannot know what is meant exactly by "the people". Rather, it is a rhetorical element by which populists support their argumentation. If it is at all possible to find what is meant by "the people", then it is via direct democracy, which goes against the institutions of representative democracy. No wonder populist parties often support referenda as a democratic means. This isn't, however, a universal populist principle, but one could also argue that there might be a huge and unbridgeable gap between the general will of the people and the results of a referendum. We think, however, that Taggart does not help the cause of clarifying the definition, by substituting the difficult to grasp concept of "the people", for an even more unclear (as he himself admits) of "the heartland".

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[18] Cas Mudde. The Populist Zeitgeist. Government & Opposition, 39.3, 2004, pages 541-563.
[19] Edward E. Shils. The Torment of Secrecy. New York: Free Press, 1956, page 101.
[20] Idézi Juraj Buzalka. Nation and Religion: The Politics of Commemorations in South-east Poland. LitVerlag, 2006, page 16.
[21] Van Kessel, op. cit. 5. o.
[22] Taggart, op. cit, page 6.

1.4.   Unpacking the definition and alternative definitions

Not even a whole volume of studies would suffice to detail the full spectrum of alternative definitions of populism. Considering the limited space available here, we won't attempt this, but will, nevertheless, highlight some important elements. Contrary to Mudde's above mentioned simplified definition, researchers often use a higher-dimensional definition (see for example the above-mentioned Taggart) and try to emphasize its importance from different angles. The drawback of this definition is that if one narrows in the set of populist actors, too few parties can be defined as populist. If, however, criteria can be used in a selective manner, the sample will be unmanageably broad. In our opinion, Mudde's narrower definition solves the tension between these two approaches.

As ideology is just one (although in our opinion, the most important) aspect, it is worthwhile to ask how the definition can be enriched with the other two dimensions, that is the populist communication and the populist strategy. Hanspeter Kriesi and Takis Pappas[23] define populism in all three dimensions, however, they think that the validity of only one of the above three is enough to define a movement as populist. We however, believe that, under this system, too many parties would be defined as populist. And among them, there could be some that cannot be connected with the other in any way[24].

Kriesi and Pappas agree on the level of ideology with Mudde by saying that "Populism […] divides society into two antagonistic groups; the moral people and the corrupt establishment, practically, putting them in opposition to each other."[25] On the level of communication, "populism as an ideology formulates itself in concrete discursive stereotypes which serve the defining of the enemy and strengthening the community of friends". Finally, when considered as a strategy, populism is a means for charismatic leaders to grab power. Urbinati also emphasizes the role of the populist leader as important, however, contrary to Kriesi and Pappas, he does not agree that the presence of one element would suffice to define somebody as populist. Similarly to this paper, Urbinati's analysis focuses on parties, so the relevant point for him is when a populist movement, such as the tea party, becomes a party. The movement and the party, connected by the "organic polarizing ideology"[26]. We can talk about populism when there is a "strategy for mobilizing masses for the sake of concurring democratic government and as a consequence an organized party, which is able to fulfill an ideology and the plan of the leader. Without an organizing narrative and the leader that would care for the whole nation's real problems, the popular movement is little more than an oppositional movement, but populism is more than their populist rhetoric and political

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[23] Hanspeter Kriesi and Takis Pappas. European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession. ECPR Press, 2015.

[24] The scientific discourse here differentiates the so-called family resemblance from the classical or Sartori-based approach. The previous one builds different criterias to define the phenomenon, but basically it doesn't use them exclusively. So fulfilling one criteria is enough that an observation falls under a category, while the classical school thinks that only the needed criteria existence is enough for the requirement. See in more detail: Alan Sikk. Parties and Populism. Centre For European Politics, Security& Integration, 2009-2, pages 2-5.

[25] ibid. introduction

[26] Urbinatti

demonstration."[27] In Urbinati's definition, there is a new element, which is the person of the leader and the will for power and strategy which leads to it. We agree with Urbinati's definition, however, a basic question is whether the complicating of the definition above or after the ideological level would change the content of the sample of populist parties. If not, one might ask whether this new definition has any value by defining additional levels.

Rafal Pankowski[28] accepts Mudde's definition as a starting point, but in his analysis of Poland, he is not interested only in the notion of populism, but also in what differentiates successful populist movements and thereby delivers an interesting fine-tuning of the definition. He concludes that "populist movements were successful where they chimed effectively with the common-sense everyday culture". In the Polish example, this involves connecting with Catholicism, implicitly invoking Taggart's idea of the "heartland", Pankowski says that it is not sufficient to talk only about the people, nor is it sufficient only to address the people. The extra ingredient necessary for successful populism is the chiming with the cultural and mental dimensions and reaching the founding notions of the cultural community, connecting himself with the voter and the voters with each other. Although at first glance, populism is most often associated with rightist nationalist movements, it is worthwhile mentioning that left wing populists also often tap into national concepts and often there is an intensive exchange between left and right wing populism. Left wing populists from Venezuela, through Thailand and Slovakia to Greece often operate with nationalist concepts and often there is an intense coming and gong between the two (For example, the Slovak Smer and the Greek Syriza formed a coalition with right wing populist parties, rather than moderate centre-right parties).

Kevin Deegan-Krause and Kevin Haughton[29] concentrate in their analysis on Slovakia and propose an absolutely new framework. Although, in a long list of footnotes, they prove the dominance of the people versus elite juxtaposition, in the works of social sciences on the subject of populism, the authors believe that although there are attempts to save it, the notion is still so imprecise, that it would best simply to give it up[30]. The authors propose to define the kernel of the concept, giving up the usage of populism as a noun, thereby meaning that one could not say that a party or politician is populist or not, but rather particular characteristics which characterizes political actors when they communicate in a special way or act politically in a certain manner could better be described as populist. The authors say that one of the benefits of this approach would be that populism would not be considered as a dichotomy, but would rather be seen more as a spectrum. A party is not populist or non-populist, but rather populist to a greater or lesser extent. Although the authors try to make their notion of populism operational, this needs more focus, even in the party system of a single country, let alone in a European comparison. For the time being, we cannot follow up on this scientific approach, and most scientific analyses follow more simple theoretical

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[27] ibid.

[28] Rafal Pankowski. The Populist Radical Right in Poland: The Patriots. London: Routledge, 2010.

[29] Kevin Deegan Krause and Tim Haughton. Toward a More Useful Conceptualization of Populism: Types and Degrees of Populist Appeals in the Case of Slovakia. Politics & Policy, Volume 37, No. 4, 2009, pages 821-841.

[30] Ibid. page 822.

frameworks, however it would be worthwhile following in the future whether the conceptual approach which bases populism on a spectrum can gain ground.

1.5.   Populism: Good or Bad

As we have mentioned previously, the concept of populism is widely used in European general speech, and particularly in the media and amongst left-leaning intellectuals, where it has a bad reputation, largely because it is often combined with the far right, euroskepticism or notorious, discredited historical personalities. The growth in support for populist parties troubles the intelligentsia because it endangers the European integration project, strengthens the currents of xenophobia and potentially ushers in autocratic tendencies, particularly in countries where democracy is yet to be fully consolidated. As van Kessel formulates: "Especially since the 2008 financial and economical crisis, the European political participants have expressed concern, regarding the growth of populism, often identifying them with xenophobia and extreme politics."[31]. The situation in central and eastern Europe is especially troubling, where the populist wave (which is not only of the right) often has an authoritarian characteristic, endangering the foundation on which the democratic system is built, such as the separation of the legislature, executive and judiciary. Ivan Krastev, a distinguished expert on the region, wrote in 2008 that in relative times of peace, "populism and illiberalism destroy the region". At that time, Poland posed the biggest problem, where the populist Right and Justice party (PiS), in government at the time, loosened the frames of the rule of law. But, as they fortunately lacked the constitutional majority, their success was limited[32]. This process, judged ambivalently and dispassionately by Krastev, has grown in strength in the meantime as the scholar himself has foreseen.

But populism is neither necessarily right wing (the increasing strength of left-wing populism in Europe is testament to this), nor is it necessarily anti-democratic. On the contrary, a historical outlook shows that the populist movements in the United States (an important early populist movement of the modern ages) were progressive movements. These movements spoke up against the exaggerated concentration of capital and the parallel concentration of political influence, during the American 'gilded age'. The founding fathers created a protest movement[33].

As in the United States in the beginning of the 20th century, it can be generally said that populism emerges as a result of the failure of democratic policy and in an ideal case, can lead to a correction of that failure. The reasons for the failure can be simple: The democratic policy performs well, but communicates poorly; the problem, however, can be more fundamental. A situation can emerge when the interests and/or the opinion of major demographic groups are excluded from the democratic conversation. Alternatively, mainstream policy may fail to solve one or more important problems, despite good intentions.

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[31] Van Kessel, 2015, op. cit. page 1.
[32] Ivan Krastev. The Strange Death of the Liberal Consensus. Journal of Democracy, 18(4), 2007,
   Pages 56-63 http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles-files/gratis/Krastev-18-4.pdf
[33] Charles Postel. The Populist Vision. Oxford University Press, 2007, page vii.

Krastev talks, for example, about corruption in eastern Europe[34]. But one could also present the problem of immigration, where there is very often a gap between the general public's opinion and the often more liberal attitude of the elite. Some problems, like corruption, which is considered an unavoidable reality of the central and eastern European region, have a broader significance than just the failure or narrow-mindedness of the elite: it leads to the concept defined by Shilst, according to which, the average man is not only equal with the elite, but is ethically superior.

In the overwhelming majority of cases, supporters of populism do not vote against democracy, per se, but rather, react to some kind of deficit, attempting to remedy the problem democratically. In the formulation of Margaret Canovan "populism is the shadow of democracy"[35]. The 2006 Gallup study *voice of the people*, was conducted across over 60 countries, spanning all continents with the exception of Oceania, and came to the conclusion that 79% of people think that democracy is, even with its weaknesses, the best system of government[36]. It is worthwhile to emphasize that although support for democracy was high everywhere, it was lowest in central and eastern Europe, with 68%.

On the contrary, the proportion of those who believe that their country is governed according to the 'will of the people' was shatteringly low: globally around 30%[37]. This average does not stem from the realistic analysis of citizens of authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes. In Western Europe, the average is just 31%, whereas in the central and eastern European region it reaches only 22%. One could say that a 60% gap between those who support democracy and those who think the will of the people is represented is an alarm bell for a democratic deficit. Even in democratic systems, which function relatively well, a significant cohort feel that the opinion of the people isn't being sufficiently taken into consideration by political decision making. With these proportions, it is clear that a "market gap" exists for populism to fill in. One must be attentive to the topics which if neglected cause a great frustration in major groups of voters (and in many cases, groups of potential voters; which, from another aspect, shows that populism cannot be focused on the same topics everywhere).

So populism functions optimally as the canary down the mine, acting as a correctional mechanism for the elite of representative democracy, signaling that they must take the voters daily life experience into greater consideration. Phillipe Schmitter attempts to weigh up the benefits and drawbacks of populism, considering as a benefit that "populism deconsolidates"[38] Another benefit to populism is that, by articulating new topics, populists could activate previously passive apolitical groups. Who would not think, for example, after seeing where the connivance of traditional Greek parties led to, that Greek politics was in dire

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[34] Ivan Krastev, 2007, op. cit.

[35] Margaret Canovan. Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy,
   Political Studies, 47 (1), 1999, page 3.

[36] Ijaz Shafi Gilani. The Global Verdict on Democracy: Voice of the People. Gallup International
   Association, 2006, page 7.

[37] Gilani, 2006, op. cit, page 13.

[38] Philippe C. Schmitter. A Balance Sheet of the Vices and Virtues of 'Populisms'. European University
   Institute and Central European University, 2006, page 3.

need of a radical renewal? And if traditional parties are unable to renew themselves quickly internally, the field is open for the populist actors.

So populism can have a welcome effect in showing up of the deficits of a democratic system. The phenomenon's complexity has however, many negative manifestations, which, although perhaps not necessarily part of populism, are often consequences which stem from it. It is worthwhile to remind ourselves of Klaus Mudde's definition, because it emphasizes the point that although populism flourishes under liberal democracy, it is very often antagonist to it: "Populism described in such a way has two enemies: elitism and pluralism. Elitism is the reflection of populism: sharing its Manichean worldview, but with the goal of politically expressing the opinions of the moral elite, rather than the moral nation. As a contrast, pluralism rejects populism and elitism, and so it sees society often as a gathering of groups with different opinions and interests."[39] Rooted in pluralism, liberal democracy operates on the conviction that democracy does not aim to enforce the majority opinion dictatorially. Moreover, that, in the absence of a homogenous Rousseuian 'will of the people', it must facilitate the peaceful coexistence of mutually antagonistic interests: by decision mechanisms and an institutional dialogue, which help to find compromises, under the framework of a constitutionally enforced respect for the rights of the others. The word liberal in the notion of liberal democracy signifies a limitation of democracy in the interest of the individual and minorities (Tocqueville wrote very early about the danger of the "tyranny of the majority" in democratic systems) so it is not surprising if Enyedi Zsolt highlights as an element of populism that "populism has doubts concerning mechanisms of pluralism and protests against the beneficial treatment of minority interests (majoritarian principle)"[40].

Elitism is an inevitable consequence of liberal democracy, since the institutional system is representative democracy, not only because this is logistically the most obvious form of decision-making, but also because it is the best method to take decisions based on a rational dialogue. Such a system necessarily (and sadly) produces its own elite, the manager, the opinion maker, and often the biggest beneficiary of the above mentioned pluralistic decision making. This is all the more true in today's increasingly professionalized political space, where parties become detached from mass organizations and develop into specific systems, in which new generations of politicians emerge who have minimal or little life experience from outside politics. If we accept Mudde's convincing argumentation, according to which, populism rejects pluralism and elitism, referring instead to the one and undividable will of the people, it is clear that populism cannot consider this form of liberal democracy as its friend. This is true, even if institutional and/or cultural/value boundaries force populist political actors in most cases to accept the rules of the game of liberal democracy. Contrary to this general experience, one can witness in Russia, Venezuela, Turkey or Hungary, for that reason, that populism referring to the will of the people seeks to circumnavigate or

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[39] Mudde, 2004, op. cit.

[40] Enyedi Zsolt. Paternalist Populism and Illiberal Elitism in Central Europe. Johns Hopkins School of Advanced and International Studies, Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2015, page 2. http://transatlanticrelations.org/sites/default/files/Zsolt%20CTR.pdf

reconstruct the rules of game, presenting itself as the permanent guarantor of the will of the people.

Since populism orients itself against the elite, it necessarily communicates in an oppositional or revolutionary mode, since it is always antagonistic to the ruling power. This permanent oppositional attitude clearly becomes problematic as soon as a populist party forms part of a government. Particularly when in power for a prolonged period, its posture against the ruling order becomes increasingly strained by a confrontation with reality. In these situations, some populist parties integrate into the system, finally adopting the rhetoric and policies of mainstream political actors, which however, doesn't mean that previously they wouldn't have influenced or changed the system itself.

If however, the populist keeps to its anti-elite and underdog status, the image of a deeper-lying power must be created, which suppresses the populist, the only true representative of the people. It is this argumentation which creates America, Brussels or the International banks as the new enemy elite and in the fight against them, the populist can save his rhetoric even while in government. There is no doubt that the deeper powers which influence the rhetoric of the populist really exist, however, not in the co-ordinated form that the populists would like to present it; there are in reality real interests of international actors or the international markets which influence policy making in different countries.

A problem for the populists in government can be that they must keep up this martial image even if the problem itself is irrelevant. Populism can become a dangerous tool when the government attacks the institutions of democracy under the disguise of defensive communication. It thus happened that the Venezuelan regime had the leader of the opposition condemned for 13 years of imprisonment in the name of the people because he was said to have instigated his followers to violence by subliminal messages[41].

The Turkish government smashes the remaining oppositional media because they are said to support terrorism[42] or the Hungarian government performs searches of the offices of critical NGOs, handcuffs their leaders, all the while emphasizing that they serve foreign powers. If we consider populism as the immune reaction of democracy in response to democratic deficit, then populism which tangles with authoritarian government is the auto-immune illness, when the T-cells are unleashed and kill off the organism which they were supposed to guard: in our case, democracy.

2. SUPPORT FOR POPULIST PARTIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The presence of populist political parties and their influence on politics in general is one of the most debated political issues in the European Union. These political formations, which define themselves by their opposition to the mainstream, pose a major challenge for the

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[41] New York Times szerkesztői vezércikk: Free Venezuela's Leopoldo López. 2015. szeptember 14. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/14/opinion/free-venezuelas-leopoldo-lopez.html?_r=0

[42] BBC: Turkey targets Dogan media 'terror propaganda' http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34256762. 2015. september 15.

European party systems, not only because traditional parties may lose significant portions of their traditional support to them, who often campaign with unrealistic promises, but also because competition between mainstream and populist parties can push the system towards populism as a consequence of established political parties, mimicking the emotionality in an attempt to sure up their voter base and take the wind from the sails of the populists.

In this chapter, we will analyze the present status and recent changes in the support for European populist parties. We will ask, on the basis of recent polls, how big the support base of populist powers are in Europe and will also ask what trends can be seen in the data, suggesting changes in support for populists.

The most important measurement of the support of political powers is the elections held every four to five years. Since the different member states of the European Union hold parliamentary elections at different times, however, in order to make sure that the data are comparable, we chose the results of the most recent European Parliamentary elections in 2014 as a basis. These elections, held 18 months ago, will be compared with new polls from the member states and thus we will get an insight into the present strength of populist parties and also in the change in their strength since the European Parliamentary elections.

When choosing polls regarding party preferences, we chose data not concerning the whole population, but only the cohort of voters who are considered extremely likely to vote. All this information was necessary for the data from the polls to be comparable with the European Parliamentary election data. The polls used were limited to those with a sample size over 1000.

This method however, was not used in the case of five countries, since there were parliamentary elections in Denmark (June 18), Greece (September 20) and Portugal (October 4). In the case of France, we used polls concerning the presidential elections since there was no part-preference poll available (we believe however, that these French polls give a reliable insight). In the case of Belgium, we used the polls dated earlier, from March 2015.

2.1. Situation in the summer 2015

Rather than an isolated phenomenon, the presence and growing strength of populism in Europe today is widely distributed. This is evident from the telling fact that in 24 out of 28 EU member states, populist parties polled in significant numbers. That is, in four fifths of the member states of the European Union, there are populist party formations independent of geography or economic situation. On the basis of the newest polls, it is only Estonia, Croatia, Malta and Slovenia where such political organizations have no significant support.

The relative success of populist parties shows a great variability across the EU member states. Whilst in Romania, the extra-mainstream Great Romania Party, the only party which can be considered populist, enjoys only 2.1% of the support, meanwhile in crisis-stricken Greece, more than 50% of the voters supported a populist party. Greece is unique in Europe

in that populist parties enjoy more than half of the vote share. In those 24 countries where support for populist parties is measurable, an average of 22%, that is almost a quarter of voters support these anti-mainstream powers. Even if we calculate for all 28 member states of the EU, the result will be an extremely high 19%, so one can say that every fifth vote is given to a populist party.

As mentioned, in Greece, populist parties enjoy the majority of support (54.6%), an unprecedented situation in recent European history. Greece is currently in first place for voter support for populists, In the 2014 European Parliamentary election, Greece was also in first place, with populists receiving 45.5% the votes. In 2009, however, Cyprus was the frontrunner with a 35.5% support. In the third quarter of 2015, support for a non-mainstream party was the second highest in Poland where four out of ten voters (42%) would vote for a populist party. Populists are greatly embedded in Italy (38.3%) and France (38.5%), where they gain more than a third of votes. Since these three member states have a high population, these data mean that in Poland, Italy and France, support for the populist powers are not just proportionally high, but also contribute large numbers to the European average.

The aggregated voter base for populist parties is higher than 30% in Cyprus and in the Netherlands, but at least a quarter of voters would back such political organizations in Hungary (26%), Austria (26%) and Denmark (25.6%). The other two Scandinavian countries in the EU show similar results with Sweden at 23.4% and Finland at 23.4%. Populist parties gain the support of every fifth voter in Ireland, Spain and Portugal, whereas in another six member states, support is between 13 and 16%.

All this means that in one third of the EU member states, at least a quarter of the voters sympathize with openly populist powers and in half of the member states (14 countries), at least a fifth of the voters have a similar attitude.

In only a quarter of the EU member states can the support base for populist parties be considered negligible, with only four countries where their support falls below 10% (Slovakia and Belgium, both around 8%, Luxemburg at 7.2% and Romania at 2.1%). In only four member states (Croatia, Slovenia, Malta and Slovenia) were there no political powers that would suit the definition at all. The above situation shows that it is the lack of populist movements, rather than their strong presence, which could be considered exceptional in the European Union today.

Comparing the present situation with the two previous European Parliamentary election results, it becomes obvious that, whilst in 2009, populist parties gathered a fifth or more of the votes in only seven countries (a quarter of the member states), and over 30% in only three countries (Cyprus, Denmark and The Netherlands), populist parties reached lower than 10% in eight member states and in three EU member states, they had no support from the voters at all. Five years later, in the spring of 2014, Populist parties took at least 20% of the vote in eleven member states and over 30% in five (Greece, Poland, Denmark, France and Italy). In eleven member states, populists captured at least 20% of the vote, and in five member states;

Greece, Poland, Denmark, France and Italy, they reached over 30% of voter support, whereas more than 40% was reached only in Greece. Less than 10% support for the populists was given only in four member states and in four further member states, these political powers failed to achieve any significant result at all. That is, in the last year, the number of those member states where support for the populist parties outside the establishment became significant; that is 20%, 30% or even higher than 40% continuously grew.

2.2.   Trends in support for populist parties 2014 - 2015

Amongst the 24 member states sampled, there has been a general trend for a growth in support for populist parties since the 2014 European Parliamentary elections. In 17 states, the support has grown, whilst there were only seven member states where support for these political organizations has decreased in the past 18 months. The magnitude of the change is very different in individual member states. If we consider changes smaller than 2 percentage points a stagnation, then we can say that the all in all support for populist political parties has grown in 12 member states, reduced in 4 member states, while remaining static in 8 member states. This proves that the growing of populist parties is a trend in the EU in the past 18 months.

Lets see now as a comparison the period between the past two EP elections of 2009 and 2014: in that period, support for populists grew in 17 member states and retreated in 8 member states. If we exclude changes of under 2% from the analysis, then support grew in 15 member states, whilst decreasing in six. This historical outlook shows that the increase between 2014 and 2015 can be viewed as a continuation of a previously existing trend.

Whereas, in the European Parliamentary elections of 2014, an average of 17.7% of the voters voted for populist parties, representative polls show that today they have a support of 19.1%. That is, in 18 months, the support for populist parties has grown an average of 1.4 percentage points across the European Union. At a first glance, a 1.4 percentage point growth may seem marginal over 28 countries. If we, however, consider that between 2009 and 2014 support for populist parties grew from 13.9% to 17,7%, a 3.8 percentage point increase over five years, we can see that the increase in support for populist parties between 2014 and 2015 as the continuity of an already existing trend.

Table 1. Support for populist parties in the European Union (In 2009, 2014 and 2015)

	Abreviation	EU group	EP-election results 2009	EP-election results 2014	Change 2009-2014	2015	Change 2014-2015
Austria			**17,30%**	**19,97%**	**2,67%**	**26%**	**6,03%**
Freedom Party of Austria	FPÖ	ENF	12,70%	19,50%	6,80%	26%	6,50%
Alliance for the Future of Austria	BZÖ		4,60%	0,47%	-4,13%	-	-
Belgium			**14,10%**	**4,16%**	**-9,94%**	**8,00%**	**3,84%**
Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang)	VB	ENF	9,85%	4,16%	-5,69%	7,40%	3,24%
List Dedecker (D)	LDD		4,51%	-	-4,51%	0,60%	0,60%
Bulgaria			**11,96%**	**13,60%**	**1,64%**	**13%**	**-0,60%**
Attack	Ataka		11,96%	2,96%	-9,00%	6%	3,04%
Bulgaria bez Cenzura		ECR	-	10,64%	10,64%	-	-
Patriotic Front						7%	7%
Croatia			**5,77%**	**-**	**-5,77%**	**-**	**-**
Croatian Labourists – Labour Party			5,77%	-	-5,77%	NA	
Cyprus			**34,90%**	**26,90%**	**-8,00%**	**32,60%**	**5,70%**
Progressive Party of the Working People	AKEL	GUE/NGL	34,90%	26,90%	-8,00%	30,80%	3,90%
National Popular Front	ELAM		-	-	-	1,80%	1,80%
Czech Republic			**15,44%**	**16,22%**	**0,78%**	**13,50%**	**-2,72%**
Czech Communist Party	KSČM	GUE/NGL	14,18%	10,98%	-3,20%	13,50%	2,52%
Party of Free Citizens	Svobodni	EFDD	1,26%	5,24%	3,98%	NA	-5,24%
Dawn - National Coalition	Úsvit					0,50%	0,50%
Denmark			**33,23%**	**39,16%**	**5,93%**	**25,70%**	**-13,46%**
Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti)	O	ECR	15,30%	26,60%	11,30%	21,10%	-5,50%
People's Party Against the EU	N	GUE/NGL	7,20%	8,00%	0,80%	NA	-8,00%
Left Bloc	B,E,		10,73%	4,56%	-6,17%	4,60%	0,04%
Finland			**15,70%**	**22,20%**	**6,50%**	**23,40%**	**1,20%**
True Finns	PS	ECR	9,80%	12,90%	3,10%	15,60%	2,70%
Left Alliance	Vas,	GUE/NGL	5,90%	9,30%	3,40%	7,80%	-1,50%

France			**21,80%**	**31,59%**	**9,79%**	**36,50%**	**4,91%**
National Front	FN	ENF	6,30%	24,95%	18,65%	26%	1,05%
Libertas (Movement for France)	Libertas (MPF-CPNT)		4,60%	-	-4,60%	NA	
Left Front	FG	GUE/NGL	6,00%	6,34%	0,34%	9%	2,66%
New Anticapitalist Party	NPA		4,90%	0,30%	-4,60%	1,50%	1,20%
Germany			**7,50%**	**15,50%**	**8,00%**	**14%**	**-1,50%**
THE LEFT	DIE LINKE	GUE/NGL	7,50%	7,40%	-0,10%	10%	2,60%
Alternative for Germany	AFD	ECR	-	7,10%	7,10%	4%	-3,10%
National Democratic Party of Germany	NPD	NA	-	1,00%	1,00%	NA	
Greece			**20,20%**	**45,47%**	**25,27%**	**54,55%**	**9,08%**
Popular Orthodox Rally	LAOS		7,15%	-	-7,15%	NA	
Communist Party of Greece	KKE	NA	8,35%	6,07%	-2,28%	5,55%	-0,52%
Coalition of the Radical Left	SYRIZA	GUE/NGL	4,70%	26,57%	21,87%	35,46%	8,89%
Golden Dawn	XA	NA	-	9,38%	9,38%	6,99%	-2,39%
Independent Greeks	ANEL		-	3,45%	3,45%	3,69%	0,24%
Popular Unity	LAEN	GUE/NGL	-	-	-	2,86%	2,86%
Hungary			**14,77%**	**14,68%**	**-0,09%**	**26%**	**11,32%**
Jobbik	Jobbik	NA	14,77%	14,68%	-0,09%	26%	11,32%
Ireland			**13,86%**	**17,00%**	**3,14%**	**21%**	**4,00%**
Socialist Party	Soc		2,76%	-	-2,76%	NA	
Sinn Féin	SF	GUE/NGL	11,10%	17,00%	5,90%	21%	4,00%
Italy			**13,58%**	**31,33%**	**17,75%**	**38,30%**	**6,97%**
Northern League	LN	ENF	10,20%	6,15%	-4,05%	15,80%	9,65%
Communist Refoundation Party, European Left, Italian Communists	PRC, SE, PDCI		3,38%		-3,38%	NA	
Five Star Movement	M5S	EFDD	-	21,15%	21,15%	22,50%	1,35%
For Another Europe – With Tsipras	-	GUE/NGL	-	4,03%	4,03%	NA	-4,03%
Latvia			**7,45%**	**14,25%**	**6,80%**	**16%**	**1,75%**

For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK (National Alliance in 2014)	TB/LNNK	ECR	7,45%	14,25%	6,80%	16%	1,75%
Lithuania			**12,22%**	**20,89%**	**8,67%**	**15%**	**-5,89%**
Order and Justice	TT	EFDD	12,22%	14,27%	2,05%	8%	-6,27%
Lithuanian Peasant and Greens Union	LVŽS	G/EFA	-	6,62%	6,62%	7%	0,38%
Luxemburg			**3,41%**	**5,76%**	**2,35%**	**7,20%**	**1,44%**
The Left	Déi Lénk		3,41%	5,76%	2,35%	7,20%	1,44%
The Netherlands			**32,94%**	**29,80%**	**-3,14%**	**31,70%**	**1,90%**
Party for Freedom	PVV	ENF	16,97%	13,20%	-3,77%	13,50%	0,30%
Socialist Party	SP	GUE/NGL	7,10%	9,60%	2,50%	12,50%	2,90%
Green Left	GroenLinks	G/EFA	8,87%	7,00%	-1,87%	5,70%	-1,30%
Poland			**27,40%**	**39,39%**	**11,99%**	**41%**	**1,61%**
Law and Justice	PiS	ECR	27,40%	32,33%	4,93%	41%	8,67%
Congress of the New Right (Kongres Nowej Prawicy)	KNP	ENF	-	7,06%	7,06%	NA	-7,06%
Portugal			**22,59%**	**19,29%**	**-3,30%**	**19,62%**	**0,33%**
Left Block	BE	GUE/NGL	10,73%	4,93%	-5,80%	10,22%	5,29%
Unitary Democratic Coalition	CDU	GUE/NGL	10,66%	12,69%	2,03%	8,27%	-4,42%
Workers' Communist Party	PCTP	NA	1,20%	1,67%	0,47%	1,13%	-0,54%
Romania			**8,65%**	**2,70%**	**-5,95%**	**2,10%**	**-0,60%**
Greater Romania Party	PRM		8,65%	2,70%	-5,95%	2,10%	-0,60%
Szlovakia			**5,55%**	**3,61%**	**-1,94%**	**8%**	**4,39%**
Slovak National Party	SNS		5,55%	3,61%	-1,94%	8%	4,39%
Spain			**3,73%**	**17,96%**	**14,23%**	**21%**	**3,04%**
United Left- Initiative for Catalonia Greens- United and Alternative Left-Bloc for Asturias	IU-ICV-EUIA-BA	G/EFA, GUE/NGL	3,73%	9,99%	6,26%	4,50%	-5,49%
Por la Democracia Social	Podemos	GUE/NGL	-	7,97%	7,97%	16,50%	8,53%
Sweden			**8,93%**	**16,00%**	**7,07%**	**24,40%**	**8,40%**
Sweden Democrats	SD	EFDD	3,27%	9,70%	6,43%	17,80%	8,10%

2.3.   Present trends in the member states

Support for populist parties has changed in different ways in different member states. Compared with the 2014 spring elections, one could witness a surge in support and a collapse in support, depending on where one looked. Hungary saw the steepest rise in support for populists: The far-right party, Jobbik, achieved around 15% at the European Parliamentary elections, whereas it now polls at 26%, A gain of 11 percentage points. To draw the full picture, it must be said that the far-right Hungarian party performed very poorly on the European Parliamentary elections. 18 months earlier, at the national parliamentary elections, it won 20% of the vote. In light of this, the strengthening of the party is less dramatic.

The popularity of populist parties also grew in Sweden, where, in spring 2014, they took 16% of the vote, already considered a very strong result. Today, they poll at 24.4%, a growth of over 50% in 18 months. The Swedish democrats enjoyed the lion's share of this increase, almost doubling their vote haul from 9.7% in 2014 to a poll of 18% in a recent poll.

In two southern member states, Greece and Italy, the voter base for the populist parties grew significantly in the period of study. They grew in Greece by 9 percentage points and in Italy, by 7 percentage points. Since their original support was already extremely high, at 45.5% and 31%, respectively, this result is even more remarkable. The difference between the two southern member states is that demand for populist powers grew at the right end of the spectrum in Italy and on the left end of the spectrum in Greece. In Italy, the engine of the growth was Lega Nord, reaching a 250% expansion to 16% making them second only to Jobbik, concerning the expansion rate in the study period. On the other hand, during the September parliamentary elections in Greece, it was the far left parties who could broaden their voter base: Syriza and LAE (Party of national unity), whereas, the far-right populists, Golden Dawn lost votes. The two landslide victories of Syriza are unprecedented among populist parties: during the elections they gained more than a third of the votes, strengthening their 2014 EP election results by 9 percentage points.

Compared to May 2014, the Austrian populist powers gained 6 percentage points, entering the group of European parties which grew the most. The far-right Austrian freedom party's support grew from 19.5% to 26%, a 6.5 percentage point rise in the last period, whereas the alliance for the future of Austria, which was barely visible in the statistic last year, fully disappeared from the political landscape. The 5.7 percentage point growth in Cyprus is similar to that of Austria. This growth results from the 4 percentage point growth of the very popular, communist AKEL and partly by the 1.8 percentage point growth of the national popular front.

On the basis of presidential election polls, support for populist parties grew in France between the spring of 2014 and the summer of 2015 by 5 percentage points. Although it is still the Front National (FN), which has the biggest support from amongst the populist parties, people who would support the party and its leader have grown in number only by a single percentage point since 2014. Two other parties take their share in the 5 percentage point elevation in France: the

new anti-capitalist party grew by 1.2 percentage points, whereas the left front grew by 2.6 percentage points.

The number of those who wish to vote for a populist organization, grew by 4% in Slovakia and Ireland. In each of these countries, there is, for the time being, just one such political party. The newest data show that the Slovak national party has an 8% support among those voters who are sure to vote, whereas during the European Parliamentary elections, they hadn't even reached 4%. That is, in a short period, they doubled the number of their supporters. Populist policy is being represented in Ireland by Sinn Fein, with the biggest Irish Catholic left nationalist party receiving 17% of the votes last spring. In the summer of 2015, however, every fifth voter would have given their support to them. Support for populist parties grew at a similar rate in Belgium by 3.84 percentage points, a change for which the Vlaams Blang is mostly responsible, with List Dedecker winning only 0.5% of the support.

Support for populists grew on a smaller, but still significant scale in Poland. However, Poland's situation is special. Support for populist parties grew on a national level by 3.1 percentage points, but there is a more differentiated picture behind these statistics. The conservative-Liberal and Euroskeptical party, The Congress of the new Right (KnP), founded in 2011 and reaching 7% at the European Parliamentary elections in 2014. By the summer of 2015, their support diminished to a non-visible level. The support for the Law and Justice party (PiS), on the other hand, grew by 10 percentage points and, at present, 42% of Polish voters give them their support. By this, PiS reaches the second place, behind Jobbik, concerning the increase of their support in the period of study. However, because of the collapse of KnP, this doesn't mean that populist voters grew radically in Poland. One could rather say that party preferences of populist voters had changed.

Spain is the twelfth in the list of countries in which support for populist parties grew. Overall by 3%. There was a much bigger change in the support base of the two populist left wing Spanish parties, however. Support for the United Left (IU) more than halved from 10% at the European Parliamentary elections to 4.5%. The other populist party, Podemos, doubled its 2014 results of 8%, to an expected vote share of 16.5%, were elections carried out today. (not mentioning the fact that in the last 18 months, there were periods when Podemos had an even higher support). An 8.5 percentage point increase is, even among the European populist parties, impressive. Only the Hungarian Jobbik, Polish PiS and the Italian Lega Nord, could gain more electoral support during the period of study.

Non-mainstream, populist parties grew only non-significantly, that is by less than 2% in five EU member states. In both Latvia and Luxemburg, the support for one party changed, whereas in the Netherlands and Finland, two populist parties support has changed.

Support for populist parties reduced non-significantly in three member states: in Romania, the Greater Romania Party reached a paltry 2.7% support in the European Parliamentary elections, a reduction of a single percentage point. Meanwhile, in Bulgaria, a similar 2.6% reduction can be seen in the voter base of populist parties. In Bulgaria, however, one can witness a similar

rearrangement as in Poland. The Bulgarian Bez Cenzura won 10% in 2014 and disappeared fully by the summer of 2015, whereas a new populist party, the Patriotic Front, which currently enjoys support of 7%, according to polls, appeared on the scene. The third Bulgarian non-mainstream party, Ataka, has, by 2015, doubled their previous 3% support.

Aside from the above mentioned two new member states, support for populist political parties reduced only minimally in Germany. Die Linke (the left) increased their support of 7.5% in 2009 to 10% in 2014. The National Conservative, AfD support of around 7% collapsed to around 3.5%. Overall, support for German populist parties retreated by 1.5 percentage points by the third quarter of 2015. In Portugal, three left-populist parties compete for the votes: the Left Block (BE) doubled its support from 5 to 10%, the communist unitary democratic coalition (CDU), however, lost a third of its voters, whereas the workers communist party, which had reached only a marginal 1.7% in 2014 lost support by autumn 2015, polling at only 1%.

There was a significant, but moderate decrease in support for populist parties in the Czech Republic, during the last 18 months. On the other hand, support for the communists, grew in the Czech Republic. On the basis of the newest polls, support for the Czech Communist party is 2.5 percentage points higher than in the spring of 2014, with a current support of approximately 13.5%.

The number of voters supporting populist parties fell by roughly six percentage points in Lithuania, reaching today a 15% share of all voters. Support for the two non-mainstream parties became approximately equal, because whilst the Lithuanian peasant and Green Union (LVZS) has not changed in the last 18 months, retaining around 7% support, the Order and Justice (TT) voter base fell from 14 to 8%.

In two member states, the fall in support for populist parties was exceptionally high. In Denmark, at the june parliamentary elections, every fifth Dane voted for one of the populist parties, whereas, at the last European parliamentary elections, every fourth vote was given to them, losing, in a single year, a third of their voters. The 13.5% drop results mainly from The People's Party against the EU (N), fully losing its support of 8% in 2014. The second most popular populist party in Denmark, the far-right, Danish People's Party (O), fell back by 5.5 percentage points, still gaining every fifth vote of the Danes in the summer of 2015. Although there was a strong drop in comparison to their 2014 results, these results can be seen as a break though for the Danish People's Party, since 2011, at the Danish Parliamentary elections, they reached only 12%. The third non-mainstream party, the Left Blocks (BE) 4-5% support remained unchanged in the period of study.

The biggest fall in all of the EU member states was witnessed in the United Kingdom, where UKIP received 26.5% of the vote share in the 2014 European Parliamentary elections, a historical success for the euroskeptical populist party. Their support however halved within a year. In the General Elections of May 2015, UKIP scored only 12.7% and at present, the polls

show them on around 13%. The 13.5 percentage point drop is the biggest any European populist party witnessed during the last year.

2.4.   Extraordinary results of certain parties

The national statistics cover up the individual performance of the populist parties, however there are remarkable data of individual parties which stand out from the general picture of populism within the European Union. Looking at our table with this question, it is visible that there is only one populist party in Europe which would have more than 40% support. The Polish conservative PiS stands with its 42.3% support as the strongest populist party in the European Union, The threshold of 30% support is passed by two other parties: Syriza in Greece, which won the elections in September and the Marxist-Leninist-Communist, Cypriot AKEL; gaining support of 35.5% and 30.8% respectively in the third quarter of 2015.

The Austrian FPÖ, the French, Front National and the Hungarian Jobbik, belong to the elite of the populist parties, each with a support 26%. Overall, nine European populist parties have a support higher than 20%. Alongside those already mentioned, the Italian Five Star Movement has 22%, Sinn Fein 21%, the right-wing, populist Danish People's party has 21%, the Sweden democrats 20% and the Spanish Podemos 16,5%, the Latvian National Alliance 15.4%, Lega Nord 16% and the party of the Finns 14%. These parties form the frontrunners of populist parties in Europe.

In the past 18 months, it is worthwhile looking at the ranking of parties in terms of changes in party preference. The 11.32 percentage point growth of Jobbik, in Hungary, could not be matched by any other populist party in Europe. The second largest rate of growth was enjoyed by the Polish Law and Justice Party (PiS), which saw a rise of 10 percentage points since the European parliamentary elections of May 2014. The Italian Lega Nord's vote share grew almost by the same amount, with a 9.65 percentage point increase. With it's polling success in September, it can be considered an outstanding result that the support of Syriza also grew by nearly 9 percentage points. Remarkable growth was celebrated by the Spanish Podemos, who grew 8.5 percentage points, and by the Sweden Democrats, who grew 8.1 percentage points. And the Bulgarian Patriotic Front grew 7 percentage points. The Austrian Freedom Party grew 6.5 percentage points, while the Greek LAEN grew 6.4 percentage points.

At the other end of the scale, the party which has lost the most is the British UKIP, dropping 13.5 percentage points in 11 months; half of their electoral support. Parties in second and third place in the list of those which lost votes are the Bulgarian Bez Cenzura (-10.74 percentage points) and the Danish peoples party against the EU (-8 percentage points). The polish new right coalition (-6.6 percentage points) and the Latvian order and justice (-6.32 percentage points) suffered a similar fate. From parties which shrank by more than 5 percentage points, the Czech Svobodni disappeared completely, while the Spanish United Left shrank to half its previous voter base. Although the Danish People's party shrank by 5.5 percentage points, they are still one of the most well supported parties in Denmark.

Let us emphasize again that our analysis focused on the populist parties outside the establishment. The populist contamination of Mainstream parties (such as Fidesz) was not analyzed.

3. STRATEGIC RESPONSES TO POPULISM

Populism is a challenge for mainstream politics, but as it takes many different forms, so the reaction of mainstream parties to its challenge is diverse. As much as there is no single successful populist strategy, since the success of populism depends upon the capitalization of a real democratic deficit, neither is there an exclusively successful anti-populist strategy. In the molding of these strategies, different aspects play a role. The democratic deficit, i.e. the problem left unarticulated by the mainstream parties, but articulated by the populists, its acceptance in society, its radicalism, the election system, the reaction of the other parties, the attitude of the media and so on. Instead of a detailed analysis of the above factors and the anti-populist tactics, we concentrate on four strategic approaches, which sum up the reactions of all the mainstream parties. Obviously, these are just ideotypes and never appear in a pure form. The reaction of a party is articulated by more politicians and voices (moreover, on the local, regional and national level) and it is far from sure that these voices would be in harmony with each other. Moreover, we do not necessarily talk about a party, but rather about the reaction of party systems. These strategies are not mutually exclusive, but, rather, contain partly combinable elements.

Finally, it must be said that although we talk about mainstream parties, or party systems, this is an oversimplified framework, as parties rarely react in a united way, but rather develop their strategies individually according to their interests and values. This doesn't mean that there cannot be an intersection in interests or values, and it doesn't mean that there cannot be mutually beneficial, harmonized strategies amongst the parties. It is however, the individual decisions of the parties regarding how to respond to populism (that is to the populist parties and populist methods), inasmuch as they accept the framework of a collective answer.

Furthermore, the different interests of non-populist parties often lead to different strategic answers, with the responses of individual parties often influencing other actors. Let's assume that theoretical accord is being struck, theoretical understanding is being made that a strongly xenophobic populist party should be held in a quarantine. That is, more mainstream parties think that the growth of xenophobia can be confined by a united rejection.

Keeping such a strategy can be very costly to the co-operating parties in different ways. It can be especially risky for a centre-right party if it loses the right-wing of the party, in a situation where xenophobia grows in the society. And if the party understands that by imposing a quarantine, they would lose more to the right than they would gain in the centre, then there is a strong temptation for them to quit the mainstream consensus because they might profit more from an active confrontation or through the topics articulated by the populists. The same issue can be imagined for a party of the left, if a populist party can offer a good enough narrative to

persuade a significant part of its voter base that their problems can be better solved by abandoning the party they would traditionally support. In such as situation, the quarantine cannot be maintained for a long duration. Neither can they continuously ignore the topics articulated by the populists. Thus it is not surprising that the Austrian people's party (ÖVP) finally formed a coalition with the very populist FPÖ in 1999. It also shows the magnitude of the social change that at least in one of Lander, even the social democrats formed such a coalition. It is possible that on a local level, the strategy to exclude the extremists from every part of the executive would not have had any chance of success, but the Austrian example also shows that such an excluding strategy cannot be upheld in the long run if the giving up of the common strategy promises major political profits. The ÖVP profited greatly from quitting the previous political consensus, since they celebrated a great victory by multiplying their support between 1999 and 2002 from 26% to 42%. Although this success didn't prove to be long-lasting, in the same way that FPÖ's loss from 27 to 10% was only transient.

When analyzing reactions to populism, one is always forced to confront dilemmas from game theory in relation to collective action. In our case with the problem that non-populist parties can often gain from a co-ordinated action, it is often the case that one of them stands to reap a greater benefit from leaving the common action. This makes the maintenance of a collectively organized quarantine unviable. The solution to populism is therefore a continuous meander. The success of populism is always dependent on the ideological position of the mainstream party, its attitude toward the ideological orientation of the those who may support populist parties and the strategy of the other mainstream parties. The fluctuating response of mainstream parties to populism mainly stems from here.

3.1. Ignoring

Although rare today, in previous decades, populists and the problems which they articulated were often ignored as a transitory phenomenon. Considering the present European success of populism, this seems to be far from a profitable strategy. Considering that populists generally articulate real problems with over simplification and doubtful elements, ignoring them seems not only to be strategically foolish, but also rather ignoble. It is not the case, however that the success of populism is necessarily typical of the past or paradigmatic of the future. Western European democracies have often witnessed short waves of populist success, but they rarely stood the test of time. In those countries where the election system practically excludes small parties from parliamentary representation, a populist party which can command 10-15% of the vote share does not necessarily pose an electoral challenge to the mainstream party system. A relatively large share of the votes does not always translate into even a single seat in parliament. If a populist party cannot create a parliamentary platform in the long-run, it usually has no chance of consolidating and growing in strength. In the US, for example, the populist third parties could never break up the duopoly of power and embed themselves into the system. For a long period, even in Great Britain and France, it may have seemed that, despite their episodic successes, the populists could not become part of the mainstream political system.

Even in proportional electoral systems, which better represent the full breadth of the electoral will, however, mainstream parties may decide to ignore the populists, either because they are too weak to pose a challenge, or because by this, they hope to replicate the same effect imposed with the *cordon-sanitaire* used in the majoritarian systems.

Concerning the success of the French and British populists (which is based for the time being on polls, and is certainly not certain to lead to real parliamentary mandates if in the near future or at all), ignoring them cannot be considered to have been a successful strategy. [although in none of the countries mentioned did the mainstream parties follow a pure strategy of fully ignoring the populist parties]. It should, however, be emphasized that, although populist topics and rhetoric sometimes appear in the output from mainstream political parties, parties which could be considered populist by definition could be successfully excluded from the government and nearly successfully from parliamentary mandates altogether. It is debatable whether the democratic deficit instrumentalized by the populists can be bridged, however, it is without doubt that populists could never represent the majority of society. It cannot be the task of this paper to find an answer to the question of whether it is more ethical to ignore the opinion of the (for example xenophobic) minority, or whether it is better to integrate it. Moreover, this often depends on the situation.

3.2. Quarantine

The policy of ignoring populist parties can also be supplemented by a conscious political quarantine of the populist party. This would mean that the mainstream parties would actively decide that they are unwilling to accept the populist parties as a participant in the political discourse. In order for this to be effective as a method, the populist party must express extreme points of view. Being an enemy of the elite is not sufficient for a quarantine to be successfully imposed. Nor can the rejection of societal inequality, austerity economics, or the will to decrease immigration, in themselves be considered extreme, unless they are coupled with extreme rhetoric or xenophobia, exclusion or rejection of basic democratic principles or values.

A political quarantine imposed on a populist party by the mainstream political actors can also send a message to the electorate that "whoever would like to belong to the middle of the society, should not support populism". Stemming from the idea that a majority of the people have the desire to conform, showing that commitment to the populist can seem a non-conformist choice could successfully lead to stifling their growth. Moreover, the quarantine could also send a message based on practice, which is that support of the populist party is a waste of a vote, because it will never have translate into power without the support of the mainstream parties, which strongly decreases their image of potential in political circles.

Such strategies are particularly at the mercy of successful co-operation between the participants imposing the quarantine. It is unlikely that a political quarantine can be successfully sustained if one or more influential political party is unwilling to take part and rather, decides to express that they consider the populist party a part of the mainstream democratic competition. Similarly, the mainstream media is also a key player and in order for the quarantine to be

effectively maintained, they must be of a like mind in imposing it. Besides these strategic concerns, it is clear that a policy, which involves the neglect of the real problems instrumentalized by the populists, is in danger of having an effect converse to that intended; increasing the power of the reaction to the problem being ignored, thereby nourishing populism. Unfortunately, imposing a quarantine can also act as a displacement activity- an easier way to deal with populists in the short term than dealing with the problems which they are articulating. A further problem with the quarantine strategy is that it can reinforce the victimhood status of the populists and the idea of the elite as arrogant, fueling the fire from which populism emerges.

3.3.   Mainstream parties co-opt the concerns and rhetoric of populists

Putting aside any moral considerations, the most successful political solution for neutralizing populism is to integrate the populist themes and programs into the mainstream discourse. As mentioned previously, the power underlying the populist parties is the juxtaposition between the people and the elite, describing the elite's activity as disinterested in the ordinary person. To describe it in a fashionable Hungarian expression, the politics is betraying the ordinary man. The difference between populist parties lies in the specific themes and programs articulated. In Latin America or Southern Europe, often poverty or inequality rises as a major problem. Therefore, populists are often on the left end of the political spectrum. Although in Europe, the left-wing populists who are fighting against inequality and free-trade are increasing in strength, it Is still true that a populism that is against foreigners and migrants or at the extreme right end of the political spectrum is generally more prevalent. The common feature between the parties concerned is that they state that the elite, which incorporates both the mainstream left and right at the same time, is unable to handle important societal problems. Moreover, it is unwilling to pay these problems any attention.

Although a smart populist can build a success out of a variety of themes, it isn't true that you can build a populist movement on anything. In places where there is no theme which naturally concerns a major part of the society, populist parties are likely to find limited success. This in no way means that this specific society should be without any problems, but if the occurring problems only concern separated small groups, then the main narrative is lost with which you can hold together and keep up the voting community connected to the populist party.

Concerning the "big theme", it is possible to hobble the populists if the mainstream parties, or at least one influential party will start to pay attention to the problem and integrate it into its own rhetoric. Assuming that the communication in that matter projects credibility, then the idea upon which the populist party draws most of its political power, i.e. that the elite neglects the real problems of the people, or that the elite's understanding or politics is too far removed from reality, will therefore be difficult for the populist party to sustain and momentum will be lost.

Turning the mainstream towards populism is a risky game for many reasons. Firstly, when validating the problems articulated by the populists, there is a danger of also validating their proposed methods or suggestions. Alternatively, mainstream politics can become contaminated

with the excesses of populism, including xenophobic attitudes and unworkable economic policies. To raise an example, it is unlikely to be called efficient or good democratic practice if a mainstream politician denies the problem of integrating migrants or the shortcomings of migration policy, when this is obviously inconsistent with almost everybody's everyday experience. It also fails to help in solving the problem if mainstream political actors suggest that these problems have an easy solution, that the migrants in themselves represent a problem, or that the worries of the people who happen to live in places where very few migrants live and who just instinctively regret their difference or anything that differs from their narrow ethnic and cultural ideas, are reasonable. Independent of someone's opinion on the migrants, allowing societal exclusion to grow will strengthen the failure of integration and with that it will possibly lead to a social problems, which in the long-term, will lead to such societal polarization, which can only help future populists to become successful. To highlight the weaknesses of the other end of the political spectrum: the fancy-sounding policies like the French socialists 75% tax for extremely high incomes, despite the high attention of the media, did not lead to a lowering of inequality. Above all, the government, after only 2 years, had to quietly quit the taxes, after gaining just a minimal income. Presumably, it probably led also to damage which would not have happened with a lower tax key.

Therefore, it is specifically problematic to adopt such rhetoric, unless it is paired with real political commitment, which would suggest that the political power actually takes the problem seriously. At the opposite end of the political spectrum, the room for maneuver is greater, but for a government, or a party in a position of power, a failure to solve the problems articulated could be extremely damaging in the long-term. As we have previously highlighted, the greatest risk here is that for the sake of short-term political gains, a serious and difficult problem will become the centre of mainstream political discourse, after which it will be neglected or solved too slowly for an impatient electorate, which only increases the gap between communication and reality and in the long-term, not only legitimizes populists but it can largely widen their electoral basis as well. In France, the conservative right wing sometimes tried to employ temporary solutions and while it repaired the reputation of the conservative leadership, it may also partly explain the current strength and radicalism of the far right Front National.

3.4. Offensive strategies for dealing with populism

The solution which is most harmonious with democratic principles is when the existing problem, articulated by the populists, is admitted and active discussion with the populists pursued. This way, the populist argumentation is confronted with reality and their exaggerations corrected, while policy solutions are developed. This idealistic approach, however, cannot be used simply in practice and it is not guaranteed that the political elite are capable of handling such a situation properly. The democratic deficit which fueled the success of populism also occurred with the same elite. Even if communication is improved and a more satisfactory policy solution is put in place, there is likely to remain a section of society which still prefers the populists. In an ideal case, democracy solves the problem of the nation and the nation recognizes and accepts that. But, democratic politics is performed by people, and people vote by the performance of democratic politics and, although it is difficult to deny that

democracy usually performs better than authoritarian structures, especially when it comes to satisfying popular needs, perfect solutions are never found. Therefore populism will always find fertile ground and the question will always be about its scale and relevance, rather than its existence, per se.

Moreover, populists usually base their communication on big-scale problems, which have a genuine effect on people's lives and have a deep history. Poverty in South America, the integration of the migrants or the growing inequality in western Europe, the integration of the Roma in Eastern Europe and so on and so forth. It is worrying that, concerning these topics, there is little or no progress and there is little sign of the mainstream politicians understanding and paying enough attention to these problems. Although sometimes, even intensive attention does not translate into viable solutions to complex, multi-generational, historical problems. In these situations, in some sense, it is largely unimportant who makes the decision and how committed they are to solving the problem.

Although the populists have loud and usually radical slogans, they are less likely to be capable of solving the problems themselves, than mainstream parties. Unfortunately, however, the critical test of their competence comes only in their participation in government. Whatever Jobbik says in Hungary, the question of Roma integration cannot be solved only by policing. Whatever AfD says in Germany, the Euro cannot be phased out cautiously and its phasing out would probably solve less problems than the party imagines. Whatever the anti-migrant populists promise to solve, the deep problems of the banlieue in France cannot be easily fixed and a complete halt to migration would cause serious economic problems in certain countries.

In summary, to suggest that populism can be successfully dealt with using democratic tools is a little like a populist promise itself- although it sounds good in theory, it is much more difficult in practice. However, we would not like to exaggerate the comparison. Active discussion and the dismantling of false promises coupled with the development of serious solutions is the most noble exercise and, if it is being taken seriously, seems the best, and for certain the most democratic strategy against populism.

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