

Contemporary Populism

Contemporary Populism:
A Controversial Concept and Its Diverse Forms

Edited by

Sergiu Gherghina, Sergiu Mişcoiu
and Sorina Soare

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P U B L I S H I N G

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INTRODUCTION: POPULISM - A SOPHISTICATED CONCEPT AND DIVERSE POLITICAL REALITIES

SERGIU GHERGHINA AND SORINA SOARE

If the Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti or the President of the European Council Herman van Rompuy are not regarded as populist figures in the public imagination or in the scientific community, then it should be quite easy to identify their opposite. Cases like those of Juan Perón, Hugo Chávez, Pym Fortuyn, Geert Wilders, Martine and Jean-Marie Le Pen, or Corneliu Vadim Tudor are well-known examples of populist leaders. The problem is that these manifestations cannot all be treated as a unitary phenomenon, with a similar programmatic discourse, a common *Weltanschauung*, or an organisational structure that consistently reproduces the pre-eminence of a charismatic leader. Moreover, the situation gets complicated when we consider the variable of the past and, in particular, the genealogy of these leaders. Often referred to as a phenomenon that is viscerally related to the extremisms of the 20th century, populism is arguably coterminous with right-wing radicalism, in more or less direct connection with interwar extremism, and, in some cases, with left-wing radicalism, such as espoused by Fidel Castro or other Latin American leaders. And yet, an in-depth analysis may reveal that the genealogical approach has a limited heuristic capacity. The situation becomes truly difficult when the label “populist” is used for some of the political leaders of the institutionalised parties. A relevant example in this sense is that of Ségolène Royal and the Socialist Party in France or of Traian Băsescu and the Democratic Liberal Party in Romania.

Everything becomes even more confusing when populism is used as a political label in everyday language to describe a propagandistic discourse exemplified mainly by the mutual accusations between the government and the opposition parties. In this sense, populism is generally encountered both in democracies and in authoritarian regimes, in parties and organised movements, in leaders (who may be more or less charismatic) and in political messages. The common point is the strong negative connotation

surrounding this phenomenon throughout the world: in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Western or Central and Eastern Europe. In short, as Cas Mudde observes, populism is a widely used concept, which is often reduced to a genuine “shopping list” that combines parties, movements, and leaders of diverse or even opposite ideological backgrounds and orientations.

How can we explain this conceptual ambiguity? At a general level, this is a shortcoming of political science *per se*, characterised by the absence of a typical specialised language¹ (both in the hard and in the soft versions of political science). Political science does not have a monopoly over the vocabulary that may be characteristic of a well-circumscribed subject. Instead, its object of study and its discourse are partly shared with other social science disciplines. Its terminology often risks becoming a commonplace - in this case, a journalistic commonplace, taking the inflation of populism into account. From a complementary point of view, consistent with the fears expressed by Sartori, we can observe a tendency to increase methodological rigor at the expense of theoretical foundations. Such types of research are mainly oriented towards theoretical and conceptual development, without following a rigorous and methodological approach. Outside a valid testing ground, the theories of populism can hardly strive for conceptual clarifications. With respect to theories, this book will bring minor contributions. Our emphasis is on providing the reader with an approach in which the coherence of theory is supported by detailed empirical studies (individual cases or comparative approaches).

What is Populism: A Genre with Permeable Frontiers?

The fundamental question uniting the contributions to this volume is: what exactly is populism? This is certainly not a new question, as a large amount of literature has focused on this topic for more than half a century. In the spring of 1967, a series of researchers including Ghiță Ionescu, Isaiah Berlin, Ernst Gellner, Alain Touraine, Franco Venturi, and Hugh Seton-Watson held a thematic seminar dedicated to populism.² The term was not new, as Tarchi remarks, since it had already been applied to American or Russian historical cases and “had asserted itself for some time in the language of the social sciences, especially in analyses of the

¹ Giovanni Sartori, “Where is Political Science Going?”, *Political Science and Politics* 37(4) (2004): 785.

² See the transcript of the discussions, presented in a special issue of the journal *Government and Opposition*. Isaiah Berlin et al., “To Define Populism”, *Government and Opposition*, 3(2) (1968): 137-80.

experiences of mass political integration in the Third World, in examinations of authoritarian phenomena, as well as in analyses of trends typical of the pluralist systems, starting with that in the U.S”.³ In fact, in a book that has become a landmark, Ghiță Ionescu and Ernest Gellner ironically define populism as the new spectrum hovering over contemporary society.

Since the 1960s, populism has flaunted its “chameleonic” nature grafted with “essential impalpability” and “conceptual slipperiness”⁴, being analysed in turn as an ideology, a *forma mentis*, a movement, a syndrome rather than a doctrine, or a social identity. A large number of cases have been identified, but a common definition has not been reached. Isaiah Berlin points to a genuine “Cinderella complex”, concluding that:

There exists a shoe - the word “populism” - for which somewhere exists a foot. There are all kinds of feet which it *nearly* fits, but we must not be trapped by these nearly fitting feet. The prince is always wandering about with the shoe; and somewhere, we feel sure, there awaits a limb called pure populism.⁵

Half a century later, things appear to be equally complicated: the quest for the perfect limb is not over and, in its absence, more or less well-argued approximations are proposed. Over the years, the defining elements of populism have been collected in several lists. Its constitutive elements include⁶:

- the idealisation/sacralisation of the people, perceived as a special or chosen people;⁷

³ Marco Tarchi, “Il populismo e la scienza politica: come liberarsi del ‘complesso di Cenerentola’”, *Filosofia Politica* XVIII(3) (2004): 413.

⁴ Paul Taggart, *Populism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), 1.

⁵ Quoted by Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 7.

⁶ Based on the index built by Isaiah Berlin et al., “To Define...”, 172-73.

⁷ According to the populist rhetoric, the polysemy of the term “people” is rather broad. The “people” may refer in turn, or even concurrently, to the poor, the weak, the middle classes, and the peasantry. In fact, as Mudde contends, the acceptance of the term may change from one populist to another, or even within one and the same country; see Cas Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist”, *Government and Opposition*, 39(4) (2004): 546. Like *trait d’union*, the people are always presented as threatened, on an internal level, by the corruption and moral degeneration of the establishment and/or by the phenomenon of globalisation on an external level - see, for instance, the delocalisation operated by the international loan institutions, by inter-governmental bodies, such as the European Union, or by another State.

- statism, a common point until recently, although the emergence of so-called neo-populism has shifted attention to certain liberal economic perspectives on the phenomenon;
- customised leadership and faith in the leader's extraordinary qualities;
- xenophobia, racism and/or anti-Semitism permeate the discursive register;
- promoting the image of an organic society, i.e. economic, social or cultural harmony;
- the intensive use of conspiracy theories and the invocation of apocalyptic visions;
- affinity with religion and a nostalgic outlook on the past;
- anti-elitism and anti-establishment, etc.

Beyond their descriptive relevance, without information about their mutual relations, these features have limited utility.⁸ Based on a dynamics of identity that varies depending on context and period, all the political phenomena within this "family" are stigmatised as degenerate forms of democracy⁹, as pathologies¹⁰ necessitating radical removal, or as crises of democracy in which populism becomes a form of protest.¹¹ However, this diagnosis is problematic, since it often simplifies the content of the message and implies the existence of a quick treatment for the cure of its immediate manifestations; and the causes are ignored. In this case, the analysis of populism can turn into a

disguised pamphlet. Populism is stigmatised as a perverse *ism* or as an erroneous political position par excellence, as a political vision that verges on Manichaeism. (...) The word populism denotes therefore a threat and

⁸ See, on this topic, Francisco Panizza (ed.) *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy* (London, New York: Verso).

⁹ For more details, see Cas Mudde, "The Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy", *Willy Brandt Series of Working Papers in International Migration and Ethnic Relations*, Malmö Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare and Department of International Migration and Ethnic Relations, Malmö University 3 (2008): 24.

¹⁰ Alain Bergounioux, "Le symptôme d'une crise", *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire* 56 (1997): 230 and Alexandre Dorna, *Le Populisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999), 3.

¹¹ Michael Minkenberg, "The Renewal of the Radical Right: Between Modernity and Anti-Modernity", *Government and Opposition* 35(2) (2000): 170-88.

expresses an anxiety that seems to associate it with instinct, with impulsiveness or tribalism, with gregariousness or passion.¹²

Hermet cautions against the risks of too loose a diagnosis:

The populist crisis does not generate itself, through a process that may be diagnosed by circular reasoning. It finds fertile ground where the weeds of democratic aspirations are offered to those who disrupt the political field when it goes through a delicate moment or when it has not yet had time to settle in a stable manner.¹³

In addition, if it is used on a large scale, the “populist party” category loses its incisiveness, becoming an epithet that may be easily applied to any party. If we attempted to analyse the DNA of this family from a historical perspective, we might stumble against a major difficulty. The populisms cited at the beginning of this volume or those analysed in the following pages are not always long-term phenomena. They are often meteoric appearances or recent creations that cannot be explained by history and geography like in the case of Lipset and Rokkan’s socio-economic map.¹⁴

From a historical perspective, one might refer to Margaret Canovan’s typology of populisms, distinguishing between agrarian and political populism (within a range of seven subcategories).¹⁵ However, this classification has been criticised for its limited empirical applicability.¹⁶ Populism might be better encompassed by the model developed by Michael Freeden with reference to ecology and feminism: populism as a “thin-centred ideology, [which] can be easily combined with very different (thin and full) other ideologies, including communism, ecologism, nationalism or socialism”.¹⁷ The right vs. left dichotomy cannot effectively guide the researcher in analysing populism due to the remarkable ease with which it attracts diametrically opposed types of voters.¹⁸ Along these

¹² Pierre-André Taguieff, “Populismes et antipopulismes: le choc des argumentations”, *Mots* 55 (1998): 7.

¹³ Guy Hermet, *Les populismes dans le monde. Une histoire sociologique XIXE-XXEe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2001), 13-14.

¹⁴ Russell. J. Dalton, *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Western Democracies* (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House, 1996), 149.

¹⁵ Margaret Canovan. *Populism* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981).

¹⁶ Paul Taggart, *Populism*, 18.

¹⁷ Cas Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist”, 544.

¹⁸ See, in this regard, the importance of the “red” vote as explained by the successful candidate Le Pen in the French presidential elections of 2001.

lines, the classical dichotomy cannot guarantee any pertinent orientation with respect to the positioning of populist parties. These, moreover, often resort to diverse combinations between ideals that typically belong either to the left or to the right; this vast repertoire explains the ease with which the parties from the two extremes fail to capture voters of various political orientations.¹⁹ The connection point is granted by the constant antagonistic option:

For a popular positionality to exist, a discourse has to divide society between dominant and dominated; that is, the system of equivalences should present itself as articulating the totality of a society around a fundamental antagonism.²⁰

Finally, populism with its three components - leaders, parties, movements - is inextricably tied to the democratic arena. The sphere of populism is amplified by the limits of contemporary democracy, whether it is a matter of its complexity or its increased use of technology, the effects of globalisation, the crises of parties or those of the traditional forms of political participation, absenteeism or electoral volatility. There is a growing number of debates on the effects of politics²¹ in which rational legal rules are directly defied by the rules of entertainment. The centre of attention in politics is occupied by the *videns* voters,²² who are attracted to chunks of simplified information and commercials rather than to detailed and well-argued programs, to leaders rather than to organisations or institutions. Debates are replaced by polemics, political opponents become enemies and the political space turns into a populist Eden. Within this

¹⁹ What is symbolical, in this sense, is the transfer of votes from the Communist Party to the National Front during the legislative elections in France in 2001. Pascal Perrineau and Colette Ysmal, eds., *Le vote de tous les refus. Les élections présidentielles et législatives de 2002* (Paris: Presses de Sciences PO, 2003).

²⁰ Ernesto Laclau, "Populist Rupture and Discourse", *Screen Education*, 34 (1980), 91, quoted by Yannis Stavrakakis, "Religion and Populism: Reflections on the 'Politicised' Discourse of the Greek Church", Paper presented at the London School of Economics & Political Science (2002), 26, available at <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/5709/1/StavrakakisPaper7.pdf>

²¹ Giampietro Mazzoleni and Anna Sfardini, *Politica pop. Da "Porta a Porta" a "L'Isola dei Famosi"* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009).

²² In compliance with Sartori's genre of *homo videns*, the *voter videns* might be one of the species of a political competition more interested in images and simplified symbols than in ideas and developed concepts. Giovanni Sartori, *Homo videns* (Roma, Bari: Laterza, 2007).

context, populism is regularly linked to anti-institutional rhetoric and some authors associate its popularity with “democratic disorder”.²³

In the particular context of the emerging democracies from Eastern Europe, the post-communist ground proves to be particularly fertile when it comes to populism. Suffice it to mention political parties such as the League of Polish Families in Poland, the Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik), or the Ataka National Union in Bulgaria. The myth of the “true people” is a direct legacy of communism and reflects a sense of lost solidarity. All these parties deplore the loss of social equality, justified not so much through the direct link with the past but through the various consequences of corruption in democratic systems - from unemployment to moral or ethical-religious approaches. In addition, in a regional context characterised by the late birth of the nation-state, the nation is perceived as a natural extension of the *demos* and is found at the centre of the populist identity. Thus, populism in Eastern Europe displays a collection of attributes that put popular exaltation and ultra-nationalism, with all their recurrent extremist detours, on a par.²⁴

Populists from all countries criticise the divisions that adversely affect the “virtuous and unified circle” of the people and of the Saviour leader, condemning the intricate constitutionalist interpretations²⁵ that tend to alienate democracy from its etymological essence: the power of the people. The populist message occurs then as a simplifying form of democracy, which is restored to its natural state, in the sense of Rousseau’s *general will*. From this perspective, populism is strongly dependent on the “popular” acceptance of democracy, in close connection with the political rights of participation, expression, and organisation. This is the context favourable to populism.

Based on this synthetic overview of populism, we may conclude that this is a complex political family that emphasises instinct and emotion at the expense of the rational legal spirit. It promotes a simplified antagonistic vision of society, in which the ruled people are betrayed by a detached ruling class. It also promotes the possibility to restore the equilibrium between the ruled majority and the ruling minority by empowering the latter. As such, the sacralisation of the people becomes an

²³ Marc F. Plattner, “Populism, Pluralism, and Liberal Democracy”, *Journal of Democracy*, 21 (1) (2010), 87.

²⁴ Michael Minkenberg and Pascal Perrineau, “The Radical Right in the European Elections 2004”, *International Political Science Review* 28(1) (2007): 30.

²⁵ Yves Mény and Yves Surel, “The Constitutive Ambiguity of Populism”. In *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, ed. Yves Mény and Yves Surel (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave, 2002), 7.

instrument in the fight against the corrupted elites, which increasingly become alienated and alienating. Within this difficult balance, the role of the leader's personal ascendancy²⁶ is that of enabling a relation of proximity that is no longer valued by contemporary society.

What is New in This Book?

This volume is a natural continuation of an analysis published in 2010 (in Romanian) under the coordination of Sergiu Gherghina and Sergiu Mișcoiu.²⁷ While the previous volume was interested in aspects of populism in Romania over the past two decades, these analyses approach the populist phenomenon from a broader theoretical and empirical perspective, making reference to its developments on several continents. The contributions from this volume aim to reduce the level of abstraction registered by the concept of populism. In this sense, the book is divided into two parts: the first is theoretical and discusses various perspectives on populism, while the second is empirical and emphasises the diversity of the forms populism has embraced throughout the world.

Adapting Sartori's observations, our (the authors') "sympathy goes [...] to the 'conscious thinker,' the man who realises the limitations of not having a thermometer and still manages to say a great deal simply by saying hot and cold, warmer and cooler".²⁸ This is also the fate of those who analyse the concept of populism: we are not sure we have a universal thermometer, we do not have a unique limb, and our interpretations depend

²⁶ Tarchi notes that "it is almost always a populist leader who will lend credibility to a movement, which, in turn, will crown and follow him, tying its own fate to his. Emphasis has often been laid on the charismatic quality of this figure; without a doubt, a leader must demonstrate out-of-the-ordinary qualities that will warrant his supporters' faith in him; at the same time, a populist leader cannot afford to fall into the trap of showing that he is made of a different alloy than ordinary people. On the contrary, his most important quality is his ability to make his supporters believe that he is like them, but that he is capable of using these qualities, which potentially belong to any member of the people, in a more adequate manner. Strong leadership (...) shows us that in the eyes of the supporters, their will can be represented without getting dissolved in the lengthy process of representation". A relation of unlimited faith is thus installed, replacing the legal-rational contract with mutual solidarity. Marco Tarchi, *L'Italia populista. Dal qualunquismo ai girotondi* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003), 30.

²⁷ Sergiu Gherghina and Sergiu Mișcoiu, eds., *Partide și personalități populiste în România postcomunistă* (Iași: Institutul European, 2010).

²⁸ Giovanni Sartori, "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics", *The American Political Science Review* 64(4) (1970): 1033.

on our consciousness as researchers, on our degree of rigorousness. These are the premises underlying the contributions from the first part of this volume, which offer the reader a multidimensional analysis of the phenomenon. Sergiu Mișcoiu's contribution provides a conceptual delineation of neo-populism, offering several explanations regarding the types of populism, its traits and manifestations. While the concept of populism has been the subject of in-depth investigations, its evolution towards neo-populism has not received similar treatment. Most authors simply reject the concept of neo-populism, while others reduce it to a local or contextual version of populism. Mișcoiu's chapter systematically analyses the transition from populism to neo-populism by highlighting the significant differences between the two twin concepts from a temporal and formal point of view; these differences are illustrated through a series of relevant examples. Along these lines, the author provides an answer to the question regarding the status of neo-populism and discusses whether it is a particular phenomenon, a contemporary version of "classical" populism, or just a hollow concept with no scientific value.

The following chapter in the book belongs to Chantal Delsol and undertakes a profound analysis of the phenomenology of populism against the customary meaning of this concept. The central argument is that populism is the creation of the elites and the "progressive" establishment, meant to prevent the development of popular democracy and the formulation of popular demands. Focusing on the Enlightenment ideology of emancipation, this chapter shows how, over time, elitist intellectuals have attached this label to their conservative opponents in order to discredit them, just like the aristocratic elites had once used the concept of *idiotes* in ancient Greece.

Remaining in the area of ideological debates, the aim of Daniel Șandru's contribution is to characterise populism through the lenses of its ideological features. In this sense, the author highlights the conceptual relationship between populism and ideology, in an attempt to suggest a possible reconsideration of the two terms. The emphasis is on the positive reconsideration of ideology (without ethical meanings) and the analytical reconsideration of populism. Both are of service to the normative and empirical approaches specific to contemporary political theory. From this perspective, populism is a particular ideology, typical of the contemporary period; it is connected to and influences other ideologies and their forms. Unlike other ideologies, however, populism combines doctrinal elements that did not belong to it in the first place and thus, its ideological construction takes place through the ontological construction of a social reality that is in contrast with the situations existing in different societies.

Marco Tarchi's chapter explores the difficulties raised by the definition of populism. Starting from the analysis of the seminal debates launched during the symposium organised by the *Government and Opposition* journal in May 1967 and in compliance with Berlin's metaphor of the "Cinderella's complex", the author sketches a detailed map of the various understandings of populism's undisputed and worshipped hard-core: "the appeal to the people". Moreover, his analysis encompasses populism's complex relationships with democracy and/or authoritarianism. The last contribution in this theoretical part belongs to Guy Hermet and serves to round off the perspectives on populism through a chronological account of its characteristics. At the same time, by presenting several empirical features, this chapter introduces the second section of this book, which is concerned with the diverse forms of populism recorded on several continents over the recent decades.

The second part includes studies that outline the forms of populism from various regions and continents: Latin America, Africa, Australia, and (Northern, Southern, or Eastern) Europe. It begins with a chapter on the region where populism met with large-scale success for the first time. Latin America is relevant to the debate on populism not so much as regards its specific processes, but the diversity of forms this phenomenon has experienced. Yann Bassett and Stephen Launay propose the elements of an ideal type of populism that combines existing theories and empirically observed cases. Their aim is to separate the political processes from any moral assessments or analytical and synthetic evaluations. In this respect, a comparison between classical and modern populism provides the opportunity to eschew theoretical controversies. This makes it possible to understand the phenomenon and its empirical diversity.

The next two chapters are devoted to populism in Africa. Alexander Makulilo explains that no leader in the world would like to be dubbed a populist. This is partly due to the fact that the term has a connotation that implies radicalism and anti-conventionalism. Despite this extremism, some leaders engage in populist strategies to attract the voters' support in elections by displaying the rhetoric of "a man of the people". Unlike other regions of the Third World or Latin America, where populism is quite common, populist battles have been rare in Africa. However, with the "third wave of democratisation", the phenomenon started gaining visibility. Contrary to their campaigns, designed to promote radical transformations as actions undertaken for the sake of the people, populist leaders represent an incontestable failure. The factors that appear to have given birth to populism in the region, such as the economy or leadership crises, are also the factors that have brought about its downfall. The

chapter compares the populist strategies adopted by the Tanzanian President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, by the former President of Zambia, Frederick Jacob Titus Chiluba, and by the South African President, Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma.

The complementary study authored by Emmanuel Banywesize approaches the diverse forms of populism in the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on identity-based, poverty-induced, and protest populism. The first two types have several features in common: xenophobia, human rights violations (racism, the nationalisation of foreign property) and the justification of bloody dictatorships. They exacerbate social divisions and economic disasters. In its turn, the last type of populism has given birth to political crises.

Like other modern democracies, Australia has had multiple experiences with populist parties over the recent years. Whether they have been right- or left-wing, whether they have promoted anti-immigrant or environment-friendly platforms, the populist movements have appealed to the basic instincts of the Australian voters in an attempt to gain nationwide representation, influence and political power. These efforts have not been successful and populist movements have rarely obtained the political power they aspire to. Dylan Kissane's chapter assesses the rise and fall of these populist movements along a five-step political trajectory, moving from emergence to explosion, evaluation, exposure, and eventually to extinction. The chapter highlights both the political context in which populist parties work in Australia and their political trajectory, relying on two key examples - the One Nation Party and the Australian Greens Party - to illustrate how and why this trajectory exists, as well as how it operates in the Australian context.

The four chapters dedicated to European populism present different realities from the Scandinavian Peninsula, the South (Italy), and the East (Russia) of the continent. Over the past few decades, the Scandinavian region - Denmark, Norway and Sweden - has represented a fertile ground for the development of populist parties. Notwithstanding all this, the region has not been explored in the specialised academic literature. In his chapter, Anders Ravik Jupskas presents the typology of different types of populism, which underscores his analysis of contemporary Scandinavian populism. According to a minimal definition, a populist party must appeal to the "people" and be against the "elites". A simple counting technique allows for identifying the references to the "people" in the political and electoral programs of the Scandinavian parties. These references are then interpreted in light of the proposed typology. The analysis reveals that, apart from the populist parties examined in other studies, several other

parties evince populist elements; the patterns of populism differ across parties and countries.

Two of the last three chapters of the book address the theme of populism in European countries that have witnessed intense confrontations with populist parties and personalities over the recent decades. Flavio Chiapponi focuses on the connection between charismatic leadership and populism within the dynamics of the Italian political system, which, since 2000, has stood under the sign of Silvio Berlusconi, his parties and his close collaborators, although other relevant case studies may include Umberto Bossi (*Lega Nord*), Antonio di Pietro (*Italia dei Valori*), or Beppe Grillo (*Movimento Cinque Stelle*). The analysis examines the role played by these four leaders within their political movements and populist parties. Two categories of leadership are identified - charismatic leadership and patronage leadership. The analytical criteria focus on (1) the leader's "control over the followers" (with both charismatic and patronage leadership exhibiting high scores) and (2) the leader's "hold of an office" (with the difference that a patron needs an office in order to exercise power, while a charismatic leader does not).

The diversity of neo-populism is approached by Michael Shafir from the perspective of the Central and East European historical context. The political and economic transformations in the region have been accompanied by the rise of populist parties and personalities in several countries. The political thinking of the extremists - both left- and right-wing - has managed to capture the public interest following the government failure of other parties. The NATO and EU accessions have failed to slow down the development of the anti-system policies pursued by these parties. Shafir's comparative study intends to illustrate the characteristics of the forms of neo-populism in the European region where most of the new democracies can be found - the east of the continent.

In her chapter, Mara Morini focuses on post-USSR Russian politics. Besides the political groups with populist features, the political leaders are representative exponents of how the system functions in contemporary Russia. Like in the case of Italy, where Silvio Berlusconi has shaped the dynamics of the recent period, the figure of Vladimir Putin is emblematic for Russia. His rise to power is analysed in detail, certain similarities being pointed out between his trajectory and that of the African leaders examined in Alexander Makulilo's chapter.

Without aiming to solve old dilemmas, to cover all the existing forms of populism, or to outline unequivocal conclusions, the contributions to this volume fulfil a twofold task. On the one hand, they help to clarify theoretically a concept that is difficult to grasp and use. On the other hand,

by way of reflecting these difficulties, they present several forms of populism worldwide. Their main purpose is to highlight the differences between the continents. Each of the chapters in the second section successfully accomplishes this, providing an overview that is useful both in analysing populism and in identifying the populist elements in national and international political actions or discourses.

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PART I:
THE ROOTS OF POPULISM

FROM POPULISM TO NEO-POPULISM? EMPIRICAL GUIDELINES FOR A CONCEPTUAL DELINEATION

SERGIU MIȘCOIU

Introduction

Academic debates on the definition and the typology of populism have undergone several stages of development since the 1950s. While these aspects were extensively discussed in a previous volume¹, I approach here one of the issues on which opinions differ in the specialised literature: the existence of neo-populism. What I intend to find out is whether neo-populism is a distinct phenomenon, with specific characteristics, whether it is an “updated” version of “classical” populism or merely a term without scientific value, in which case the differences between populism and neo-populism are negligible. Those who endorse the latter perspective include historians and philosophers who uphold the timelessness of social phenomena, or political scientists, such as Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, who prefer to speak about “21st-century populism” rather than “neo-populism”.² Some economists, like Luis Pazos, who invoke the permanent features of populism from the beginning of the 19th century to the present day, are on the same side of the barricade.³

¹ Sergiu Mișcoiu, “Introducere”, in *Partide și personalități populiste în România post-comunistă*, ed. Sergiu Gherghina and Sergiu Mișcoiu (Iași: Institutul European, 2010), 11-54.

² Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan O'Donnell, “Conclusion: Populism and Twenty-First Century Western European Democracy”, in *Twenty-first Century Populism. The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, ed. Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan O'Donnell (Oxford: Palgrave, 2008), 217-223.

³ Luis Pazos, *O rezinho populista* (Sao Paolo: Inconfidentes, 1988), 6-13.

Types of populism

Before outlining the choice between these two options, I review the characteristics of “advanced populisms” and compare them with the features of historical populisms. Let me use, for now, the expression “advanced populism” and avoid to pronounce myself *avant la lettre* on the existence of a distinct category - neo-populism - especially since this concept is already burdened with considerable prejudicial overtones. The identification and, then, the detection of oppositions between the characteristics of populism and advanced populism rely primarily on observing the modes in which this phenomenon has manifested itself empirically, followed by a methodological structuring of the content notes. Given the complexity of these phenomena, we therefore proceed in an empirical-theoretical manner, outlining the two categories on the basis of factual observations and then analysing the relations between them. The table below summarises the comparison criteria and the observed features of the two types of populism:

Table 1: The Features of Historical and Advanced Populisms

Comparison criteria	The features of “historical populism”	The features of “advanced populism”
Popular identity	The formation of the people	Mixture of identities
The populist perspective on the past	The sacralisation of the glorious past	The future-oriented retrieval of the past
Mission	The people’s redemption, transcendentalism	Accommodation, reformist banality
Coherence	Essentialism, doctrine entrenchment	Heterogeneity, inter-thematism
The people’s relation to their leader	Admiration, faithfulness	“Camaraderie”, conditional loyalty
The communication dominant	Direct but unidirectional relations	Indirect but bidirectional relations
The logic of populism in power	Consensualism	Polemicism
The length of the effects of populism	Temporal persistence	Temporal precariousness

1. With respect to *popular identity*, classical populism tends to be “constitutivist” in the sense that most of the times there is a concurrent appearance of the people as a political subject and of populism as a political trend. This was the case of Bonapartism, which manifested starting from the first presidential elections by universal suffrage; of Peronism, which emerged with the emancipation of the workers and the peasant masses; of Nasserism, which inaugurated popular participation in political decision-making in Egypt; or, more recently, of the populisms of Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador, the latter priding himself on having “re-founded the People”, particularly through his constitutional reform of 2008.⁴

Advanced populism relies not so much on a foundational act, on an initial and consistent identification of the people, as on an *ad-hoc* identitarian reunion of individuals, groups and social classes, of ideas and political trends, of ethnic minorities or caste interests, of individual passions, tastes and dispositions. The idea is not to grant an identity to the people, but to construct their identity in a credible manner, taking into account their past or present identifications. This is the case of the new populisms from Western Europe, where the democratic political tradition leaves very little room for any foundational or re-foundational ambitions and compels the populists to synthesise the manifold identitarian references of the masses. Silvio Berlusconi’s *Forza Italia* is a relevant example here, in the sense that his effort of reuniting the middle classes and the popular classes, instilling them with the illusion of pragmatism, modernism and progressivism, as well as with respect for the national values of the “real people”, allowed the majority of the Italians to repeatedly identify themselves with *Il Cavaliere*’s political promises.⁵

2. *Passéism* is an important ingredient of all classical populisms; it is also a way for the populist movements or leaders to identify themselves with the “historical battles” of the people. It often takes the form of an open front against the enemies of the present, who are “not up to the high moral

⁴ Unlike Hugo Chavez or Evo Morales, Correa received an elite “Western” education and passes for an “avant-garde titan” rather than an “everyday man”. His 2008 Constitution has enabled him to exercise control over the institutions through the appointed “citizens’ councils” and his presidential tutelage over the Central Bank. See Pedro Dutour, http://www.mercatornet.com/articles/view/ecuadorslabyrinth_of_nebulous_ambiguity/ (accessed on 12 May 2010).

⁵ For an analysis of the foundations of Berlusconiism, see Phil Edwards, “The Right in Power”, *South European Society and Politics* 10(2) (2005): 225-243.

standards imposed by our ancestors”.⁶ The glorification of the national past and the popular contribution to the creation, unification and independence of the country constantly fuelled Reactionary Populism in the United States, Bonapartism in France or Marshal Pilsudski’s National-Populism in Poland. In the 1920s, Pilsudski added his anti-Bolshevik victories to the collection of heroic wars waged by the Poles and fomented the immediate danger of conspiracies and insurrections in order to secure the popular support for his 1926 *coup d’état*.⁷

In the case of advanced populism, although references to the past are not absent, the dominant trend promotes a prospective orientation toward change, reforms and the removal of the elitist establishment. The latter is branded as the defender of its historical privileges, “obtained through the people’s sweat and toil”. The more disgruntled the masses envisaged by the populist discourse are with the government officials, who claim to rely on tradition, the more momentum the future-oriented discourse will gain over the past-oriented discourse.⁸ At the beginning of the 2000s in the Netherlands, Pim Fortuyn and, more recently, Geert Wilders registered a galloping electoral advancement, based on “progressive, but popular” discourses. Pragmatically resuming the prevalent themes of insecurity, immigration and the defence of (especially secular) democratic values, the Dutch populists turned against “multi-cultural deviations”, Islamisation, the “Eurocrats’ soft dictatorship”, and “high taxes”.⁹ Even though the theme of the return to the “Judeo-Christian values” was not absent (especially in Wilders’ case), the prospective dimension prevailed over

⁶ To use the formula adopted by the Czech President Vaclav Klaus, in an interview he gave to a reporter for the Euronews Channel on 19 February 2009, in which he justified his reluctance to promulgate the law ratifying the Treaty of Lisbon.

⁷ See Joseph Pilsudski, *Du révolutionnaire au chef d’Etat: 1893-1935. Pages choisies des dix volumes des “Livres, discours, orders”* (Paris: Société française d’éditions littéraires et techniques, 1935), 235-61.

⁸ Hans-Georg Betz is one of the researchers who follow the same direction. According to him, most of the radical-populist right-wing parties support reconsidering the socio-economic and socio-cultural status quos. See Hans-Georg Betz and Steffan Immerfall, eds., *The New Politics of the Right. Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).

⁹ See the article “Far-Right politician makes gains toward becoming next Dutch prime minister” *National Post*, March 5, 2010, available on the website www.nationalpost.com/related/topics/story.html?id=2644219#ixzz0ntgZVsTq (accessed on May 14, 2010).

exalting the past, which was considered to be much too marked by “compromises and defeats”.¹⁰

3. More profound than the message of advanced populism, the discourse of classical populisms incorporates a transcendental dimension, promising to change the world, to lead the masses beyond what they have been so far, and to transform society through a series of saving acts. Classical populism entails thus a “civil religiosity” that includes the more or less explicit promise of overcoming the ephemeral condition of human life by partaking of a well-articulated political and moral body - the People. This was the case of the Colombians grouping themselves, in a gesture of popular solidarity, around Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, in the 1930s-1940s. With a radical manner of expression, this defender of the workers and the peasants and this fine orator was the first Colombian populist who openly fought against the oligarchies and the traditional social stratification of the country, promising a “radical transformation” and “a different historical destiny” to the people. His speeches, especially for the 1946 presidential campaign, indicated a general willingness to re-found the Colombian people, who could thus overcome their marginal global condition by a historic leap forward.¹¹ Assassinated in 1948, Gaitán ended up being the emblematic figure of popular heroism and of the struggles for the political and social emancipation of the underprivileged.

These features are not, however, characteristics of advanced populism. More anchored in everyday reality, the new populists limit themselves to criticising the absence or the excess of reforms and to exploiting popular discontent against political opponents without promising the purification or salvation of the people. This attitude corresponds to what Michel Maffesoli calls the postmodern condition, characterised by gregariousness and the relinquishment of rational ideals, being destined to constantly

¹⁰ For a discursive analysis of Dutch populism, see Oana Crăciun, “The New Populism. An Analysis of the Political Discourse of Front National and Lijst Pim Fortuyn”, in *Radicalism, Populism, Interventionism. Three Approaches Based on Discourse Theory*, ed. Sergiu Mișcoiu, Oana Crăciun and Nicoleta Colopelnic (Cluj-Napoca: Efes, 2008), 31-69.

¹¹ Gaitán made his way into politics by positioning himself at the edge of the traditional party system, even though he was, on several occasions, one of the leaders of the Liberal Party. He rejected the dominance of the elites, opposing to them the “People”, whose transformation, in his opinion, was fully underway. He did not hesitate to talk about the “transcendence of the People” and the “mutually transforming” relations he had with them. See Herbert Braun, *The Assassination of Gaitán: Public Life and Urban Violence in Colombia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 82-87.

accommodate the realities of the present.¹² Far from envisaging the emancipation of the *narod* (“people”) and undertaking any rescue mission, advanced populism makes somewhat more “mundane” promises: the cleansing of the political world, the reduction of fees and taxes, strengthening the citizens’ referendum powers, helping the poor regions, restoring dignity to the elderly, supporting the integration of the youth, taking the corrupt to the people’s courts, limiting the immigration waves, etc. This is the case of the highly publicised *Democratic Union of the Centre (UDC)* in Switzerland, which has expanded the traditional electoral base of conservatism by radicalising and vulgarising its political message.¹³ Apart from being quite “uptight” about Islam, the UDC defends the right to an almost unlimited use of referenda for consulting the citizens on naturalisation time frames, reinforcing police rights, maintaining the country’s sovereignty and neutrality, rejecting unions of the PACS type, etc. In a country where the confederate-level institutions have less power than the cantons, the UDC’s populism also promotes a “Rousseauian” defence of the small communities and of their right to self-management. There is then nothing eschatological about the discourse of the UDC, even though the strategies used by this political formation and its means of expression are typically populist.

In addition, advanced populism may allow the thematic customisation of the message targeted by referendum campaigns according to criteria other than the strictly communitarian-territorial one. This is the case of the petitioners’ mobilisation in the United States: paradoxically, those who bring the citizens together in the name of participatory democracy are various lobby groups that nonetheless defend interests that tend to belong to the detested elites.¹⁴ Having no other goal than the quick mobilisation of

¹² Since the 1980s, Maffesoli believed that we had moved from a modernity dominated by reason to a postmodernity dominated of affections, from the individual to the person, from politics to management, from project to accommodation, etc. See Michel Maffesoli, *Le temps des tribus. Le déclin de l’individualisme dans la société postmoderne* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 2000), 101-09.

¹³ For an analysis of the UDC and especially of its most important leader, Christophe Blocher, see Matthias Ackeret, *Le principe Blocher: manuel de direction* (Schaffhouse: Meier, 2007).

¹⁴ “These expensive campaigns have led some critics to suspect that wealthy interests are using direct legislation to buy favourable policy at the ballot box. They fear that, despite the efforts of the Populist and Progressive reformers, the balance between citizen and economic interests has shifted too far in the direction of the economic interests. According to this view, direct legislation has paradoxically become a powerful instrument of wealthy interest groups rather than

the individuals in order to exert pressure on the policy makers (sometimes merely to impose certain nuances in the bills debated by the state legislatures), the practitioners of advanced populism generally assume versatility as a profession of faith.

4. While classical populism had a tendency towards essentialism and dogmatism with respect to its *coherence*, advanced populism is characterised by the extreme heterogeneity of its themes. Despite the diversity of their historical and contextual trends, classical populisms were entrenched in the tradition of the political right and this granted them a certain degree of stability, built around traditional and religious values such as the family, the church, work, the nation etc. At the same time, classical populism focused on a limited number of key themes - order and the glorious past for Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte; unity and peace for Jozsef Pilsudski; justice and order for Juan Perón. These themes were perceived by their promoters not only as temporary political demarcations, but as the very substance of their political action, without which their presence in politics would have been devoid of any purpose.

The advanced populists conceive and present their political ideas in accordance with the particular demands at a given time. With few unshakable reference frames, they adapt themselves to the themes imposed by the public opinion and change direction with it. Ségolène Royal, the 2007 candidate of the Socialist Party for the Presidency of the French Republic is a telling example. Trying to get as many votes as possible from the left-of-centre voters, Royal added several right-wing issues - such as national identity and security - to the traditional topics of her party and willingly adopted a strategy based on pursuing and resuming those areas that were of utmost concern to the public opinion.¹⁵ The corollary of this strategy was the adoption of trenchant viewpoints and attitudes on issues

a popular balance against these groups (...) From this perspective, the populist paradox - the alleged transformation of direct legislation from a tool of regular citizens to a tool of special interests - undermines the promise of popular policy making at the ballot box", Elisabeth R. Gerber, *The Populist Paradox. Interest Group Influence and the Paradox of Direct Legislation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 5-6.

¹⁵ See the preface to the new edition of Pierre-André Taguieff's book, *L'illusion populiste. Essai sur les démagogies à l'ère démocratique* (Paris: Champs. Flammarion, 2007), 9-66. See also Sergiu Mișcoiu, "Citoyenneté et identité nationale: les limites du retour gauche-droite en France lors de l'élection présidentielle de 2007", in *Identités politiques et dynamiques partisans en France*, ed. Sergiu Mișcoiu, Chantal Delsol and Bertrand Alliot (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene, 2009), 201-218.

that were likely either to divide the audience into two relatively equal groups or to unexpectedly make the public opinion swerve during electoral campaigns.¹⁶ Advanced populism does entail a *suiviste* dimension (in the sense that it blindly follows or adopts the attitudes of the majority public opinion). As seen in the case of Ségolène Royal, this is not always a guarantee for electoral success.

5. Regarding the relationship between a charismatic leader and the masses, traditional populism imposes “natural” limits between the two parties: the leader necessarily comes from a higher class, is educated, rich, and evinces a certain naturalness in the relationships with the “world above”. Being emancipated, he will also emancipate the masses; still, there will always be a distance between them. Because he is so different not only from the other politicians (who look down on the people), but also from the people (whom he loves and wants to subdue, educate, and civilise), he has the right and the duty to carry their banner. This attitude could be identified, for example, in the 1930s, in the case of Getúlio Vargas in Brazil, who was proud that he had enlightened the people, thus building the New State.¹⁷

The neophyte populists are usually “common people” (or, at least, they try to leave this impression); they are close to the ordinary people, having similar tastes and preferences with those of their voters. Being companions or even friends, the new populists and their voters know and recognise each other through certain verbal and behavioural features. The latter may be open, affectionate, familial, or, if necessary, vulgar, as signs of their common values and attitudes. However, like in any fragile relationship, populists may easily fall out with their voters. The voters’ loyalty is conditional upon results or it may be the effect of media over-exposure or the absence of a better alternative. Along these lines, Nicolas Sarkozy’s “interference with” Jean-Marie le Pen’s votes in the 2007 presidential

¹⁶ Turkey’s accession to the European Union would be one example. According to surveys, the centre and right-wing voters whom Royal wanted to conquer were unfavourable to Turkey’s accession, while the leftist electorate, which Royal wanted to keep, inclined to be in favour of this. Consequently, the socialist candidate did not assume a clear position in this regard and adopted an open position whereby she would do and think what the people, consulted by referendum, would decide.

¹⁷ For a pertinent analysis of Getulism, see Karl Loewenstein, *Brazil Under Vargas* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1973), 197.

elections and the voters' return "from the copy to the original"¹⁸ in the 2010 regional elections are relevant examples. Convinced that he had got rid of the far right by taking away all its votes, thanks to his exaggerated recourse to hot topics such as immigration, insecurity and unemployment,¹⁹ Sarkozy over-estimated his popular support and misunderstood the conditional nature of the trust that the French had vested in him. In the case of advanced populism, we may speak of a permanent necessity to constantly win the allegiance of the groups deemed to form the people rather than of a consistent political rootedness.

6. As great orators, the classical populists mobilised the masses through their eloquence and dominant position. By comparison with their opponents, populists are not averse to mingling with the crowds and addressing them directly, the moments of their speeches being, most of the times, solemn. The audience's manifestations include primarily ovations, applause and, less frequently, interventions and comments. From the Gracchi brothers in Ancient Rome to the Peruvian Raul Victor Raya de la Torre during the inter-war period,²⁰ populists can be regarded as tribunes who held the power (sometimes considered to be magical) of catalysing the will and actions of the masses through words.

In the age of mass communication, advanced populism actually amounts to "relationism" rather than "tribunism". Although the practice of mingling with the crowds or the so-called "crowd baths" has maintained its symbolic importance, populists today have a higher necessity to make themselves known and visible on television and *via* the internet rather than by travelling from one end of the country to another.²¹ This has also diminished the importance of the political leaders' rhetorical qualities because if the differences between them and the crowds stood in stark relief, this might alienate them from the masses. Traian Băsescu and Boyko Borisov, the former mayors of Bucharest and Sofia, are hardly "elite" orators and prefer "speaking in a simple and popular manner". The number of words they use is limited and, as shown by some analysts, they

¹⁸ See Simon Petite's article, "L'original et la copie", published in *Le Courrier* (March 27, 2010), 3.

¹⁹ See the article "Le Front national est de nouveau dans le jeu", published in *Le Monde* (March 14, 2010), 9.

²⁰ See Percy Murillo Garaycochea, *Historia del APRA, 1919-1945* (Lima: Atlantida, 1976).

²¹ Guy Hermet rightly speaks about "telepopulism" and "cyberpopulism". See Guy Hermet, *Les populismes dans le monde contemporain* (Paris: Fayard, 2000), 400-59.

make frequent speech errors.²² A striking feature of advanced populism is the politicians' apparent readiness to listen to and follow the "People". The latter are no longer satisfied to express themselves only through elections or associative movements, demanding instead to engage in a dialogue with the politicians. This is why candidates must ensure that "participatory debates" are organised (e.g. Ségolène Royal).²³ The political and electoral legitimisation of modern populist leaders takes place through these very permanent exchanges with the people.

7. If we compare the dominant political logic of the classical populist movements, we may notice that once in power, their leaders focus on imposing and maintaining the political consensus and, in more general terms, the social consensus framework. In the newly united Germany, Otto von Bismarck imposed a consensus regarding social reforms, capitalising on the rivalry between the liberals and the conservatives to whom he opposed the general interest.²⁴ In Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk proceeded in a similar way. The consensus card was played in favour of the paternalistic populists, especially since consensual values could be embraced by the people, thus weakening the opposition.

Instead, the dominant logic of the advanced populists who come into power is that of constant dissension and rupture. This evolution has been imposed by the accelerating pace of events in the media-based society, which forces politicians to react promptly to changes as they are taking place; hence, the need for a permanent delineation of the camps: opponents *versus* allies. Adapted to the fluxes of contemporary society, the clock of the populists in power never ceases to count the moments until the next elections, debates, television shows or until the next online "chat" with internet users. Since the benchmarks are unclear, there is always a need to make a difference, to find the culprits, to open new fronts. Silvio Berlusconi, the Italian Prime Minister and media tycoon, is the living example of the new populists, who are always in search of a ground where

²² For an overview of President Traian Băsescu's vocabulary and manner of addressing the citizens, see Cătălin Tolontan, "The 27,353 Words of President Băsescu", available on his blog: <http://www.tolo.ro/2009/08/06/cele-27-353-decuvinte-ale-lui-traianbasescu/> (accessed on May 10, 2010).

²³ For a pertinent analysis of "participatory debates", see Loïc Blondiaux, "La démocratie participative, sous conditions et malgré tout. Un plaidoyer paradoxal en faveur de l'innovation démocratique", *Mouvements* 50 (2007).

²⁴ The Bismarckian Consensus was a model for paternalism with a populist twist. See Olivier Giraud, "Le cas de l'Allemagne: la protection sociale entre tensions et consensus", *Mouvements* 14 (2001).

they might wage the battle against the opposition, the unions, the communists or the “intellectualists”.²⁵ Other populist leaders, such as the former Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, focus their attacks on a single person or a particular faction, which has the advantage of being in office for a longer period of time (in this case, Yushchenko’s target was his Prime Minister, Yulia Tymoshenko). No longer being protected against permanent contestation, the new populists cannot afford the luxury of consensus; they will therefore choose rupture, which they hope to keep under control and turn into their favour.²⁶

8. Finally, another major difference between the two types of populism derives from the duration of their formation processes and their effects. The emergence of populist leaders, the organisation of their political movements and the phenomena related to their presence at the forefront of political life may span several decades, while the long-term effects of this presence may last for more than half a century. By contrast, advanced populism is much more ephemeral. In the case of extremist populists, this precariousness is due to the massive rejection of the other parties, the international community, or the civil society, which may be augmented by the sometimes spectacular results obtained by such leaders or formations.²⁷ In the case of systemic and moderate populism, the ephemerality is due to this accelerated pace of contemporary political life, which entails a rapid succession of changes, unsettling medium- and long-term strategies. In addition, at stake there is also the failure of other contemporary parties to provide the citizens with the necessary landmarks for identification with a stable political project.

²⁵ Given the changes brought about by Berlusconiism, some scholars have advanced the idea of a transition to “neopolitics”. See Pierre Musso, “Le phénomène Berlusconi: ni populisme ni vidéocratie, mais néo-politique”, *Hermès* 42 (2005): 172-180.

²⁶ I have elsewhere analysed the functioning mechanisms of the logic of dissension and its institutional effects in post-communist Romania. See Sergiu Mișcoiu, “Între retorica consensului și practica rupturii. Efectele oscilațiilor strategice asupra percepției publice față de Parlamentul României”, in *Cine decide? Partide, reprezentanți și politici în Parlamentul României și cel European*, ed. Sergiu Gherghina (Iași: Institutul European, 2010), 91-106.

²⁷ The sanitary cordons organised against the Vlaams Blok Party in Belgium, the National Front in France, the British National Party in Great Britain, the Progressive Party in Norway and the People’s Party in Denmark underscore this idea. It was less the case of Jörg Haider’s FPÖ, which was an ally of Wolfgang Schüssel’s government and led to Austria’s international isolation in 1999, ending up in a scission in early 2000.

The appearance of the Tea Party in the United States is undoubtedly a proof of this temporal precariousness of advanced populism. This “popular-conservative” orientation, which emerged mainly (although not exclusively) within the Republican Party in 2009, symbolically took on the name of the American colonists’ revolt against the taxation levels imposed by the British metropolis (the Boston Tea Party, 1773).²⁸ Resorting to a tradition that makes direct reference to the Founding Fathers, the Tea Party advocates de-taxation, the freedom of local collectivities, and the reduction of fiscal costs. However, in comparison with classical populist movements, the Tea Party is actually a rather heterogeneous political association. Being, in fact, a comingling of local platforms, this movement has no hierarchical leadership system and prefers to endorse “opinion leaders” and notables or local celebrities whose ideas have more or less conservative overtones. This movement rallies together, at its bosom, WASP, which flirts with racism and, in particular, with Islamophobia, and African American tribunes, such as Herman Cain, the Georgian commentator and businessman, an official candidate for the Republican primary presidential elections in 2012.

From an electoral point of view, the Tea Party served as a scarecrow for the half-term elections of November 2010.²⁹ Having been victorious in a series of primary Republican elections, where they had run against the incumbent “people of the system”, the candidates supported by the Tea Party obtained, with a few exceptions³⁰, modest results and only managed to mobilise the Democrats and the moderate Republicans against them. Being divided between the usual rhetoric of the local notables, who sometimes harshened their discourse in order to obtain the support of this

²⁸ In addition to its name, the Tea Party also took over the American flag with a circle of 13 stars and the figure II in the middle, symbolising the second American Revolution. For more details on the revolutionary symbolism used by the Tea Party, see Jill Lepore, *The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party’s Revolution and the Battle over American History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010).

²⁹ See Denis Lacorne, “Tea Party, une vague de fond” (*Le Monde*, October 19, 2010), 22. See also the well-documented book written by Scott Ramussen and Doug Schoen, *Mad As Hell: How the Tea Party Movement Is Fundamentally Remaking Our Two-Party System* (New York: Harper, 2010), which nonetheless wrongly overstates the importance of the Tea Party in the American political system.

³⁰ See, for instance, one of the most publicised figures of the Tea Party, Marco Rubio, who was elected as a Senator in Florida; or the Republicans in office, such as the South Carolina Senator, Jim DeMint, who joined the movement in order to be re-elected.

movement, and the rising stars, who did not hesitate to present their ultra-radical stances³¹, the Tea Party had an unquestionable impact on the public debates. Notwithstanding all this, the rather limited number of candidates elected in 2010 and, above all, the absence of ideological and organisational agreement indicate that this party has a minor presence on the American political scene.

Discussion

This comparison has enabled us to realise that classical populism and advanced populism have a few fundamental commonalities. Of these, the most important are the appeal to the “People”, the organisation around a charismatic leader and anti-elitism. However, the comparison has also revealed a series of important differences that were summarised in eight points. Thus, the question concerning the existence of neo-populism may be answered as follows: on the one hand, there are not enough characteristics to render neo-populism as a discursive register that operates according to other principles than those on which populism itself functions.³² On the other hand, there are enough points of difference between classical populism and advanced populism for the latter to be considered the most important stage in the historical evolution of the great populist family. Accordingly, the term “neo-populism” may indeed be used to refer to the tendency that has been limned here as “advanced populism”.

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³¹ It is especially Christine O'Donnell's case, the Republican candidate for Delaware who was supported by the Tea Party and who had no hesitation about fighting contraception, modern science and any form of social assistance.

³² I have elsewhere defined populism as “a discursive register with a hegemonic vocation that relies on exalting popular identification through the ideological articulation of the imaginary characteristics of a community (People) and through the exclusion of the otherness responsible for this collectivity's failure to fulfil its identity”, Sergiu Mişcoiu, “Au pouvoir par le Peuple! Le populisme saisi par la théorie du discours” (Habilitation Thesis, Paris-Est University, October 2010), 63.

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THE “COMMON IDIOT” OF POPULISM

CHANTAL DELSOL

Introduction

Populism emerges in those democracies for which it represents both a humiliation and a betrayal at the same time. Part of the people appoints a leader to express the claims they consider neglected not only by the government in office, but also by the various currents of thought that may successively accede to power through the democratic game of political alternation. We might be led to believe that the majority principle entails the emergence of minorities, which, having no hope of participating in the alternance of power, appoint charismatic leaders and replace any futile efforts of securing power through the use of verbal tumult. The reality, however, is much more complex. Even where, by exception, the populist movements approach or accede to power, they will still be regarded as banal or baleful interlocutors. On the other hand, only certain militant minorities are considered to be “populist”. That is why their status as neglected minorities and their very image turn out to be problematic.

It is difficult to objectively ascertain the notion of populism. Coined in the 19th century, it carries strong emotional overtones today. It is, first and foremost, a derogatory term, an insult. Hence, the impossibility of assigning it a genuine definition: its repulsive character is what draws attention first. We cannot describe this phenomenon objectively before pointing out its bad reputation. This chapter does not examine populism in strictly sociological or political terms, but shows that the foundations of its bad reputation are philosophical, pertaining to the evolution of the status of *particularity*. This analysis will demonstrate the manner in which the Greek *idiot* has become a *patented idiot*.

When it comes to populism, one can only speak of hetero-definitions rather than of self-definitions. Today the term designates - in Europe, at least, on which I focus - an enemy whose magnitude has increased in time. Analysing its semantic shift from mere condescension to insult will allow us to understand its content better. This multifarious phenomenon, devoid of objective criteria, seems to be nothing but a concept that has been

reinvented to demonise an opponent. In reality, it is the outcome and, no doubt, the instrument of the bitter distrust that afflicts the triumphant European democracies.

Should we perhaps correlate populism with its ancestor, demagoguery, which is an ancient notion? The former term, derived from Latin, and the latter word, of Greek origin, are quite close in meaning. A demagogue originally referred to one who ruled the people and was not tinged with derogatory overtones; these nonetheless quickly gained ground, denoting one who led and flattered the people, pleasing them through words and deeds so as to finally influence and dominate them. Here pleasure is opposed to truth and the good. It is a matter of pleasing the people and commending their greatness instead of pointing out their shortcomings; about promising them all manner of advantages although the context will not allow these to materialise; about distributing alms that will impoverish society for a long time to come. He who flatters the people is, therefore, one who promises welfare instead of the good, convenience instead of reality, the immediate instead of the future.

The Sources and Offshoots of Populism

Every individual is a private person and a citizen at the same time, willing, for example, to avoid paying taxes while also being aware of the necessity of such taxes. No society is divided into good and bad citizens, even though the two extremes do exist. Choosing the general interest is always an ethical choice where consciousness is crucial for ousting the instinctual impulse to quickly gratify one's desires to the detriment of the long-term common good. Similarly, the deployment of primary emotions and passions that go against social interests, serving a strategy of power, is a practice that is as old as mankind. There has never been and, hopefully, there will never be a future society in which citizens will cease to lead a private life.

There still persists the apparently vague idea that one may distinguish between two groups of people, and this has given rise to the contemporary notion of populism. One thing should be made clear: every citizen is also a private individual, led by selfish passions, being, therefore, vulnerable to flattery. It is an altogether different matter to claim that unlike another section of the population, which is less numerous and more reasonable, the popular milieu is naturally dominated by its passions. This idea was already expressed by Plato and it should come as no surprise given that Plato described democracy by commonly confusing it with demagoguery. What I should like to illustrate is that today the assignment of populist

characteristics to a man or a group tends to resume Plato's argument, albeit through a blatant contradiction. Our contemporaries are the democrats; their argument here is anti-democratic; or perhaps we should assign them a hidden definition of democracy, which does not feature in their speeches.

There follows a second question: in recent history, contemporary populism humbly resumes from where an initially commendable populism left off. Why? What have the people done to have their aura so quickly turned into an object of contempt? It would be difficult for us to settle for the definition that is admissible today: populism seen as a political expression that aims for an unmediated agreement between the leader and a part of the people. Instead, what we may see are the so-called populist movements that are outraged to be deprived of or denied political representation. I argue that the contemporary outlook on populism derives from a moral process intent on defending the *private individual*. This process was already underway in the Greek analyses of demagoguery. However, it took a new course with the advent of the universal, of the Enlightenment and, in the 20th century, with the failure ensuing from the emergence of universalisms. The destiny of contemporary populism is similar to the shift from the Greek *idiot* to *idiot* (from the Greek *idiotès* to *idiot*) or, in other words, from the particular to the imbecile: a shift which the Greeks were already aware of, but which has taken a new twist with modernity. This is the passage I intend to emphasise.

In ancient Greek, the word *idios* meant that which belonged to a person or a thing, the existence of something private or particular. The masculine noun *idiots* indicated a particular individual, or a private man, as opposed to the king, the magistrate, or the public man; in other words, a simple citizen, a man of humble condition, an uneducated man. *Idios* was opposed to the term *koinos*, meaning the same thing either for the many or for all; it referred to the State, to public relations, or to the public authorities. The word *koinotès*, a feminine noun, designated the community, what was said or done together, the common or vulgar use (in the sense of the common place). The reputation of populism is related to the image of *idiotès* and, crucially, to that of a slippage of meaning that reduced the simple individual to an ignorant; hence, the French term "idiot". A populist leader may be abhorred because he speaks directly to the people as to a bunch of ignorant, vulgar and uneducated people. By contrast, a civilised leader's vocation is that of alternating the ideas of the cultivated and educated elite.

For ages, oligarchic periods have relied on the idea of the people's inability to govern and, in a way, on their innate idiocy. A simple man, isolated in his private concerns and deprived of education would not know

how to make decisions for a community. The only ones who can make decisions for the *koinos* are those who feel they are a part of *koinotès* before becoming *idiotès*: the people of the community, people who think about what is important for all and not only what is important to them, people with an open mind, who can leave aside their private interests. Built on this distinction, the contempt for the people is destructive in oligarchies, just like hate is. The popular idiot may certainly be found with many other people, such as the Chinese, where he appears in a peculiar form. There is no need for further explanations - things are already clear - that a rural illiterate man looks like a savage to a cultivated city dweller.

With the advent of democracy, anthropological and political beliefs changed for the ancients and, later, the moderns. A simple private individual can vote. Not only does he equal the elite in terms of his culture and knowledge, but the qualities that are necessary for political participation are features that everyone can have: common sense, judgment, good will, and generosity. Democracy is based on the principle that if simple individuals are capable of choosing life partners or raising children, they are also capable of participating in the public affairs that require the same abilities. In other words, a person who mistook *idiotès* for *idiot* would not know how to be democratic. Or, if you prefer, the essential work of democracy consists in separating *idiotès* from *idiot*, whereas oligarchies always confuse them. We cannot be democratic if we perceive simple individuals, those who take care of their private matters but are not open to the citizens at large, as hopeless idiots who will always let power slip through their fingers. The “private” man acquires a new meaning today: he becomes an idiot. The official defence of democracy cannot preclude vivid suspicions as regards the people’s ability to participate in the public affairs. Hence, the bad reputation of populism, in the sense that it gives credence to imbeciles. The people’s alleged incapacity is, however, a secondary accusation: it is derived from a charge of post-modern universalism. There is thus an opinion whose status as an opinion is denied, being translated into stupidity. The following lines argue that here is where the pedestal of contemporary populism is located.

After the painful experiences of the 20th century, we have reconsidered Rousseau’s assertion that “the general will is always right”. Any democrat will agree that a leader need not always comply with the popular demands. However, this certainty raises a question: on what criteria should we decide whether or not we should listen to the popular voice? Since these criteria are not known or determined by any recognised principle, the people are instrumentalised to serve the leaders’ preferences. If the death penalty is preferred to life imprisonment for repeated offences, we shall

keep vehemently opposing it. Who is to decide whether we should listen to the people or contradict them in the name of the public good? No one knows. In other words, the possible and the acknowledged errors of the *vox populi* have left no room for a reflection on the limits of democracy, but rather for an instrumentation that allows the leaders - at their own will - to give the people what they demand or, on the contrary, to reduce them to silence.

In the latter case, when the popular voice finds a means of expression, the leaders are at a loss for words to describe their anger. Class contempt is as odious, in itself, as race-based contempt. In Europe, the former is a national sport, whereas the latter is a crime. Reference is made too lightly to the “people” as if they represented a determined and defined entity, or as if we could include them under this umbrella. When we talk about the “people” within the context of populism, we refer to a part of the popular milieus that are difficult to quantify and to define in advance. The question we would like to answer here is: how is it possible for what is “popular” in the people to have become such a contested opponent in a time of triumphant democracy?

Origins: the Idiot and the Commoner

The first “populists” were those numerous tyrants who seized power in the Ancient Greek cities during the 7th and 6th centuries BC. If we observe their behaviour and the manner in which they gained access to office, we shall find a striking analogy with the contemporary populist phenomenon. In this regard, Platonic thought was a prelude to contemporary judgments. The Greek tyrants fostered a poisonous complicity with the crowd and this allowed them to have access to power. They flattered the masses and the masses applauded them. At that time, the cities were governed by powerful oligarchies which paid little attention to the rural populations. In this case, in some of the cities, the oligarchies assumed their role and demanded this terrible oath of allegiance: “I will be an adversary of the people and I will do the Council all the harm I am capable of”.¹ There is nothing surprising here if we consider that adventurers, who were generally good orators, came and gave speeches before the crowds, promising them a better life.

Greek tyrants came mostly from among the people, whom they defended. According to legend, the Indian Gyges, who was the first known tyrant, had been a slave. Orthagoras of Sicyon was the son of a butcher,

¹ Gustave Glotz, *La cité grecque* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1968), 326.

Cypselos of Corinth was the son of a potter, while Dionysius of Syracuse was the son of a donkey breeder. These men, who sometimes managed to set up entire tyrannical dynasties, seized power in the midst of wheat production crises or external threats, whose importance they exaggerated in order to establish their own legitimacy. Still, it would be outrageous to claim that their strategies were based exclusively on cunning cynicism. Their projects were mixed, as Aristotle undoubtedly notices: “a tyrant derives from the people and from the rabble to protect them against the notables, and in order to prevent the people from being oppressed”. Then he rightly talks about the “demagogues who have gained the trust of the people by condemning the notables”.²

Whether a tyrant was honest or used the people as mere instruments (it is impossible to generalise because of the impressive number of tyrants from that period), the ancients were always reserved about this uneducated man who would predict calamities, promise reckless reforms, distribute land, raise the soldiers’ wages, or criticise the creditors. At the same time, a tyrant would surround himself with scoundrels and seek the advice of charlatans: “Timophanes walked through the public square, accompanied by people with the worst reputation”.³ In the end, the crowds would be fooled and led to perdition: after suppressing the elites, the tyrant would rule against them. Let us tell here the story of a great passion and a great deception, collected in this brief fragment written by the poet Alcaeus who says this about Pittacus: “Everyone having gathered to celebrate him, they proclaimed him the tyrant of this gentle and unfortunate city”.⁴ These were the aristocrats and while they may sometimes love the people, they will always favour parvenus above all others.

Why should we consider it a catastrophe when a man, whether illiterate or not, lends an ear to the people? The later writings during the Athenian democracy continued to disparage this triumphant assassin, deeming his regime to be “the ultimate disease of the state”. What is the difference, then, between the democracy that seeks the good of the people and the tyranny that seeks the good of the people? Why is the former praised while the latter is condemned, always in the name of the people? Today we may ask a related question: why should we honour Lenin and condemn Chavez? Did they not both aim to defend the people in spite of the fact

² Aristotle, *La Politique* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1953), 1310.

³ Diodorus Siculus, *La Bibliothèque historique* (Paris: Adamant Media Corporation, 2001), Volume X, 65.

⁴ Alcaeus of Mytilene, in *Histoire de la littérature grecque*, ed. Suzanne Saïd, Monique Trédé and Alain Le Boulluec (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, coll. “Quadrige”, 1997).

that this generous project has nowhere led to its expected outcomes? A tyrant will often start his career as the leader of the popular party, as Aristotle writes about Peisistratus: "Peisistratus was the leader of the people and *strategus* when he became tyrant". Before seizing power, Peisistratus "passed, for the most devoted, as the most democratic leader".⁵ The character of the demagogue was very much present in the Greek writings of the 5th and 4th centuries BC, suggesting that he represented a common yet somewhat disregarded aspect of democracy. The relations between tyranny and democracy were problematic, especially since the former had made room for the latter by abolishing the aristocracy.

A wrongful approach to the defence of the people fostered the emergence of this original strand of populism as a degraded form of democracy. This is how Thucydides describes Pericles, the true democrat, in relation to his demagogue successors:

He was not one of those who would let the people lead him instead of him leading the people because, since he did not seek to increase his power through condemnable means, he never addressed them words just to please them. The faith the people manifested in him was of such nature that it bordered on cholera, resisting their own desires (...). From among his successors, none could assert a real superiority over the others. All of them wishing to come first, they began to appeal to the people and give them leverage over the problems gradually.⁶

For the Greeks, both tyranny and declining democracy were associated with the sycophants. Tyrants lived surrounded by flatterers, and the ill-governed people were surrounded by demagogues.⁷ Aristophanes, for whom demagogy was one of the main targets, highlighted the moment when the people could be easily seduced by flattery: "*Ah, Demos, you hold a sway,/ The fairest on earth today (...) Yet gullible as a boy. Beguiled by a stupid toy,/ To flattery insincere/ You lend a delighted ear*".⁸ Jacqueline de Romilly shows how "during the 5th century, the word *demagogue*, which had originally meant the *head of the people*, acquired the

⁵ Aristotle, *La Constitution d'Athènes* (Paris: Livre de Poche, 2006), XXII: 3; XIII, 4.

⁶ Thucydides. *Histoire de la Guerre du Péloponèse* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000).

⁷ Aristotle, *La Politique...*, 10, 1310, V, 11, 1214 a.

⁸ Aristophanes. *Théâtre complet (Tome 1: Les Acharniens - Les Cavaliers - Les Nuées - Les Guêpes - La Paix)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 114-1120. English edition consulted, TN: *The Complete Plays of Aristophanes*, trans. Robert H. Webb (New York: Bantam Books, 1962), 106.

unfavourable meaning it is invested with today”.⁹ The moment when a crowd becomes easily seduced is always known. Referring to Aristagoras, Herodotus said: “We ought to believe that it is easier to deceive many than one”.¹⁰ The people must be sufficiently weak for the demagogues to “easily take advantage of their anger and mislead them”.¹¹

The Leader of the Crowd

Is the problem of tyranny and, then, of demagoguery in emerging democracies caused by the masses? Is this a problem related to mass gatherings? The beginnings of crowd psychology lie with our ancestors. In Homer’s work, the population is described as a choppy sea, as an unpredictable and violent mass capable of moving everything in its path, surging “like giant waves at sea” as the poem goes.¹² Telling the story of Solon, Aristotle emphasises the main difficulty inherent in a legislator’s profession: “to restrain the people” who are compared with a pack of dogs.¹³ Since the first democracy, we have been aware that grouped individuals are more likely to abandon themselves to passions than when they are isolated or in small groups. As Solon puts it, “each of you alone walks in the steps of a fox, but all together your mind is confused”. And Aristophanes says in *Knights*: “I’m done for! At home, this old man is the noblest of people, but once he sits on this rock (in the people’s assembly), he turns into a gawking flathead”.¹⁴

We find in these texts the gist of the analyses that ushered in the contemporary era after the “era of the masses”. Greek democracy functioned naturally, starting from a crowd, from several thousand people gathered together: the rules of crowd psychology were already at work here. When a crowd assembles, each individual tends to wander among the others, losing common sense and the ability to reason soundly. It is as if individual consciousness, seen both as situational intelligence and moral capacity, were diluted. In the midst of the crowd, passion always speaks first. For instance, the excitement of going to battle without reflecting on the risks and on the stakes, which Thucydides speaks about when referring to the expedition to Sicily, the moment when the most lucid spirits switch

⁹ Jacqueline de Romilly, *Les problèmes de la démocratie grecque* (Paris: Hermann, 1975), 43.

¹⁰ Herodotus, *Histoires (V-X)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), V: 97.

¹¹ Aristotle, *La Constitution...*, XXXIV: 1.

¹² Homer, *L’Iliade* (Paris: Hatier, 2009), II, 144.

¹³ Aristotle, *La Constitution...*, XII: 4-5.

¹⁴ Jacqueline de Romilly, *Les problèmes...*, 25.

over to the side of those who are silent, “fearing they might be branded unpatriotic”¹⁵ if they publicly disavowed the fanatical zeal of the crowd surrounding them. Passion, as we know, is expressed only at the right time; hence, the instability of the crowds, their proneness to change their mind from one moment to the next, just like the disgruntled Athenians sanctioned Pericles and then immediately re-elected him “as is characteristic of inconsistent crowd behaviour”.¹⁶ The crowd forgets, moving from extreme leniency to extreme severity, from excitement to negligence, from rage to dismay. Thus, the crowd becomes unable to sustain a genuine policy that requires long-term thinking and generates a dangerous spontaneity.

When Plato speaks of the “huge beast” the people form in democracy, he refers to a crowd: “they come together, huddling on seats in assemblies, or Law Courts, or theatres, army camps, or at any other contest or gathering of the people”.¹⁷ They develop and propagate excessive and contradictory opinions. With his usual finesse, Plato describes how crowd manipulators astutely observe this enormous and frightening beast, studying its reactions, noticing its weaknesses and identifying its Achilles’ heel. Then, with the boldness of an animal trainer, they can handle it and make it come to heel. He describes how, at the same time, the educated youth, lost in this crowd and numb to this overflowing enthusiasm, is instantly caught in the surge. Thus, the setting is in place: the crowd, deprived of consciousness and endowed with power, engulfs the seduced individual consciousness; the trainer who breaks it in carefully observes the outlines of its floating passion. Furthermore, the presence of the demagogue, a forerunner of the populists, entailed much more profound aspects that went beyond the fact that crowd gatherings allowed and encouraged uncertainty. Individuals do not lose their reason simply because they come together. Outside the circumstances that keep them together, they have a natural lack of judgment. We now turn to the real problem of democracy.

The Many and the Few

In the atmosphere of Greek democracy, an expression - “the many” - was coined; although simple and present in all human societies, it acquired here an essential meaning, designating initially the mass of the city’s

¹⁵ Thucydides. *Histoire de la...*, VI: 24.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, II: 65.

¹⁷ Plato, *La République* (Paris: Flammarion, 2002), VI: 492 b.

inhabitants, whether they were citizens or not, together with all the people in the streets; in other words, everyone and anyone. This was no longer a crowd, but a sum of people who resided in a common place, using the same institutions, being subject to the laws, and practising a similar culture and art of living. Labelling an ensemble as such implicitly makes us realise its dissimilarity from another group, because we identify it by reference to something else. *The many* are not the mass of inhabitants from Athens compared to those in other cities and to the neighbouring barbarians. *The many* are distinguished from *the few* within one and the same city. They are characterised by a certain mode of behaviour. In the city, *the few* who really want to see *the many*, identify and designate them. By contrast, *the many* do not define *the few*, who define themselves. In the democratic city, there is - hardly in a democratic manner - a difference between an observed mass and a small group that observes the mass.

The many are, by definition, superior in number, but inferior in quality to *the few*. What is therefore certain is the existence of an elite whose criteria must be defined. These criteria do not resemble those of the oligarchy. Their peculiarity represents the primordial means allowing for the emergence of populism in democracy. *The many* are attached to their own desires. They do not have an overarching view that would enable them to conceptualise and strive for the common good. Aristotle likens the tyrant with the people who indulge their basic instincts. None of them aims for the common good, but they enjoy the pleasure of the moment. In the beginning, he says, the Thirty Tyrants ruled well and "executed the traitors and the evil-doers who addressed the people against their true interest, just to curry their favour".¹⁸ A demagogue is seen as the one who indulges in the temptation to live for himself, neglecting the common good. It seems that the two factors are correlated with the characteristics of those whom we call *the many*: attachment to the pleasure principle and indifference to the long-term consequences.

Any analysis of Greek demagoguery, the ancestor of contemporary populism, leaves room for the differences between the pleasure principle and the reality principle, the former being related to short-term gratification and the latter to long-term concerns. A characteristic of the demagogue is pleasure for the moment: he will pretend that everything is easy and that everything can be obtained, concealing any difficulties and substantial efforts. This boils down to promoting the pleasurable at the expense of the good or, in other words, to promising momentary wealth and comfort to the detriment of the good, which amounts to an elevation of

¹⁸ Aristotle, *La Constitution* ..., XXXV: 3.

the being in time. Demagogues evince this facile complacent behaviour or indulge in the spontaneous expression of desire. In Euripides' *The Suppliant Maidens*, the flatterers "please the people today and cause them pain tomorrow".¹⁹ Thus, even when they are not gathered as a crowd, the people are characterised by coarse emotions that will obliterate their fair judgment through a spontaneous explosion of feelings that blurs their vision of the future. Accordingly, they lack cautiousness and are irresponsible due to a stringent sense of ownership. In short, *the many* are deprived, as we shall see next, of the reason (*noos*) that only *the few* can pride themselves on.

Aristotle was the sole Greek philosopher who did not disparage *the many*. On the contrary, he believed it was likely that the population at large could reason better than a small group of individuals, even if they were well informed. In fact, every individual could pool in his share of lucidity: lucidity could be summed up²⁰ even though the author admitted that this superiority was arguable and some crowds were less lucid than others. He told the story of how the wealthy Cimon built his reputation by attracting a large clientele: "anyone from the deme of Laciadae - the people in his village - could find him every day and obtain subsistence means from him; in addition, none of his estates was fenced so anyone who wished could help himself to the fruit".²¹ Unable to compete with him, because he lacked a fortune, Pericles established emolument systems for the judges. Was that not a situation in which the people were paid off? And how come they were so easy to buy off? Similarly, "the few are, to a greater extent than the many, open to corruption by bribery or favours".²² These statements reveal an underlying postulate: everyone is capable of wisdom to some degree. This was the case even though the Stagirite was well aware of the danger that the demagogues posed to the city, because they promoted the most basic instincts in the popular consciousness. Aristotle was the only true democrat of Athens because he laid the foundations of government on prudence and human wisdom and because he saw them as divided.

The many, as we have seen, are dangerous because they most often gather in large groups, but also because of their innate weakness. They are people without a genuine education, guided by their instincts. This inferiority is not the only difficulty in a society led by *the many*. The other problem is the multiplicity denounced by Plato. Democratic freedom

¹⁹ Euripides, *Tragédies complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 411.

²⁰ Aristotle, *La Politique...*, 1281 b.

²¹ Aristotle, *La Constitution...*, XXVII: 3.

²² *Ibid.*, XLI: 2.

allows everyone to express themselves, to live as they please. Thus, the free society is overwhelmed by conflicting desires and Plato ascribes it a carnivalesque beauty: “It looks”, I resume, “as though it is the most beautiful of all the regimes: just like a many-coloured cloak decorated in every hue, this regime is decorated with every disposition and so would appear to be the most beautiful”.²³ Plurality itself - without taking into account the good or bad dispositions that it sparks off - is reprehensible because it encourages the most childish inclinations of the human soul: the desire to express oneself spontaneously and freely. The joyous and enthusiastic explosion of multiplicity has an immature, incomplete side. Plato’s criticism of democracy is based on the discord that engenders the freedom of being: “Wherever there is licence, it is obvious that every man will organise his private life according to a plan that will seem most convenient to him”.²⁴ Plato uses the Greek word *idios* (one’s own, private, personal) and opts for a problematic change. Sometimes he speaks of the human temptation to fulfil one’s own whims and to be guided by one’s own desires. At other times, he talks about the differences between people, lifestyles and opinions that inevitably occur in a democratic regime. However, he constantly mingles these two ideas. For him, plurality can only be born out of desires and passions. He would not be able to harbour, for example, a diversity of assumptions. That is why democracy is buffoonery. The reason can only be *one*. Consequently, there cannot be more than one reasonable opinion. The motley, many-coloured opinions of democracy are considered to be passions, desires and whims. This regime is the most fragile and it is loved by all, especially by the ordinary people who can leap to reach their desires. In reality, democracy is simply demagoguery or proto-populism because it keeps catering for the whims of the first born or the first imbecile who shows up. Claiming that plurality is tantamount to mediocrity or to chaos amounts to an elitism that rejects any attempt and any hope of taking into account what the people express. Only a handful of individuals hold the truth. As we know, Plato based his theory on his life experience and, in particular, on the deception of democracy. Plato’s outlook anticipated today’s perspectives on populism: at present, if the public opinion is not consistent with the human rights discourse conceived in a certain way, this opinion is deemed to amount to a wasteful cluster of whims and passions, and the one who pays attention to it is considered to be a demagogue.

²³ Plato, *La République*..., 557 c.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 557 b.

However, it is necessary to restore Plato to his time. Ancient holistic society had difficulty accepting a plurality of views, and Aristotle was incredibly modern when he supported harmony at the expense of unison.²⁵ However, in contemporary individualistic societies, is it not the case that identifying plurality with anomy strikes a somewhat off-key note? Why should personal privacy be considered nefarious and why should more be worth less than one? Because in the political philosophy of the ancient Greeks, with the exception of Aristotle's nuanced position, the existence of reason and the existence of the city mutually reflect each other. Reason attempts to find the truth. The truth is unique, although we do not know it (nor shall we ever know it). The theories of twofold truth, fashioned through intellectual imposture to serve as ideologies, have failed to convince anyone. Two contradictory assertions cannot be true at the same time.

"While authentic speech is universal, *the many* live with reason as a particular characteristic" - this famous excerpt from Heraclitus highlights the contradiction between *xunos*, i.e. the universal, which in fact the Greeks often also referred to as *koinos* and *idios*, i.e. the particular, the individual. Each and every one of *the many* expresses their own truth and their own opinion. However, this plurality makes no sense, it is nothing but squander. Only the truth that all have in common, the unique truth, has meaning. *The many* ignore it and consider their particular judgment as the only truth. Heraclitus expressed the same idea in the following passage: "For those who are awake, there is a unique and common world, but each of those who are asleep abandons himself to a particular world".²⁶ Here, *the many* are identified with cumbersome spirits, just like those who are asleep, each engulfed by own dreams. By contrast, a sage or a philosopher is compared to a wakeful man who sees the common world displayed in front of everyone: one and the same world.

Intelligence or reason, *noos*, is that capacity which consists in the power to investigate and take into account not what is particular, but what is common to all.²⁷ No one is deprived of this capacity, but most people do not use it: they are only interested in the particular and although the *logos* or universal speech is presented to them, they either cannot see it or will not leave it.²⁸ We may therefore understand the connection between *idiotès* and an idiot and why the simple private individual is seen from the

²⁵ Aristotle, *La Politique...*, II, 1263, 34.

²⁶ Heraclitus, *Fragments* (Paris: Flammarion, 2002), Fragment 9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Fragment 57.

²⁸ Georges Moyal, "La Raison d'Héraclite", in *La naissance de la raison en Grèce*, ed. J. F. Mattéi (Paris: PUF, 2006), 189.

beginning as an imbecile. He could use his intelligence to rise above the ordinary, but will nonetheless remain in his individual world.

This transition from *idiotès* to *idiot*, from the particular to the imbecile, can only be accomplished starting from a postulate that is already present in Heraclitus²⁹ and is well-entrenched with Plato: the close connection and near overlap between philosophical reflection and political practice. Philosophy consists in looking - beyond the diversity of opinions and the pluralism of relativity - for the *logos*, or the universal word, the truth that exists for all. If the goal of politics ought to be the pursuit of the truth that belongs to everyone in the city or even to all people, the diverse habits, opinions, temporary and historical ideals will occur naturally as private manifestations doomed to disappear in the face of philosophical intelligence. Does politics aim at the universal? Is politics not a practice that is always inscribed in history and inserted in some relative considerations? In this case, a particular individual may equally well defend the general interest of his city, inspired by necessarily relative historical values, even without being a philosopher or aiming for the universalism of the *logos*. In this situation, *idiotès* is not an idiot, but a man who is incarnated in a human particularity, like many others.

In the distinction made by Plato between the philosophical *logos* and political finality, there is an image consistent with the contemporary era. Today, a unique moral truth lays down the finality of politics, considering that those who will defend particularities against this imposed framework are idiots. Just like in Plato's case, the dominant contemporary opinion refuses to distinguish between *the many* who, disturbed by personal passions and desires, refuse to pursue the common good, and *the many* who, armed with caution about always reaching individual decisions, refuse a truth that is stated *a priori*, beyond any particularity. Populism is born out of this amalgam.

Poor and Evil at the Same Time

This assimilation of politics through philosophy implies a distinction between two types of persons. The texts use certain key adjectives to denote them. The elites are distinguished from *the many* through understanding and moral characteristics. Generally, the best (*aristoi*) are opposed to *the many*; here “the best” means being intelligent and virtuous at the same time. In the aristocracy which preceded democracy in Greece, the aristocrats were considered to be the best, an attribute that combined

²⁹ Heraclitus, *Fragments...*, Fragment 7.

the beautiful and the good, the ideal of *kaloskagathos*, the beautiful and good man. The best are educated: the reason of ignorance is constantly invoked in the stigmatisation of *the many* whom democracy elevates. There are numerous texts in which the illiteracy of the masses is ridiculed, especially since they are in power. For instance, Thucydides says that when the Athenians decided to undertake the expedition to Sicily, they “were generally poorly informed regarding the extent of the country and the size of its population”.³⁰

Ignorance is seldom treated separately. It is almost always associated with immorality and, respectively, with wickedness. For example, in Aristophanes’ work, the butcher is convinced that the more ignorant he is, the more skilled a leader he will be: “To lead the people, a man need not be endowed with a rich culture and a refined education. He should be ignorant and cunning at the same time”.³¹ In Pseudo-Xenophon’s *Republic of the Athenians*, a causal link is established between ignorance and immorality:

In every country, the best are opposed to democracy. For among the best, there are but slight manifestations of injustice and the strongest manifestations of all that befits an honest man; among the people, however, there is the highest degree of ignorance, disorder and infamy, for they are engaged in rather disgraceful actions because of poverty, lack of education and ignorance, which, for some, is a consequence of their material needs.³²

Bitter causality: poverty brings about ignorance, which, in turn, leads to immorality. Thus, *the many* are burdened with all the shortcomings at the same time. If there is a kernel of truth in this logic, it may be detected with the passage of time. Poverty compels one to live in the present. Ignorance prevents the development of overall perspectives in space and time. That is why the people tend to perceive things in the short term. Since the government of a society demands long-term perspectives, we may say that the satisfaction of the moment (momentary pleasure, whims) is immoral when it comes to politics. The idea is already present in Heraclitus: “They will take one thing in exchange for all, and the best of them will go for immortal glory in exchange for things that perish; but the many will glut

³⁰ Thucydides, *Histoire de la...*, VI, 1.

³¹ Aristophanes, *Théâtre...*, 180.

³² See Pseudo-Xenophon, “La République des Athéniens” (I, 5), in *Œuvres Complètes. Tome 2 : L’Anabase - L’Economique - Le Banquet - De la Chasse - La République des Lacédémoniens - La République des Athéniens* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1967).

themselves like the cattle".³³ *The many* are compared here with animals, which are unable to think beyond the fodder they feast themselves on; the best ponder on immortality... Because of this, there is a danger that the crowd will make long-term decisions without a vision; as the defender of oligarchy in Herodotus' work says: "A tyrant knows what he does, but the crowd is not even capable of that. How could they be, since they have never been educated and have never seen the beautiful by themselves? How could they leap blindly into these matters, stirring them like a torrent in full flood?"³⁴ The essential flaw of *the many* lies in the fact that they mistake the individual, momentary good for the common good of the city; there is perhaps no harsher expression in literature than that of Xenophon, who envisages a dramatic broadening of the right to vote should the city be ruled by "the slaves and the villains who would sell their city for a drachma".³⁵

The best people are those who are trained, competent and have a long-term perspective that goes beyond their own sphere. That is why the Greeks tended to categorise idle men as the best leaders, since their wishes could not affect the pursuit of the common good. Generally, the best stand out as distinguished people, who are moulded through training and education, which ensure both their competence and morality. Culture and civilisation go hand in hand. Thus, Aristotle makes a distinction between the "first comers" and "honest people",³⁶ pointing out that honesty is not natural; on the contrary, it is the result of education and any person without education is still a barbarian.

The sense of time is related to the meditation on the *logos*, to which the people make no contribution: a meditation on what is essentially good, rather than on what is good for oneself, for a particular time or a specific location. When, in a pedagogical matter, Plato imagines the famous competition between a cook and a doctor, he describes a jury consisting not only of children, but of "people with no more sense than children".³⁷ It is obvious that he refers to *the many*, who also appear in *The Republic*, where they are said to make "utterly ridiculous" criticisms in assessing art or politics. This is the case because *the many* are familiar only with particular cases and ignore the unity of the *logos*,³⁸ being unable to

³³ Heraclitus, *Fragments...*, Fragment 29.

³⁴ Herodotus, *Histoires* (I-V)... , III, 81.

³⁵ Xenophon, *L'Histoire de la Grèce antique* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1973), II, III, 48.

³⁶ Aristotle, *La Constitution...*, XXVII: 5.

³⁷ Plato, *Gorgias* (Paris: Flammarion, 1996), 464 d.

³⁸ Plato, *La République...*, VI: d, e.

perceive the common good of the city. This does not mean that it would be appropriate to delineate clearly *the many* from *the best*. On the contrary, the more we hear about this difference, the harder we can define it. When the Athenians sought, on the cusp between the 5th and 4th centuries BC, to establish the oligarchy, their hesitations were visible: “Willing to share power with honest people, they only gave a share to three thousand people, as though merit were limited to that number”,³⁹ as Aristotle writes. What is the number of capable people and how are they to be distinguished from the others?

The City Belongs to the Most Cunning

If we consider the *logos* through the lens of the city and of political life, then it becomes *nomos*. In other words, the universal is (*koinos* or *xunos* in Heraclitus) for reason the equivalent of the law for the political society.⁴⁰ The law is what unites, what has the same value for all, and what allows the individuals not only to live side by side, but also in wisdom, without the eternal threat of disunity and war. The law is justice and gives everyone what they deserve. It is harmonious and fosters the establishment of civic friendship among the citizens, where desires meet, goals intersect, and ideals are shared. There is no harmony without justice because there is no friendship without equality.

The law makes this requirement binding for every citizen: the abandonment of private interests in favour of the general interest, the suppression of individual desires and passions in favour of achieving the conditions for agreement. Political life is not only about the law, but about this exigence to express joint decisions in specific cases that the law does not provide for. When the Athenians decided to forget the past and let go of revenge after the fall of the 30 Tyrants, the “Athenians, individually and in groups, seem to have adopted the fairest and most civic conduct towards the woes of the past”.⁴¹ In philosophical reflection, a harmful particularity consists in taking one’s own opinions for the only truth. In the city, the harmful particularity resides in carrying out one’s own desires to the detriment of the general interest. Curiously, in the Greek texts, these two features overlap, suggesting that *idiotès* are limited spirits and selfish souls, even though these are not quite the same thing. The decline of the

³⁹ Aristotle, *La Constitution...*, XXXVI: 2.

⁴⁰ Michel Fattal, *Logos, pensée et vérité dans la philosophie grecque* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2001), 33.

⁴¹ Aristotle, *La Constitution...*, XL: 3.

city is therefore defined through two interconnected factors: the momentum gained by demagoguery and the disrespect for the laws.

Aristotle traces this decline to the time of Pericles' reign: "the passion of the demagogues will entail the relinquishment of political principles".⁴² The Stagiritic describes the auction organised by the leaders, who intended to give people increasingly substantial allowances; hence, their desire that the dregs of society should be in charge of political matters. In fact, the less educated people were bought off. As for Cleon, who headed the democratic group, "he was the first person to bawl on the platform, utter reviling words and speak recklessly, all the other orators adopting the right attitude".⁴³ Prior to this, the leaders of the popular party had been educated people, members of the elite. From then on, however, all the popular leaders were commoners and demagogues. Aristotle points out that the main feature of their policy was taking only the present moment into account: exposed to the crowd, they were betrayed by their impulsiveness.

The coming to power of diverse categories of vulgar and uneducated people coincided with increasing non-compliance with the law. Crimes remained unpunished or, even if a sentence was passed, it was not enforced. This is one of the key themes in Demosthenes' work. He describes a kind of lethargy, weakness or complacency, which prevents the full implementation of the law: "the rules are perverted in our city; in this trial, the accuser is the one who defends himself and the defendant is the one who accuses" as he says.⁴⁴

Plato and Thucydides describe the amoral environment that captures well this exhausted democracy after the Peloponnesian War, the plague epidemic and Pericles' death. In a famous work, Thucydides shows how words changed their meaning, allowing for vices to appear as virtues and claiming that "at the origin of all these evils is the appetite for power that fuels greed and personal ambition".⁴⁵ In other words, there was a disruption of social connectivity through an increase of self-love. Or, rather, it may be that self-love reached power faster thanks to the influence of the demagogues. Social alienation was not caused by the corruption of previously honest citizens, but by the accession to power of the "first comers".⁴⁶ As Demosthenes writes, "Everything is dismantled, opened up, disturbed, and the city belongs to the most cunning and the most

⁴² *Ibid.*, XXVI: 1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, XXVIII: 3.

⁴⁴ Demosthenes, *Œuvres complètes. Contre Ctesiphone* (Paris: PUF, 1986), 192.

⁴⁵ Thucydides, *Histoire de la...*, III: 82.

⁴⁶ Aristotle, *La Constitution...*, XXVII: 5.

reckless”.⁴⁷ The respect for laws is a matter of education, because instinct compels us to cater for ourselves, outside any constraint.

Athenian democracy did not thwart the existence of contrary opinions. Throughout time, in the city, democracy was bound to expect competition from the oligarchy. The power of Sparta, an aristocratic city, increased the influence of the oligarchs. Elitist arguments were therefore always present in speeches and texts, especially since democracy was the target of irony. The city may be democratic, but can *the many* really govern? And if they can, under what conditions?

The crisis that deepened starting from the end of the 5th century was due to an excess of democracy, according to several witnesses. Individuals who ignored the common interest were granted citizenship. In 401 and 404, a list of 5,000 and, respectively, 3,000 citizens was drafted to confer them oligarchic power. They were called “the Athenians who are most capable of serving the state”. These lists were never published and the oligarchies did not last, even though commentators noted that their governance had been more than reasonable. Later, given the fear of demagoguery and incompetence, everything was done so that the number of citizens would not increase too much, and more and more praise was given to the advantages of mixed regimes, consisting of democracy and oligarchy, which Aristotle referred to as *politeia*.⁴⁸ We see thus the extent to which demagoguery was propagated not only as a perversion of democracy, but as a familiar and resilient expression.

The Ancient and the Modern Judgment

The first manifestation of what populism will become is already based on a distinction between the illiterate people and the educated elite. The inferiority of the people derives from their individualistic perspectives on things, whereas the members of the elite see the world through the lens of the *logos*: hence, their ability to envisage the common good. Our perspective on populism is very close to that of the Athenians from that age: the populism of our time revolves around a party leader, who may be in power and who flatters not only the passions of the crowd, but especially the tendency of the simple citizen to remain entrenched in particularity. When we reject contemporary populists, we implicitly support the *logos*. And still this *logos*, this universal language, was very different for the Greeks even though the two versions are rather close in

⁴⁷ Demosthenes, *Œuvres complètes. Contre Aristogitone* (Paris: PUF, 1986), I: 25.

⁴⁸ Aristotle, *La politique...*, IV, 8, 1293 b 30.

terms of their genealogy. We shall see that this metamorphosis also requires a change in the manner of looking at populism.

The *logos* of the Greeks is a truth that has not been found yet and perhaps it never will. It is always awaited - as an ideal. The spirit seeks the unique truth through dialectics. It is a road littered with obstacles and all that we may recover are fragments, which are always ephemeral. Dialogue is an adventure that perturbs desire, distorts arguments, and demands that opinions should be tested. We know that the truth exists (the beautiful or the good in itself), but we do not hold it; instead, we search for it through endless debate. As for the political truth or for the content of the common good, they also emerge from dialogue. Thus, for the Greeks of the democratic era, *idiotès* was the one who was unable to participate in a dialogue aiming to uncover the truth. He was not the one who refused to accept the final truth, but the one who refused to seek the truth that was supposed to be discovered in common. He was blinded by his own desires and prejudices.

What philosophers reproached the *idiotès* for was that he did not use the capacity that all men had in common: reason. The use of reason would not necessarily make him see the truth that the elite might already have discovered, but it would allow him to partake of this lengthy pursuit of the universal, rendering him a complete man. We may say this because a complete man is the one who develops, who is unfulfilled. What the Greeks reproached the *idiotès* for - and, consequently, the demagogue who flattered him - is that they were satisfied by a primary individuality that was insufficient, since man, by nature, needed to go beyond it. At stake was a desire for the progress of man and for the good of the city at the same time. The city could be well governed only by people who rose higher than themselves, who developed their nature beyond particularity or the point where birth had cast them into the world.

The reproaches underlying the Greeks' critique of demagoguery were: the citizens were relegated to the status of *idiotès*; hence, the city was badly governed. Thus, the moral aspect was reinforced by and related to the political aspect. Pursuing the common good demanded the prepared citizens to expand their humanity as far as possible. This did not mean that the common good was defined *a priori*; on the contrary, only a citizen who stepped down from his secure yet narrow pedestal, because of its particularity, who dared escape into the space of investigation, was able to join the dialectical adventure and approach the common good of the city.

Although the Greeks' conception of reason helped create our own vision, these are entirely different. Jean-Pierre Vernant has correctly indicated that an inquiry into the Greek origins of reason is bound to

ruin a certain conception of Reason as constant, eternal, and absolute, which still prevails, I believe, in many rationalistic circles (...) By inquiring into its origins, we reintroduce reason in history; we therefore approach it as an emblem that is, like any human phenomenon, relative and subject to particular historical conditions, varying according to these conditions.⁴⁹

We are not referring here only to this relativity, which inevitably ushers in a long-term study of this notion in history. More than this, judging by the history of reason from Ancient Greece to the present day, we may realise the sheer extent of its changes. Investigative, spontaneous reason, which was never a prisoner of the certitudes we might want to fetter it with, aiming for the absolute as an as-yet unnamed reality, has become the Reason that fades away as it enters the darkness of ignorance and reveals enlightened truths, which compel us to accept it. In Ancient Greece, reason was one of the pillars of anthropology, but in modern times it has turned into an ideology. The transition from ancient demagoguery to modern populism has its roots in this metamorphosis.

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⁴⁹ Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Entre mythe et la politique* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1996), 230-231.

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THE IDEOLOGICAL COMPONENTS OF POPULISM

DANIEL ȘANDRU

Introduction*

This chapter sketches a characterisation of populism as a *trans-doctrinarian* and *processual type of ideology*. Therefore, I shall attempt to capture the main aspects of the conceptual relationship between *ideology* and *populism* in order to suggest a possible reconsideration of the two terms. Thus, on the one hand, I shall refer to a positive reconsideration of ideology (lacking any ethical significations) and, on the other hand, to an analytical reconsideration of populism; both orientations will serve an approach that is characteristic of contemporary political theory, regardless of whether it is normative or empirical. From this standpoint, I believe that populism is a particular type of ideology, specific mainly to our times, which intersects with and can influence the other established ideologies and their forms of manifestation. However, in my opinion, its specific difference with respect to other ideologies is that it combines a series of doctrinarian elements which did not belong to it initially and that it constructs itself ideologically, precisely during the process by which a social reality - whereby it counters the current state of a given society - is ontologically instituted.

As there are several fundamental works in this field, the analysis of populism as an ideology is evidently not a new subject matter in political theory or in sociology. Nevertheless, most of the approaches available in the literature of politics use the negative meaning of the concept of ideology, as a form of reality distortion. Likewise, populism has been perceived in a negative manner, being associated both empirically and imagistically with an identity which transforms it into the foremost

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opponent of contemporary democracies, whether they are recently instituted or well consolidated. In this context, while proposing another way of conceptually delineating ideology, I find it challenging to argue in favour of reconsidering populism as an analytical tool that may serve as a marker of democratic dysfunctions.

Throughout this chapter I argue that the analytical reconsideration of populism is relevant for political theory because it operates at two different levels: at the empirical level, we may need an instrument that can account for the various forms of manifestation of present-day politics (populism itself, with its many aspects, is one of them) and at the normative level, we may need a tool which can help us understand why the dysfunctions visible in contemporary democracies favour the emergence of ideological projections which are populist in nature. In order to achieve this goal, I shall set forth a different way of articulating the concept of ideology in general, by stressing its positive meaning, and then I shall focus on particular ideologies, among which I also include populism. Therefore, I shall employ the conceptual analysis and textual interpretation specific to normative political theory in order to capture both the characteristics which make populism formally similar to established ideologies, such as liberalism, conservatism or socialism, and those which render it a distinct and particular type of ideology. It is not by chance that this chapter follows a heuristic course: in the first section, I discuss the conceptual relationship between *ideology* and *populism*; in the second part, I argue in favour of a *positive reconsideration of ideology*; in the third section, I suggest some possible conditions for an *analytical reconsideration of populism*; and finally, in the fourth part, I characterise populism with reference to what I see as its *trans-doctrinarian status*, a status which grants it *processual features* that enable it to be ideologically flexible and have a remarkable capacity of adapting to the context.

The Conceptual Relationship between Ideology and Populism

The conceptual approach to terms has been a constant challenge in political theory and this has been due to the disarming dynamism which has characterised social and political reality for the past two centuries. Although they seem to possess a state of clarity, rooted in a semantic heritage whose authority is commonly acknowledged from the viewpoint of the history of political ideas, many of the notions used by the specialists in this field are actually constantly challenged. This is a situation common to both terms that are deemed to possess an aura of classicity - such as

politics, democracy, constitution (in Aristotle's acceptance), citizenship, participation, freedom, etc. - and notions whose historical origin is not older than the beginning of modernity. The latter case is also applicable to the two concepts between which I attempt to establish a connection throughout this chapter, i.e. *ideology* and *populism*.

I believe that a first coordinate of the closeness between the above-mentioned terms has already been outlined: both notions may be seen as language products which appeared with modernity, even though they were separated in time and emerged under different circumstances. Thus, if we refer to *ideology*, the history of the term is about two hundred years old; its origin is traceable to a conference held in 1796 by Antoine Destutt de Tracy, who aspired to lay the foundations of a "science of ideas" which would produce arguments about the essentials of human knowledge. The term's inventor, de Tracy, along with other thinkers of that time, were labelled as "ideologists" by Napoleon, whose politics they used to criticise; their criticism made the emperor think that such an approach was based on a "metaphysical nebula" whose only purpose was to distort reality. Virtually, this was the moment when the negative signification attributed to the concept of ideology started to emerge; having been overemphasised by Karl Marx, this signification has prevailed up to present-day political thinking. On the other hand, *populism* began its career in the language of politics at approximately the same time as the period when thinkers started to proclaim the "end" of ideology, that is, towards the end of the first half and the beginning of the second half of the 20th century, even though it was afterwards also applied retrospectively to some phenomena from the 19th century. However, just like ideology, populism was qualified in a negative manner in the political field, regardless of the fact that its meaning initially referred "not to a political phenomenon but to a literary movement founded at that time (1929, author's note) by Léon Lemonnier and André Thérive, as a reaction to the bourgeois and fashionable psychology which was spreading, in their view, among the novelists of that time."¹

Associated, in its turn, with criticism against the established power and its policies - from the criticism specific to the Russian Narodniks to that of the American farmers from the second part of the 19th century and up to that of French Poujadism in the 1950s - populism has therefore acquired a negative meaning, which is also shown by contemporary analyses of the phenomena that involve it. I hereby identify a second coordinate of the closeness between the two concepts. Finally, in my view, another coordinate

¹ Guy Hermet, *Sociologia populismului* (Bucharest: Artemis, 2007), 14.

consists in the fact that both *ideology* and *populism* are terms marked by semantic ambiguity; as a result, defining them in a clear and distinct Cartesian manner would be very close to an intellectual endeavour of Sisyphean proportions. Therefore, I would like to stress that even if throughout this chapter I account for a particular way of circumscribing the definition of ideology (explained further on), I do not aim to do the same with populism, which I approach not with the purpose of defining it, but of identifying its ideological characteristics. Coming back to semantic ambiguity, it is easy to observe that, insofar as *ideology* is concerned, we are not dealing with a static concept, as the evolution of its meanings has been closely related to the development of social sciences, mainly after WWII. Of course, this evolution is based on a legacy which contains echoes not only of a Marxist understanding of the term but also of analyses conducted in areas like the sociology of knowledge, epistemology, political theory or psychology. The proclamation of the “end of ideology”² did not put an end to the problems raised by the attempt to define the concept but intensified them, allowing it to be understood, within the very timeframe

² The expression, used for the first time by Albert Camus - in order to name the still hypothetical, at that time, separation of French socialism from Marxism (Daniel Bell, “The End of Ideology Revisited. Afterword, 1988”, in *The End Of Ideology. On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001, 411) - was reiterated in an interrogative manner, a decade later, to form the title of the conclusions of Raymond Aron’s influential book, *Opiul intelectualilor - The Opium of the Intellectuals* (“The end of the ideological age?”, Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2007, 343-362). Starting from what may be seen as a minimal definition of the concept discussed - that “an ideology implies the apparently systematic shaping of facts of interpretation, of desires or forecasts” (p. 345) - Aron claims that Marxism is the “last great ideology”, which was born of the “combination of three elements: the vision of a future consistent with our aspirations, the link between this future and a given social class, the trust in human values, beyond the victory of the working class, due to collective planning and ownership” (p. 348). By placing this ideology at the end of the “column” that also includes liberalism, socialism and conservatism, which is seen as completing the heritage of modern European thinking - a type of thinking which was fully aware of the pluralism of civilisations but did not question its universal message - the French political theorist drew the conclusion that, in the 1950s, “the free world would commit a fatal error if it believed that it possessed a single ideology and that the latter was comparable with Marxism and Leninism” (p. 355). In other words, with such an idea, Raymond Aron let the door open to all the conceptions interested in noticing how difficult it was to keep ideology “alive”, even by artificial means. As a result, since then, the idea of the “end of ideology” has held an important place in Western thought, but the signification we inherit today was undeniably produced by the American theorist Daniel Bell.

of its formulation, as the moment when a new ideology emerged.³ In any case, this notion has not petered out and its empirical manifestations have not disappeared in time: despite the “funeral procession” formed during the post-war age, ideology has continued to represent one of the key terms in the language of social sciences.

As for the concept of *populism*, its analysis also confronts specialists with some “framing” difficulties. A brief overview of the most relevant - and, by now, classical contributions, as well as of the most recent definitions, shows that populism is understood as an ideology, as a political movement, that is, as a phenomenon with social roots or involving economic aspects⁴; as a mode of identification, a process of denomination or a dimension of politics⁵; as the clue of a democratic “indisposition”⁶; as an aspect of political culture or even as a specific type of political culture⁷. So, even if we take into account only some of the meanings allotted to the concept, we see that it operates in a wide array of situations. Probably, this is why some authors prefer to emphasise the term’s *anexactitude*, considering that “the interesting thing about this notion is that it falls outside the binary opposition between exact and

³ While trying to identify the main trends within the sociological study of ideology over a period of two decades, in 1960, Norman Birnbaum noted that “the recent announcement - which appears on many counts to be premature - of “the end of ideology” may be viewed as an attempt by a number of thinkers to present their own ideology as a factual version of the world” and that “the announcement of the end of ideology, then, appears to represent what can only be termed an ideological position. It is interesting that the analysis of ideology here has been used (once again) as a method of political persuasion. There may well be a certain consonance between this position and the prevailing disinclination to attack the philosophical problems of ideology; both entail an acceptance of what appears to be empirically given as an appropriate framework for theoretical discussion” - Norman Birnbaum, “The Sociological Study of Ideology (1940-1960): A Trend Report and a Bibliography”, in *Current Sociology*, IX, No. 2, 1960, 92, 117.

⁴ Ghiță Ionescu, Ernest Gellner, “Introduction”, in *Populism. Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, ed. Ghiță Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 4.

⁵ Francisco Panizza, “Introduction: Populism and the Mirror of Democracy”, in *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, ed. Francisco Panizza, “London: Verso, 2005), 1.

⁶ Yves Méni, Yves Surel, “The Constitutive Ambiguity of Populism”, in *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, ed. Yves Méni and Yves Surel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 21.

⁷ Gianfranco Pasquino, “Populism and Democracy”, in *Twenty-First Century Populism. The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, ed. Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 19.

inexact, for the vagueness of the contours of anexact objects is a requisite condition and cannot be formalised as a clear truth-value”.⁸

In any case, the relationship between ideology and populism that I have tried to sketch by referring to the above-mentioned coordinates cannot avoid a point which marks the difference between them. This is given by the fact that the term *ideology* was invented and has been employed, since its birth, as a tool - first as an epistemological tool, then as a political one - that serves the purpose of *interpreting* a given reality (be it the reality of human knowledge or that of social life, as in Marx's view). By contrast, the concept of *populism* emerged due to the need to *express*, at the language level, a given reality. The fact that in the evolution of analyses specific to the theory and science of politics, as well as to other social sciences, populism has come to cover various realities identifiable geographically, temporally, ideologically or organisationally does nothing but justify the specialists' interest in explaining and understanding it. However, beyond this difference, what is most striking, in my opinion, in the context of the closeness between the two terms of political language, is the fact that both are charged with negative meanings. It is precisely for this reason that, in the following lines, I shall focus on this aspect and try to identify how it would be possible to reconsider *ideology* and *populism* conceptually.

The Positive Reconsideration of Ideology

During its intellectual evolution, the concept of ideology has been approached from a twofold perspective: because of its initial ambiguity, it has raised the interest of both political theorists and philosophers concerned with the issues of knowledge. Therefore, these two dimensions of analysis have resulted in various conceptions of ideology. In an attempt to summarise them, we may discern three conceptions based on an epistemological perspective (objectivist, relativist-relationist, and pragmatist) and three other ideas based on a theoretical-political perspective (negative, neutral and positive).⁹ As I am interested in pointing out the difference between the ideological components of populism, a concept which is clearly related to political issues, I shall not insist here on the

⁸ Benjamin Arditi, “Populism as an Internal Periphery of Democratic Politics”, in *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, ed. Francisco Panizza, (London: Verso, 2005), 75.

⁹ I launched this analysis and I showed at length the main aspects of each of the above-mentioned conceptions in Daniel Șandru, *Reinventarea ideologiei. O abordare teoretico-politică* (Iași: Institutul European, 2009), 48-116.

epistemological matters implied by ideology; instead, I shall focus on its theoretical-political aspects. In this respect, I take into account the fact that the “hard core” of the *negative conception of ideology* is to be found in Marx, who provided the term with the ability to produce an upside-down image of reality.¹⁰ Presented in this fashion, ideology becomes a system of ideas which express the interest of the ruling classes, representing class relationships in an illusory manner. The result is the fact that social and political praxis, the actual life of people, is reflected in their conscience in an ideological manner. Although this vision is still quite influential today, one may also identify a *neutral conception of ideology* in social and political theory, and its main supporter is Karl Mannheim. He aims to recover the epistemological project of the “science of ideas” in the context of social-political theory, such a task being attributed to the sociology of knowledge. In Mannheim’s view, the negative acceptance which sees ideology as a distortion of reality is discarded when we invalidate the idea that there is a unified order of worlds, a single reality which attracts various interpretations.

This is the moment when one passes from the particular conception to the “total conception of ideology”, within which “we attempt to reconstruct the whole outlook of a social group, and neither the concrete individuals nor the abstract sum of them can legitimately be considered as bearers of this ideological thought-system as a whole”.¹¹ Thus, ideology transcends the bias implied by the particular and negative conception, which has contrasted different interpretations of a common reality. Actually, social reality is fragmented, depending on the type of knowledge possessed by various social groups. Therefore, at this stage, the most important idea seems to be that any knowledge is determined existentially - this is the background of the neutral view on ideology. We are dealing here with what Mannheim calls, somewhere else, “subjunctive knowledge” and which contrasts, in his view, with the “communicative knowledge” specific to epistemology; ideology replaces epistemology when we acknowledge the fragmentary nature of the modern world.¹² The conceptual reconsideration of *ideology* and, implicitly, its recovery, is possible to the extent to which we accept the idea that the “positive” aspect which may be extracted from the negative conception of ideology is precisely the role given to its legitimising function, with the necessary

¹⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Eseuri de hermeneutică* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1996), 275.

¹¹ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), 52.

¹² Karl Mannheim, *Structures of Thinking*, ed. D. Kettler, V. Meja and N. Stehr (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), 20.

amendment that the ideological phenomenon cannot be reduced to that of class relationships. In other words, ideology does not appear *only* in the context of the relationships between a ruling class and a ruled class, but whenever a political authority needs to be legitimised.

Marx analysed ideological phenomena exclusively from the viewpoint of their dissimulating function or, more precisely, - as shown by Paul Ricoeur - he understood ideology as “distortion-communication”.¹³ It is true that ideology has a legitimising role, sometimes even by using dissimulation: “Where there is power, there is also a claim of legitimacy. And where there is a claim of legitimacy there is also a usage of public discourse rhetoric, with the purpose of persuading”.¹⁴ But this is not the essential quality of ideology. On the contrary, legitimising, the justifying action specific to ideology, even through the use of dissimulation, is actually an extension of its integrating function. In my opinion, when we discuss about the integrating nature of ideology, which may be identified through the theories or activities which have the role of “disseminating the belief that founding events are a constituent part of social memory and, through it, of the community identity itself”¹⁵, we may identify the merits of Mannheim’s attempt to go beyond the rigid framework imposed by the negative conception of ideology.

Being concerned with the manner in which reality is built socially, ideology focuses mainly on how our knowledge about the world finds itself in a relationship of belonging with our socio-political and historical environment, with something which precedes us and, at the same time, guides us. In fact, we hereby identify the essential function of ideology, i.e. its integrating function. In this context, we need to identify a function of ideology which would precede the distorting one. This aspect is also stressed by Clifford Geertz, who believes that all social action is symbolically mediated.¹⁶ We are dealing, in fact, with a fundamental function of ideology, whose purpose is to maintain a group’s socio-cultural identity. Once we arrive at this stage, when ideology becomes positive, we may define the concept as one which names *a system of ideas and beliefs shaped by any society, a system placed at the level of the social imagery and which has the role of creating a normative and action-based framework referring to the operating style of that society*. I would like to stress that, beyond this general understanding of ideology, which implies its conceptual reconsideration, I also take into account its particular

¹³ Paul Ricoeur, *Eseuri...*, 275.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 279.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 280.

¹⁶ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books), 1973.

dimensions, which are usually seen as “isms”. However, I shall return to this aspect in one of the following sections.

The Analytical Reconsideration of Populism

Now let us try and understand how it would be possible to reconsider *populism* conceptually, starting, like in the case of ideology, with the analysis of the negative signification attributed to the term. Generally speaking, this type of meaning was determined by the observation that populism “has a fundamentally negating nature because its discourses and projects are categorically opposed to almost all the principles, institutional components and personal practices of existing powers”.¹⁷ As a matter of fact, it should be noted that such a characterisation meets the criteria specific to the negative view of ideology because it refers to the particular case of populism as an opponent of the political establishment. In fact, Guy Hermet stresses that “the main orientation of populist ideology is consistent with its ‘negating’ nature”.¹⁸ It is precisely this positioning in “negation” which produces our perception of populism and its inclusion into the scope of the negative in relation to the position of institutionalised power.

However, in particular, populism relates to political practices, and in political theory it is related to the institutional framework of democracy. Being, seemingly, a constantly updated expression of Giovanni Sartori’s observation according to which “as it lacks an enemy [a reference to the fall of communism, my note D.Ș.], democracy is no longer confronted with external problems. Paradoxical - and not so paradoxical - is that the loss of outside enemies opened a Pandora’s box full of domestic problems”¹⁹, and populism stands out now, like it did before, through a constant lack of satisfaction with the functioning of democratic institutions. If, on the one hand, the negativity of its orientation - which entails the negativity of the concept - seems to be inherent to the semantic ambiguity of the term, as “populism, as with many other concepts, is, by itself, an empty shell which can be filled and made meaningful by whatever is poured into it”²⁰, on the other hand, the negative view of it is caused by the fact that populists are “always much clearer about what they

¹⁷ Guy Hermet, *Sociologia...*, 59.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Giovanni Sartori, *Teoria democrației reinterpretată* (Iași: Polirom, 1999), 443.

²⁰ Yves Méni, Yves Surel, “The Constitutive” ..., 6.

are against than what they are for”.²¹ Of course, observing the semantic negativity of the concept and the negative orientation implied by the reality which it expresses does not represent an explicative solution at the normative level, not to mention at the empirical level.

It is precisely for this reason that the specialists interested in the paradoxical relationship established between populism and democracy - since both refer, with much reverence, to the reality of the “people”, a reality which is ambiguous itself - aim to circumscribe not only the functional elements of democracy which become the focal-points of the criticism formulated by populism, but also the potential role populism may play beyond its mere positioning in the scope of the negative. I believe that here we may identify - if my assumption is correct - a good starting point for an exercise that would attempt to reconsider the term conceptually, as an *analytical tool*. Yet before taking this possibility into account, we should observe that, historically, populism seems to have rendered permanent a role which was played in the past by “democratisers”, with the sole difference that, at least up to now, it has not managed to offer, wherever it emerged, a credible alternative to the issues it claimed to have identified at the level of democratic functioning (and such functional problems do exist even in consolidated contemporary democracies). Because, as Robert Dahl shows, “the history of democracy is a history of failure just as much as it is a history of success: of the failure to overcome existing limits, of exceptional but also fleeting achievements followed by massive defeats and, sometimes, of utopian ambitions followed by disillusionment and despair”.²²

Populism has the role of challenging the established power as regards the role of the “people” in the decision-making processes. The problem is that, by overemphasising the role of the “people” and by claiming that it speaks on the people’s behalf (after all, as Guy Hermet points out, “the best friends of the people are also those who denounce its enemies most vigorously”²³), populism hopes to be included into the gallery of the “saviours of democracy”. It does so by making use of a series of techniques, including ideology, which, even in a superficial analysis, go beyond the natural framework of democratic functioning in the modern world, endangering the life of democracy itself. In this respect, while he advances a summary of the reasons which support the idea that populism

²¹ Paul Taggart, “Populism and the Pathology of Representative Politics”, in *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, ed. Yves Méni and Yves Surel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 72.

²² Robert Dahl, *Democrația și criticii ei* (Iași: Institutul European, 2002), 430.

²³ Guy Hermet, *Poporul contra democrației* (Iași: Institutul European, 1998), 175.

has a negative impact on the operational framework of democracy, Gianfranco Pasquino has in mind the following aspects²⁴: the belief that the improvement of a democratic society's operating conditions originates exclusively in the extraordinary qualities of a leader; the identification of those perceived as enemies of the "people" and the opposition, or even the manifestation of direct hostility towards them (based on what Carl Schmitt means through the friend vs. enemy binary opposition²⁵); the rejection of any form of political and institutional intermediation, due to the belief that it does nothing but distort and betray the will of the "people"; finally, the impossibility to respond to the excessive social expectations created precisely by it.

Without denying these elements - supplemented by many others in the specialised literature - which transform populism into an enemy of democratic politics, we may proceed to a reconsideration of the concept of populism, with a heuristic and explicative purpose, from a normative and empirical perspective, if we accept the idea that it can be used as an analytical tool. To place populism in a position where the spotlight shows its anti-democratic nature is, undeniably, a perfectly justified endeavour, especially as recent history demonstrates that the movements underlying this conceptual expression have affected not only the status of vulnerable democracies, which were electoral in nature, but also that of well-consolidated democracies in Europe.²⁶ Nevertheless, since populism remains an important character in post-war politics, I believe that the theoretical-political perspective is very interesting because it suggests not supporting its "positive" character, but recovering it precisely in order to ground democracy.²⁷ This process, as we know today, is related to every aspect of daily life in a democratic society, going beyond the "set of

²⁴ Gianfranco Pasquino, "Populism"..., 28-9.

²⁵ See, in this respect, the references presented in Alfio Mastropaolo, "Politics against Democracy: Party Withdrawal and Populist Breakthrough", in *Twenty-First Century Populism. The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, ed. Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 34.

²⁶ Jack Hayward, "The Populist Challenge to Élitist Democracy in Europe", in *Elitism, Populism, and European Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 10-32.

²⁷ Being one of the first who began to conduct research in this field, Andreas Schedler identified five coordinates of democratic consolidation: preventing the collapse of democracy, preventing democratic erosion, organising democracy and grounding democracy - Andreas Schedler, "Ce este consolidarea democratică?", in *The Romanian Journal of Political Science* (Vol. 2, Nr. 1, April 2002), 122-38.

minimal conditions”²⁸ that guarantee its existence, as Robert Dahl contended almost half a century ago.

In other words, I suggest that if populism is to have its status as the “preacher” for an “improvement in the quality of democracy”²⁹ recognised, then it should be put to use and employed as a *marker* of democratic dysfunctions. It is clear that I take here the path opened by Albertazzi and McDonnell, who claim that “populism and democracy are inextricably linked”³⁰, but my argumentation is guided by the following two coordinates: sketching the general framework within which we understand contemporary politics - which also includes populism - as it has been outlined by several theorists, and circumscribing populism as a particular ideology with trans-doctrinarian and processual features. The former aspect will be accounted for in the following lines, while the latter will be discussed in the next section. Ernesto Laclau is one of the most important authors who have approached populism from the perspective of an equivalence that links it to politics. Referring to the manner in which reality is socially built, by virtue of a logic whose premises are cultural-political, social and economic, Laclau underlines that “populism appears as a distinctive and always present possibility of structuration of political life”.³¹

Therefore, according to this ontological understanding, populism is not a mere error which may appear at a given moment when it comes to the functioning of a political system. This is why the above-mentioned theorist pleads for the recovery of the concept from the marginal position to which it was “condemned” mainly from an ethical perspective. From my point of view, in the case of populism, like in the case of the particular ideologies which were systematically and specifically articulated with modernity, we find the same holistic tendency in the process of building the social

²⁸ Robert Dahl, *Poliarhiile. Participare și opoziție* (Iași: Institutul European, 2000), 29.

²⁹ In this respect, Mény and Surel show that “democracy (as it works) is challenged in the name of democracy (as it is imagined)”, stressing that “as long as the discrepancy between the ideal - and idealised - vision of democracy and the less than perfect political reality remains, there will be room for populism, in one form or another” (Yves Méni, Yves Surel, “The Constitutive”..., 8, 18).

³⁰ Daniele Albertazzi, Duncan McDonnell, “Introduction: The Sceptre and the Spectre”, in *Twenty-First Century Populism. The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, ed. Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 10.

³¹ Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 13.

space.³² This is, in fact, an important feature of ideology, understood in the positive fashion presented in the previous section. From this perspective, reality may be interpreted as a product of collective intentionality. In its general meaning, ideology thus contributes to its construction by establishing a series of *ideological conventions* whose meaning is accessible to the members of a community through the process of socialisation³³. On the other hand, it is just as true that these conventions are modified in time as a result of inter-individual and inter-group interactions which take place in the social-political space. These interactions provide a context for particular ideologies to emerge - including populism in present-day society - and they also contribute to the ever-evolving process carried on in this space. Like in the case of already established ideologies, in the case of populism we are dealing with a series of forms of manifestation which imply a particular projection about the social space. Virtually, we are dealing with a specific type of social construction of reality which is created by populism in an attempt to “balance”, in the name of the “people”, the importance of some requests that are widespread in the social space by drawing on “popular subjectivity” and by instituting “internal borders” between “us” and “the others”.

Thus articulated from an ideological perspective, populism becomes, as Laclau shows, synonymous with politics itself: “If populism consists in postulating a radical alternative within the communitarian space, a choice at the crossroads on which the future of a given society hinges, does not populism become synonymous with politics? The answer can only be affirmative”.³⁴ From this standpoint, populism does not differ formally from the manner in which other ideologies manifest themselves in the social space, since

the conditions of possibility of the political and the conditions of possibility of populism are the same: they both presuppose social division;

³² In Daniel Șandru, *Reinventarea...*, 156-85, I brought arguments to support the idea that the social space is built ideologically with the help of two types of projections: individualist and holistic.

³³ I defined *ideological conventions* as the *social-institutionalised expression of the beliefs shared by the members of a society; these beliefs serve as “landmarks” of social knowledge and may modify their meanings in the context of the societal changes produced by this knowledge* - Daniel Șandru, “The Ideological Foundations of the Social Knowledge”, *Logos & Episteme. An International Journal of Epistemology* Volume I, Issue 1, 2010, 177.

³⁴ Ernesto Laclau, “Populism: What’s in a Name?”, in *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, ed. Francisco Panizza (London: Verso, 2005), 47.

in both we find an ambiguous *demos* which is, on the one hand, a section within the community (an underdog) and, on the other hand, an agent presenting itself, in an antagonistic way, as *the whole* community.³⁵

In the lines above, if we replaced the term “populism” with any of the names of other particular ideologies, we would meet the conditions of equivalence between these ideologies and politics itself. At this point, it becomes necessary to make a specification, which I shall detail in the next section: formally, populism is a particular ideology, specific mainly to our time, which intersects with and can influence the other existing ideologies and their forms of empirical manifestation. Yet, on the other hand, populism is a trans-doctrinarian ideology: its own forms of manifestation combine doctrinarian elements whose origin is to be found in other ideologies which are already elaborated and functioning at the community level. By constructing a particular projection of social reality, populism is an ideology just like any other ideology. Nevertheless, its difference from other ideologies is, in my opinion, the fact that it builds itself ideologically precisely during the process by which a social reality - with which it counters the current state of a given society - is ontologically instituted. Here it is easy to see both its trans-doctrinarian nature and its processual aspect, two issues to which I shall come back further on. But it is also here that we may understand its ability to take various forms, depending on the social, cultural-political, economic and organisational context.

The empirical dimension of politics is not the only one to express a type of equivalence, such as that formulated by Laclau. On the contrary, contemporary theorists confirm that the normative analyses of the phenomenon are also influenced by the presence of populism when they claim, for instance, that there are “transformations in political theory and practice which have affected advanced democracies”.³⁶ Indeed, populist discourse very often makes use of the need to “improve the quality of democracy” through the actual involvement of the “people” in the decision-making process. By going against the principle of representation, populism affects not only the functioning of democracy but also political theory, because today the latter is forced to bring to the fore the intellectual dispute between a quantitative conception and a qualitative conception of democracy and because “this new conception promised to make democracy more benign, more transparent and to restore directly to the citizens the sovereignty of which they are the holders”.³⁷ At bottom,

³⁵ Ernesto Laclau, “Populism...”, 48.

³⁶ Alfio Mastropaolo, “Politics...”, 31.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

these are the reasons which make me claim that a reconsideration of populism is actually possible if we use it as an analytical tool. If, from an ideological viewpoint, the equivalence between populism and politics is real (as I have argued, following Laclau's steps), then the influence exerted by the presence of populism as a phenomenon at the level of normative theoretical-political debates is also real:

the impasse that Political Theory experiences in relation to populism is far from being accidental, for it is rooted in the limitation of the ontological tools currently available to political analysis; (...) "populism", as the locus of a theoretical stumbling block, reflects some of the limits inherent in the ways in which Political Theory has approached the question of how social agents "totalise" the ensemble of their political experience.³⁸

Therefore, the analytical reconsideration of populism functions at two different levels: at the empirical level we may use an instrument that can account for the various forms of manifestation of present-day politics (populism itself, with its many facets, is one of them) and at the theoretical level we may use a tool which can help us understand why the dysfunctions visible in contemporary democracies favour the emergence of ideological projections that are populist in nature. To put it more clearly, regardless of whether we have the empirical or the normative dimension in mind, populism can be accepted and employed as a "potential barometer of representative politics",³⁹ characteristic of contemporary democracies.

Populism as a Trans-Doctrinarian and Processual Type of Ideology

The inclusion of populism in the ideological portrait of contemporary times follows the premise announced by Donald MacRae during the second half of the past century: he stressed that "if we are to make sense of populism we must treat it as, though not only as, an ideology".⁴⁰ Contemporary analyses focus their attention on circumscribing this phenomenon ideologically, by showing that "the key concept that lies at the heart of populist ideology is undoubtedly 'the people', followed by

³⁸ Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist...*, 4.

³⁹ Paul Taggart, "Populism...", 71.

⁴⁰ Donald MacRae, "Populism as an Ideology", in *Populism. Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, ed. Ghiță Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 154.

‘democracy’, ‘sovereignty’ and ‘majority rule’, each defined through its links with the others”.⁴¹ Given this context, beyond the positive reconsideration of ideology, which I discussed in the second part of this chapter (and which, and this is noteworthy, does not involve an ethnical dimension), it is necessary to understand what the status of ideology is in general, within current political theory and science, and how its specific forms are particularised, that is, the ideologies which are usually referred to as “isms”.

According to Michael Freeden, the main challenge of present-day political theory is that of meeting the claims made by the concept. Among the most remarkable of these claims is that of holding a central place in this field of reality research, alongside political philosophy and the historical articulation of political ideas. From this perspective, just like political theory, ideology reflects and produces social-political reality so much so that rejecting the former’s role in the knowledge of the latter means giving up one of the fundamental ways of understanding political phenomena.⁴² Therefore, we deal with a situation suggesting that the problem of ideology and its analysis should be taken seriously, a fact that the British theorist backs up with several arguments. First, as Freeden shows, we may notice that ideology is ubiquitous or inevitable nowadays, but the accusations referring to the “exploiting” or “dissimulating” tendencies that it might convey are unfounded. On the contrary, ideology is deemed to be a human and social product that puts together several perspectives on the world and engages the collective action of a group or community in order to achieve certain goals. Even when it is not acknowledged as such - whether we take into account social and/or institutional practices, attitudes or behaviours, texts or statements - the presence of ideology is guaranteed.⁴³ Another argument shows that political philosophy or the history of political thinking is structured in a manner that attracts ideological-based analyses, since the ideas related to the political organisation of society should not be entirely separated from political reality and the phenomena marking their emergence. Acknowledging this may be interpreted as a professional norm of the researchers in this field because “as political theorists our task is not only

⁴¹ Margaret Canovan, “Taking Politics to the People: Populism as the Ideology of Democracy”, in *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, ed. Yves Méni and Yves Surel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 33.

⁴² Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 2.

⁴³ Michael Freeden, “Ideology and Political Theory”, *Journal of Political Ideologies* (No. 11 (1), 2006), 9.

to preach nobility; it is also to register, understand, interpret and explain the ‘hard-wiring’ within a particular set of political beliefs, and to do so in the pursuit of knowledge as well as for instrumental reasons”.⁴⁴

Third, turning towards the empirical phenomena in the political area means recognising the “plurality” of ideology. This entails assuming, beyond the general delineation of ideology as a subfield of political theory, the concept’s multiplicity, differentiation, pluralism and flexibility, which allows and implicitly justifies its use in the plural. When we talk about *ideologies* as a plural representation of the concept of *ideology*, we have the chance to get closer to a proper understanding of political phenomena.⁴⁵ Thus we come to the fourth argument, which stresses that the study of ideologies concerns the actual configurations of the political ideas which are important in a given society. Such a direction of research - and here we find the final argument brought to our attention by Freeden - allows reconnecting political thought to political science, that is, reconciling political theory with applied analyses on political processes and structures.⁴⁶ From the perspective of the concept’s plural use, we understand that, on the one hand, ideologies are central figures of politics and, on the other hand, that although it is not possible to reduce everything to ideology, political phenomena inevitably have an ideological dimension. Ideologies are necessary and normal products of thought in the political area, and they have the role of facilitating and reflecting the collective actions of groups and communities. It could be said that the ideological factor stresses its identitarian aspect, since collective action includes group members by orienting them towards what is common to

⁴⁴ Michael Freeden, “Ideology and Political Theory”, in *The Meaning of Ideology. Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Michael Freeden (Routledge: London, 2007), 12.

⁴⁵ The idea of combining the singular and the plural use of the concept enables Freeden to state that “the study of ideology becomes the study of the nature of political thought: its building blocks and the clusters of meaning with which it shapes the political worlds we populate. And one thing that political philosophers might be encouraged to do, following some acquaintance with the analysis of ideologies, is to relax (as distinct from demolish) the universalism that accompanies many of their prescriptions and to endorse the possibility of multiple, and perhaps mutating, solutions to the question of what makes a good society” - Michael Freeden, “Ideology”..., in *The Meaning of Ideology. Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Michael Freeden (Routledge: London, 2007), 13.

⁴⁶ Michael Freeden, “Ideology”..., *Journal of Political Ideologies* (No. 11 (1), 2006), 17.

them from an axiological viewpoint.⁴⁷ This idea is also emphasised by Freeden when he says that:

the rehabilitation of ideology both as a social phenomenon and as an analytical tool has shifted it from just a class or mass occurrence to a general feature of political thinking. It has removed it from the marginalised and ethically suspect shadow lands of its past experience and enabled it to claim recognition as the archetype of political thinking, in its mobilising, deciding and selecting roles.⁴⁸

As a result, political thought cannot overlook the primary function of ideology, although the “classical” understanding of the concept has emphasised, as we have seen, the negative aspects that it seemed to induce into the social area.

Yet, if we accept the idea that the social space is an ideological construction, according to the definition we gave to ideology earlier, we may operate conceptually with *populism* in order to understand it as a particular ideology. Influencing a series of conventions that are already there, populism thus contributes to social change because its presence also implies the existence of reactions against this change. Of course, where the empirical manifestation of populism entails its being labelled as a type of government - as it happened, for instance, in certain South American, but also European states - its impact at the level of social change may be accelerated and it may take various shapes. In any case, the mere presence of populism in the community space fosters the emergence of changes in society, which are visible from the organisational level of politics up to the level of discourse, usually rendered by the mass-media.⁴⁹ This is why I consider that populism possesses a minimal ideological resource, besides

⁴⁷ In this respect, the British theorist shows that “ideologies are imaginative maps drawing together facts that themselves may be disputed. They are collectively produced and collectively consumed, though the latter happens in unpredictable ways, and that collective nature makes them public property” - Michael Freeden, “Ideology”..., *The Meaning of Ideology. Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Michael Freeden (Routledge: London, 2007), 18.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁹ Gianpietro Mazzoleni, “Populism and the Media”, in *Twenty-First Century Populism. The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, ed. Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 62, claims that “there is some convincing evidence that there are close ties between media-centred processes and the political phenomenon of populism. All phases in the life-cycle of a populist movement are affected by some sort of media-driven influences, and populist leaders cannot disregard the seductive power of the media. If they do, they risk marginalisation”.

its various forms of empirical manifestation. However, this ideological resource does not have its own doctrinarian core. On the contrary, I claim that the core ideas of populism are *trans-docrinarian*. In its case, things are different from what happens in the case of the structured ideologies of modernity, liberalism, conservatism and socialism, which, *ab initio*, had a doctrinarian corpus that manifested itself most clearly, both in the field of political theory and in that of economic theory. Modern ideologies translate for the masses the complex ideas which underlie their own doctrines; moreover, they exhibit - today, as always - their pragmatic, action-oriented nature. Populism also plays the role of a “translator” from an ideological perspective but, unlike structured ideologies, it does not possess a doctrine of its own. In other words, behind its minimal ideological core there is no “populist doctrine”, understood in the same way as we understand the liberal, conservative or socialist doctrine, except for a mix of ideas made up of elements taken from these doctrines, depending on the social, economic, cultural-political or organisational context. In this respect, *populism is a trans-docrinarian and processual type of ideology*. In the following lines I shall attempt to capture some of the main elements which justify such a characterisation.

Let us start from a minimal definition of populism as “an ideology which pits a virtuous and homogenous people against a set of elites and dangerous ‘others’ who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice”.⁵⁰ Like in the case of other particular ideologies, we operate with a “narrative” or a “story” which extracts its elements from those which are already present at the level of a community’s collective imagery but which, on the other hand, contributes, in its own way, to influencing the ideological conventions of that community. Up to now, there is no formal distinction between populism and other particular ideologies; still, Margaret Canovan, for instance, has referred to possible objections against treating populism in an ideological manner - its lack of intellectual substance, its reactive character and its appetite for discourse - but concluded that it may still be understood as an “ideology of democracy” based on a redemptive type of projection.⁵¹ Taking into account this minimal definition of populist ideology, I am interested in bringing its trans-docrinarian nature to the fore. Thus, it is my opinion that populism is trans-docrinarian because, on the one hand, it lacks, as I have previously mentioned, a doctrinarian body of its own - something which

⁵⁰ Daniele Albertazzi, Duncan McDonnell, “Introduction...”, 3.

⁵¹ Margaret Canovan, “Taking...”, 33-8.

does not happen in the case of established ideologies; on the other hand, to the same extent to which it takes over doctrinarian ideologies specific to other ideologies, populism can also adapt to their core values.

Let us analyse these two dimensions of populist ideology one by one. As regards the first coordinate, it may be claimed that “the Janus quality of ‘the populist situation’ is reflected in the populist ideological synthesis of traditionalism and modernism”.⁵² Indeed, there is an ideology-based tension within the manner in which populism relates to today’s political reality, a tension to which I shall come back when I refer to the utopian and mythological component of this ideology. The ideological synthesis mentioned before is nevertheless based on the capacity of populism to take over doctrinarian elements from other ideologies, regardless of whether we are talking about liberalism (the self-determining capacity of the citizens’ will), conservatism (the reference to community traditions), socialism (the call on “the people” represented by disadvantaged social groups⁵³) or, last but not least, nationalism (the ethnic-based colouring applied to the same “people” by establishing “internal borders” between “us” and “the others”). It is precisely for this reason that “populism is, even among ideologies, a notable plagiarist, making do with scraps of doctrine and images largely acquired from other, better established attitudes”.⁵⁴ There is, of course, a mutually influencing effect among all ideologies, an aspect I shall apply to populism in the following lines. However, what I want to underline is that if the great political and economic ideas of modern times developed initially in a doctrinarian fashion and then, with the democratisation of Western society, they became crystallised ideologically, populism emerged as a political phenomenon dressed in an ideological

⁵² Angus Stewart, “The Social Roots”, in *Populism. Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, ed. Ghiță Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 191.

⁵³ Going as far as to also take into account the doctrinarian-ideological way in which theorists refer to the problem of populism, some authors specify that “we should not underestimate the importance of the Marxist impregnation of the cognitive and ideological framework which marked most of the scientists who used to approach populism. Marxism offered a basis which was both theoretical and ideological; it gave a firm legitimisation to the radical criticism of society embraced by South-American researchers and assured the highest degree of intelligibility to their ideas among colleagues from other continents” - Sergiu Mișcoiu, “Introducere”, in *Partide și personalități populiste în România contemporană* (Iași: Institutul European, 2010), 27.

⁵⁴ Kenneth Minogue, “Populism as a Political Movement”, in *Populism. Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, ed. Ghiță Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 202.

coat that was made up of doctrinarian elements belonging to already existing ideologies. For this reason, “we must expect to find that a large part of the elements we find in populism will also be found to occur in other ‘isms’, both in those which preceded modern populism and those which have co-existed with it chronologically”.⁵⁵

In what regards the second dimension, to the same extent to which populism takes over doctrinarian elements specific to other ideologies, it can adapt to their core values. Within this framework, there is a two-way *influence effect*. By taking over elements belonging to other ideologies, when there are a series of “opportunity structures”⁵⁶, populism may become compatible with any other ideology. In such a situation and depending on the social, cultural-political, economic or organisational factors existing in a given community, we may deal with an *effect of ideological recalibration* or with an *effect of ideological imitation*. In the former case, the other existing ideologies are reconfigured, both at the level of their axiological core and at that of their representatives’ type of discourse, regardless of whether they are leaders or political organisations, so that they may be able to respond to the challenges implied by the presence of populist ideology. In the latter case, the representatives of other ideologies may take over the symbolical elements specific to populist ideology also at the level of structures, attitudes or discourse; this opens the gateway for populist ideology to access that community’s public square through other channels, which are sometimes much more credible than those available to it when the other ideologies are recalibrating. This bidirectional influence effect is possible to the extent to which, as a particular type of ideology, populism is similar (in what regards its functional structuring) to any other ideological-political projection. On the other hand, without being analysed in the terms of ethical theory, populism may be differentiated from the other ideologies by the fact that, besides its trans-doctrinarian nature, it also exhibits a vigorous symbolical appetite, resorting to elements of imagery, such as myth and utopia. Obviously, such elements are also present in the case of particular ideologies like those mentioned before, which seem to be characterised by a propensity for what we may call *political illusions*⁵⁷. Nevertheless, what seems to be specific to populism is the ideological combination of the main forms or

⁵⁵ Peter Worsley, “The Concept of Populism”, in *Populism. Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, ed. Ghiță Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 218.

⁵⁶ Daniele Albertazzi, Duncan McDonnell, “Introduction...”, 9.

⁵⁷ Daniel Șandru, “Liberalismul azi: între ideologie și fantasme politice”, in *Sfera Politicii / Sphere of Politics* (Nr. 150, 2010), 55-60.

dimensions of “utopian mentality” according to context - it is here that I also identify the conjunction between its *trans-doctrinarian* and its *processual nature*.

Having resulted from opposition against the political institutions of the present and upholding an *immediate* change of social reality, populist ideology offers instead a projection which contextually combines the orientation toward the future with the orientation toward the past, so that its product is based on pledges: “Populists (...) are not reluctant to promise. They promise security. They promise prosperity. They promise identity. They promise to return the sceptre of democracy to its rightful owner”.⁵⁸ Margaret Canovan captures the difference between the “pragmatic” attitude of democracy and the “redemptive” attitude of populism. In the case of populism, time does not have enough patience for the social reality of the present, and the dysfunctions identified at its level cannot become the object of the debates implied by the procedures and the institutional mechanisms of democracy: “Populism has a somewhat different status from other ideologies, being derived from its reaction to the institutions themselves rather than to the debate within those institutions”.⁵⁹ This leads to the *immediateness* of populism, which is sustainable only by resorting to an ideological projection of the utopian-mythological type. This implies the re-actualisation in discourse of a series of mythical elements from the past of the “golden age” and their projection as a future solution for the deficiencies which mark the present.

A brief analysis of what Karl Mannheim calls the “utopian mentality”⁶⁰ may be revealing from the perspective of the ideologically trans-

⁵⁸ Daniele Albertazzi, Duncan McDonnell, “Conclusion: Populism and Twenty-First Century Western European Democracy”, in *Twenty-First Century Populism. The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, ed. Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 219.

⁵⁹ Paul Taggart, “Populism”..., 79.

⁶⁰ According to Mannheim, “one may rightly speak of a utopian mentality only when the configuration of the utopia at any one time forms not only a vital part of the ‘content’ of the mentality involved, but when, at least, in its general tendency, it permeates the whole range of that mentality. Only when the utopian element in this sense tends to be completely infused into every aspect of the dominating mentality of the time, when the forms of experience, of action, and of outlook (perspective) are organised in accord with this utopian element, are we truthfully and realistically entitled to speak not merely of different forms of utopia but, at the same time, of different configurations and stages of utopian mentality” - Karl Mannheim, Louis Wirth, *On Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Kessinger Publishing’s Rare Reprint, 2001), 188.

doctrinarian nature of populism. Thus, the first form of utopian mentality is the “orgiastic chiliasm of the Anabaptists”, which originates in the oppressed strata of society that aim to achieve mundane and immediate goals, a fact that puts “revolutionary” attitudes in contrast with the “fatalist” acceptance of the present. Considered to be a fundamental, and the most radical, form of utopian mentality, chiliasm corresponds to a “spiritual fermentation” in which it is not ideas which press the members of society, but ecstatic-orgiastic energies. Another form of utopian mentality is given by the “liberal-humanitarian ideal”, which is also rooted in divergent attitudes toward the established order. It is governed by rational ideas which give it the utopian flavour specific to any “social engineering”. Within this framework, utopia is confounded with the process of a society becoming a society where ideas play the role of a force that regulates the present, based on rational calculation. The next form of utopian mentality is the “conservative mode”, which stresses the impact of determinism on human behaviour. Nonetheless, he admits that “conservative mentality as such has no utopia” and that, within it, there is no “predisposition towards theorising”.⁶¹

Mannheim believes that it finds its own “mode” through an *ex post facto* approach, which makes the past be “experienced as virtually present”.⁶² Finally, the fourth form of utopian mentality is the “socialist-communist utopia”, which, according to the Hungarian-born author, shares a series of elements with both the liberal utopia and the conservative one. Thus, just like the liberal utopia, the socialist-communist utopia considers that equality and freedom will be accessible to social life in the future, with the distinction that, while pretending to have knowledge on the laws of history, socialism sets this future at the moment when capitalist society collapses. Moreover, “this solidarity of socialism with the liberal idea in its orientation towards a goal located in the future is to be explained by their common opposition to conservatism’s immediate and direct acceptance and affirmation of the existing order”.⁶³ On the other hand, the

⁶¹ Karl Mannheim, Louis Wirth, *On Ideology...*, 206.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 212. The explanation that makes accessible the idea according to which there is a conservative type of utopian thinking is formulated by Mannheim as follows: “Even the conservative form of utopia, the notion of an idea embedded and expressed in reality, is in the last analysis intelligible only in the light of its struggles with the other coexisting forms of utopia. Its immediate antagonist is the liberal idea which has been translated into rationalistic terms. Whereas in the latter, the normative, the ‘should’ is accentuated in experience, in conservatism the emphasis shifts to existing reality, the ‘is’” (*Ibid.*, 211).

⁶³ Karl Mannheim, Louis Wirth, *On Ideology...*, 216.

similarity with the conservative utopia is also visible at the level of its method, although the temporal meaning is different. Specifically, if the conservative utopia finds the past in the present, the socialist one identifies in the present the conditions of possibility of the future. In my opinion, the ideal-modes of utopian mentality, as they were identified by Mannheim, become ideological elements of the utopian-mythological projection produced by populism. It is its trans-doctrinarian nature which allows it to combine these forms contextually and the result, regardless of the framework wherein populism manifests itself, possesses the attribute of immediateness. By ideologically mixing the criticism of a dysfunctional present with an orientation toward an idealised past, which may project a future of political perfection, and by attributing to “the people” the capacity to take over, in this immediate environment, the prerogatives conferred to it by the sovereignty of which it is the rightful owner, populism also brings to the fore, beyond its “utopian-mythological ballast” (heavier than that of other ideologies), its role as a “prophetic or messianic protester”.⁶⁴

The trans-doctrinarian status of populism also engenders, in my view, its processual nature, which is based on its ideological flexibility and its disarming adaptability to the context. Populism is virtually building itself ideologically, as I have already pointed out, during the process by which the social reality that it opposes to the present is ontologically instituted - a process mainly visible at the level of discourse. By taking over a series of doctrinarian aspects that do not belong to it, by “juggling” the utopian-mythological elements established at the level of every community’s social imagery⁶⁵ and by adapting, when it is given the opportunity, to the

⁶⁴ This expression belongs to the French psycho-sociologist Jean-Pierre Deconchy, who shows that “what is questioned by the feverish protester is not the *content* or the *object* of the belief administered by the orthodox system, but the type of *social regulation* that this system imposed on the group’s essential beliefs, going as far as to exhaust its political significations, flavours and, very often, potentialities. Because, at the bottom, the prophetic or messianic protester reproaches the supporters of the orthodox system because they have rendered ordinary the values and the intuitions of the beginning, he/she tries to reintroduce into the social field a series of contents and significations which were controlled and managed so well by the system that its own followers start to have more faith in institutions than in values” - Jean-Pierre Deconchy, *Credințe și ideologii. Abordări psihosociale* (Iași: Polirom, 2010), 14.

⁶⁵ In this regard, Francisco Panizza stresses that “populism is thus a mode of identification available to any political actor operating in a discursive field in which the notion of the sovereignty of the people and its inevitable corollary, the

ideological context of a given society, populism finds itself in an on-going process of self-construction, a process that may take various forms, not only according to space or time coordinates but also according to social, cultural-political, economic or organisational factors. Of course, within the populist ideology there are a series of recurring themes⁶⁶ and some of them are also visible at the level of the thematic register of other ideologies; on the other hand, these themes may be supplemented by others, just like “older” themes or ideas may be “refreshed” or employed with a new meaning. As Peter Worsley shows, we are in a position to see that “the ‘original’ ideas must intrinsically, therefore, be modified in the process and become *different* ideas”.⁶⁷ Yet, such strategy effects are dictated by the context, a fact which highlights the extraordinary adaptability of populist ideology. Regardless of the context, what remains is only the call on the “people” in whose name populism claims to manifest itself and this, paradoxically, stresses the processual nature of this ideology since “it allows for versatility and chameleonic positions according to time, place, needs and strategies. The weak and vague content of this ideological framework makes it more opportunistic and flexible than the more value-laden dominant ideologies”.⁶⁸

Hence, we see that the ideological ambiguity of populism, indissolubly marked by its trans-doctrinarian nature, becomes the element which, instead of weakening the possibility that it manifests itself, actually strengthens and even multiplies it, by allowing it to adapt to various social,

conflict between the powerful and the powerless, are core elements of its political imaginary” - Francisco Panizza, “Introduction...”, 4.

⁶⁶ In what regards the central themes of populist ideology, the comparison between the “classical” and contemporary views on this phenomenon confirm that they evolved and changed over time. Thus, in the latter part of the past century, Kenneth Minogue identified the following five items as the distinctive features of this ideology but he also stressed that some of them are also identifiable within other ideologies: the call on popular nostalgia, by constant reference to the “golden age”; the conception of a natural harmony whose potential becomes real when the exploiters of the people are removed from power; the two-faced version of social struggle; the conspiracy theory applied to history; the primacy of money - Kenneth Minogue, “Populism...”, 206. In a more recent analysis, Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell capture the following four intertwined principles of populism: the people is one and it is intrinsically “good”; the people is sovereign; the people’s culture and way of living are priceless values; the leader and the party/movement are one with the people - Daniele Albertazzi, Duncan McDonnell, “Introduction...”, 6.

⁶⁷ Peter Worsley, “The Concept...”, 213.

⁶⁸ Yves Méni, Yves Surel, “The Constitutive...”, 18.

political, economic or organisational frameworks. It is precisely for this reason that populism remains a challenge. It is an ideology which leads, in the most straightforward manner, to democracy (where it both manifests itself in a fragile way and is consolidated), but which may also hamper the initiation of veritable democratic reforms in the societies that are currently seen as non-democracies. The mirage of populism has an organic core, although its predisposition toward this type of ideological message will also appear at the individual level. And, as the concept of “people” bears a heavy emotional load and the temptation of the “similar” may neutralise individual self-assertion needs - especially in those political cultures where the “patriarchal” or “paternalist” view prevails - there is sufficient reason to believe that, in the near future, populism might still take us by surprise. This is, I believe, a strong enough justification for political theory to reconsider its position toward understanding an ideology which is going through a permanent process of becoming. Identifying populist-based movements, organisations or regimes is, of course, an important step to be taken by empirical political theory. However, it should be followed, in my opinion, by the introduction of populism into the methodological toolkit of political analysis, as a marker which can show us not only the mechanisms that enable it to adapt or ensure its contextual success, but also the institutional and procedural dysfunctions which make democracy remain what it has always been - a perfectible type of political regime.

Conclusions

The arguments deployed throughout this chapter follow two coordinates: sketching a general framework for understanding contemporary politics, which, inherently, also encompasses populism, by referring to a series of authors who have insisted on this problem and circumscribing populism as a particular type of ideology, whose specificity is given by its trans-doctrinarian and processual nature. Starting from the association of the two concepts through the lens of the negative meanings that were allotted to them, I attempted to bring to the fore a theoretical-political perspective which does not suggest supporting the transformation of the populist phenomenon or of the term which expresses it into a “positive” one, but recovering it precisely in order to ground democracy, a process which, as we know today, is related to every aspect of daily life in a democratic society. On the other hand, taking into account the positive reconsideration of ideology, I have approached populism as a specific type of social construction of reality which is created through an attempt to “balance”, in the name of the “people”, the importance of some requests that are

widespread in the social space, by drawing on “popular subjectivity” and by instituting “internal borders” between “us” and “the others”. Having thus articulated populism from an ideological perspective, I have shown, following Ernesto Laclau’s steps, that it has become synonymous with politics itself. From this perspective, I have pointed to the possibility of reconsidering the concept analytically, by claiming that regardless of whether we have in mind the empirical or the normative dimension of present-day politics, populism can be accepted and used as a “potential barometer of representative politics”, which characterises contemporary democracies.

Aiming to capture the component parts of populism, I have claimed that beyond its various forms of empirical manifestation, populism possesses a minimal ideological resource. However, this ideological resource does not have its own doctrinarian core. In this respect, I have specified that ideas of populism are *trans-docrinarian* at the core. This means that in its case, things are different from what happens in the case of the structured ideologies of modernity, like liberalism, conservatism and socialism, which, *ab initio*, had a doctrinarian corpus that manifested itself most clearly both in the field of political theory and in that of economic theory. Modern ideologies translate for the masses the complex ideas which underlie their own doctrines and, moreover, they exhibit - today, as always - their pragmatic, action-oriented nature. Populism also plays the role of a “translator” from an ideological perspective but, unlike structured ideologies, it does not possess a doctrine of its own. In other words, behind its minimal ideological core there is no “populist doctrine”, understood in the same way as we understand the liberal, conservative or socialist doctrine, but a mix of ideas made up of elements taken from these doctrines, depending on the social, economic, cultural-political or organisational context.

I have stressed that *populism is a trans-docrinarian and processual type of ideology*. Populism is trans-docrinarian because, on the one hand, it lacks, as I have previously mentioned, a doctrinarian body of its own - something which does not happen in the case of established ideologies; on the other hand, to the same extent to which it takes over doctrinarian ideologies specific to other ideologies, populism can also adapt to their core values. In this respect, my idea was that by taking over elements belonging to other ideologies, when there are a series of “opportunity structures”, populism may become compatible with any other ideology. In such a context and depending on the social, cultural-political, economic or organisational factors existing in a given community, there might appear an *effect of ideological recalibration* or an *effect of ideological imitation*.

In the former case, the other ideologies established in the social area are reconfigured both at the level of their axiological core and at that of their representatives' type of discourse, regardless of whether they are leaders or political organisations, so that they may be able to respond to the challenges implied by the presence of populist ideology. In the latter case, the representatives of other ideologies may take over the symbolical elements specific to populist ideology also at the level of structures, attitudes or discourse; this opens the gateway for populist ideology to access that community's public square through other channels, which are sometimes much more credible than those available to it when the other ideologies are recalibrating.

By taking over a series of doctrinarian aspects that do not belong to it, by "juggling" the utopian-mythological elements established at the level of every community's social imagery and by adapting, when it is given the opportunity, to the ideological context of a given society, populism finds itself in an on-going process of self-construction, a process that may take various forms, not only according to space or time coordinates, but also according to social, cultural-political, economic or organisational factors. From this standpoint, I believe that as a particular type of ideology, populism may be included into the analysis specific to an *integrated theory of ideology*,⁶⁹ which would bring to the fore not only its political features (normative or empirical in nature), but also its socio-anthropological, epistemological or discursive characteristics, in such a way that future research may aspire to a deep and profound understanding of this phenomenon.

⁶⁹ Unlike Teun A. Van Dijk ("Ideology and Discourse Analysis", in *The Meaning of Ideology. Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Michael Freedon (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 5), who maintains that it is possible to build a "general theory of ideology", I prefer to take into account the option of developing an *integrated theory* because the term "general" seems to refer to a promise that is very difficult to achieve and that hides a principle of the "all or nothing" type. It is difficult to show that an admirable approach, such as that of the Dutch theorist, based on the tripartite formula of cognition, society and discourse, can have a "general" extension that may capture all the perspectives from which ideology can be analysed. On the contrary, I believe that an *integrated theory of ideology* gains its conditions of possibility by "integrating" the most important perspectives from which it has been studied. In this respect, in Daniel Şandru, "The Ideological...", 180, I proposed a graph of an integrated model of ideological analysis and I believe that it may be applicable to any particular type of ideology, such as populism.

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FOUNDATIONAL POPULISM

GUY HERMET

Introduction¹

The populist appeal to which the founders of the nation-state and the precursors of the future national democracies initially resorted was very quickly dismissed, to the point of sliding into downright oblivion. Such oblivion was mandatory; thus, by virtue of what looked like a family secret, the birth of populism had to be certified at a later and less compromising date than it had been the case of the revolutions from the end of the 18th century. Approved by the Academy, by encyclopaedias and the classifications of political science, this founding date, which coincided with the emergence of Russian populism during the years 1840-1880, became both “official” and “scientific”.

Although justifiable in chronological terms, this option was indeed unique in the sense that it inaugurated the use of the word “populism”, but applied it to a historical manifestation that was barely representative of the forms of expression that this phenomenon would later acquire. By juxtaposing the philanthropic and utopian dream of the non-conformist revolutionary intellectual circles, which were cut off from the peasant masses but worshipped them nonetheless, with a national-populism of the agrarian type, this first episode corresponded to a trend that was so particular and off-key that it is hardly recognisable today. What populism needs to be assigned henceforth is another, more relevant primordial source. This second source coincided with the Boulangist crisis in France from the early days of the Third Republic, which may even more daringly be elevated to the rank of a foundational example for the strand of populism that was characteristic of a patriotic and slightly authoritarian orientation, whose manifestations started to diversify once this populism

¹ This text reproduces, thanks to the courtesy of Artemis Press, the content of Chapter VI, “Populismul fondator” [“Foundational Populism”], from the translation of Guy Hermet’s volume, *Sociologia populismului* [*The Sociology of Populism*] (Bucharest: Artemis Press, 2007).

had emerged. In addition to this, since it is impossible to leave aside the plebeian feature of the populist protest, it may be ascribed a third matrix, which complements the previous two, becoming illustrative of all the facets that populism manifested from the very beginning. Located, this time, in the United States, the last matrix corresponds to the strong, albeit ephemeral, revolt of the small American farmers in the 1890s, revealing another form of manifestation which is altogether different from the hostile repetitive Boulangism of the masses against the political class in power.

The first Russian, French and American populist manifestations did more than set in time and space the birth coordinates of the three - utopian, plebiscitary authoritarian and protestatory plebeian - species of populism. They illustrated the diverse composition of these human milieus and their modes of organisation or disorganisation. The Russian populists formed merely small and isolated circles of intellectuals and students, who yearned to commit themselves - in a quasi-sacrificial manner - to serving their nation, which, however, could by no means find itself reflected in them. Besides, their emergence was altogether haphazard: no historical probability can be invoked for their appearance, since they embodied a marginal trend of thought and sentiment which, in the absence of a political solution, bordered on nihilistic terrorism, out of a desire to make itself known at any cost. By contrast, the Boulangist movement deserved this name in the full sense of the word. This was indeed a large-scale movement that, despite its weak structure, enjoyed a nationwide audience. In addition, Boulangism was also characterised by its manner of boosting up populism, in the sense of imparting it a capacity of mobilisation through the charisma of an almost prophetic leader. It would not have existed without General Boulanger and, moreover, it did not outlive him. Finally, American populism had two separate distinctive features. Contrary to Boulangism, it offered the prototype of spontaneously organised populist parties, equipped with a program, a statute, and electoral objectives. Its innovative character resided in the fact that it stemmed from the grassroots of popular initiatives rather than from operations aiming at what we today might call political marketing. Instead, and because of that, it obviously lacked the charisma of a leader in Boulanger's style.

One last caveat: these three foundational cases perfectly illustrate the transition of populism from the left to the right. While in its original Russian beginnings, populism was positioned on the far left of the political spectrum, later, with Boulangism, it hesitated between the left and the right, before finally drawing closer to the right, in its American

manifestation as the People's Party. Aside from a few inadvertent situations, it never ceased to pursue this course - in Europe, at least. And yet, this transition did not reflect, as it is often thought, its conversion to the national-populist or the nationalist doctrines. It rather reflected the mutation these doctrines had undergone from an initially progressive stance to a subsequent reactionary position, and the conservatives' adherence to a national imaginary to which they had been averse for a long time, because in their opinion, this was confounded too much with a democratic idea to which, in effect, they had rallied in their own style.

The Russian Narodniks

Judging by their names and their genuine attachment to the people, the Russian populists may appear to have been the involuntary founders of a family in whose midst, however, they would soon no longer find a place of their own. As an item of the political vocabulary, the word *narodnichestvo* - populism - appeared for the first time in Russia in around 1870, designating a revolutionary trend which had already been in existence for about thirty years. In its turn, the word *narodnik* - populist - came into use at the same time, whereas only the less specific terms "communist", "socialist", "radical" or "nihilist" had been used previously. These populists, baptised as such in their old age, manifested an ineffable love for the popular or, rather, the peasant masses, with which they had nothing in common though. The fact that they wanted to "turn to the people" did not mean that they did so following a strategy of power or an ideological doctrine. They did so out of a moral impulse, out of an almost vital desire for commitment, because their duty and sentiments demanded them not to "lead the people in the name of abstract, bookish, imported ideas but adapt themselves to the people as it was, promoting resistance to the government in the name of real, everyday needs".² As Isaiah Berlin notices "[t]hese men believed in socialism not because it was inevitable, nor because it was effective, not even because it alone was rational, but because it was just".³

The Russian populists did not profess a real ideology, nor did they intend to fashion one. They had only one rule of conduct and one conviction alone: action with and for the people, personal sacrifice in the

² Richard Pipes, "Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Inquiry", *Slavic Review* 23(3) (1964): 445.

³ Isaiah Berlin, "Introduction", in *Roots of Revolution: A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, Franco Venturi, Trans. from the Italian by Francis Haskell (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), XXIV.

service thereof as a rule of conduct or an imperative of life, and the conviction that saving the Russian land would only be possible with these peasants, who had been reduced to the condition of serfs. For them, the villagers embodied quintessential Russia on account of their number and, especially, their authenticity. Since the people had not been contaminated with the false values that had come from the West and perverted the cities, as well as the entire Tsarist state, they would provide the recipe for the true social salvation of the country from the mirage of Europeanisation and the hypocritical liberalism of the power holders. This explains the populist idealisation of the village community, the *obscina*, which was promoted to the role of the alpha and omega for the regeneration of the national community, a process that also had to be carried out, in complementary fashion, through the independent cooperativisation of both the craftsmen and the industrial producers. The new socialist society of the populists was to inspire itself from this truly contradictory model. Whereas the Narodniks wanted this society to be of profoundly Russian inspiration and to rally together a myriad of democratically self-governed autonomous groups, they also planned to crown it with an authoritarian central government that could only meet their ideal if it was utterly distinct from the European standard. This contradiction probably pertained to their very condition. Fanatics, with a hierarchical conception about their organisation, and haunted by a genuine passion for conspiracy and secrecy, they were prepared to do anything for their cause. Some even went so far as to engage in acts of terrorism and systematically assassinate the most emblematic traitors and enemies. They nourished an absolute indifference both to human life and to ordinary moral conventions.

A historian of Russian populism par excellence, Franco Venturi⁴ notes that this fanaticism could not have arisen out of nothing. Consciously or not, it was an extension of the religious sensitivity of the late 18th-century Orthodox Pietism⁵, of the idealisation of democracy and even of the 17th-century anti-clerical movement of the former believers.⁶ Specific to the

⁴ Franco Venturi, *Les Intellectuels, le peuple et la révolution. Histoire du populisme russe au XIX^{ème} siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), vol. 2.

⁵ The pietist sensitivity coincided with the translations of the sacred texts from Greek into Slavonic and, in fact, with their Russification.

⁶ The old believers or the Raskols arose from a revolt that had been started by the clergy of inferior rank and their faithful against the reforms Patriarch Nikon had introduced in the 17th century, under the inspiration of Peter the Great, with a view to completely subjecting the Church to state authority. To this religious revolt was added a peasant uprising with “national democratic” overtones, which was hostile to Tsarist Westernisation. During the period that preceded its suppression, it had

intellectuals, it also borrowed - from exalted romanticism - the emotions of a Europe it nonetheless rejected. Above all, it was influenced by Herder's ideas, his hostility towards the Enlightenment and his cultural and bucolic idea about the nation. Especially insofar as the dimension of personal sacrifice was concerned, it placed itself more recently in the filiation of the Decembrists, those members of a nobiliary conspiracy, some of whom paid with their lives for having failed to overthrow the Tsar in 1825, in their attempt to establish a constitutional regime. In an even stricter sense, the Narodniks belonged to the tradition of the Slavophile trend between 1830 and 1850.⁷ This affinity was attested both at the level of the ethics of action that the populists had inherited from the Slavophiles and at that of the cult devoted to the Russian people. Illustrated, in particular, by Aksakov, Khomianov and Kireyevsky, the Slavophile trend made reference to Western nationalism, attempting to detour it towards the rather "Herderian" opposition between the two civilisations: one that was "internal" and worthy of esteem, in the style of Russian Orthodox civilisation, and one that was "external", contemptible and superficial, in the style of Enlightenment Europe. For Aksakov, "the political freedom [of the West] could not be called freedom" because "true freedom is represented by the breath of the Holy Spirit".⁸ Alexander Herzen, the great prophet of the Narodniks, simply borrowed this mystical conception when he claimed that what he could hear in the muzhik's melancholy song was "the effort of the spirit seeking to get out of the oppressive environment of the proletariat in order to enter the kingdom of God".⁹

Aside from their mysticism and activism, who were the Russian populists, what was the context in which they emerged, what was their political trajectory and from whom did they derive their roots? A philosopher, a writer and a literary critic, Alexander Herzen (1812-1870) was their first mentor. A deposed official, exiled to Paris in 1847 and then denied permission to live in this city in 1851, because of his collaboration with Proudhon's *La Voix du peuple*, Herzen later sought refuge in Nice,

led to the emergence of "fraternities" (*bratstvo*), councils (*soviet*), assemblies (*sciod*), synods (*sobor*) and autonomous communities (*obscina* or *mir*), whose dominance anticipated by a few centuries those of liberal democracy and, even more so, of revolutionary hegemony.

⁷ For the connection with the Slavophiles, see Nicolas Valentine Riassanovsky, *Russia and the West in the Teachings of the Slavophiles* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952).

⁸ Quoted by Alain Besançon, *Les Origines intellectuelles du léninisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 95.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.

London and Geneva, before passing on in Paris. After his personal experience during the French Revolution of 1848, he relinquished Hegelian materialism and Saint-Simonian ideas and developed a populist outlook. From that moment on, Herzen oriented that outlook towards the tradition of utopian socialism, with shades of Christian-style romanticism, imposing upon a minority of converts the duty of a redeeming sacrifice meant to save the humble people from the terrestrial purgatory. Summarily developed - given that the *Memoirs*¹⁰ represent the bulk of his work - his doctrine was henceforth blended into the repertoire of non-Marxist communism, which was disseminated in Switzerland by the German Wilhelm Weitling. Founded on the assumption that Russia could skip the stage of capitalist revolution and switch directly to the original model of village or *obščina* communism, his doctrine projected - side by side - the anarchist principle and the highly authoritarian project for the modernisation of the central state and planned economic development, as the cornerstones on which the political and social edifice could be re-founded at a global level. It was precisely on this last point that Herzen's position differed from that of the Slavophiles, who were exclusively oriented towards the past.

It is necessary to insist on the lesson Herzen learned during the revolutionary weeks of 1848. His vexation at the Parisian intellectuals' verbal debates inspired his contempt for ideological abstractions. Thus, the events of 1848 led him to revolt against the principles of modern government, specifically against the elitism of what he called the "democratic orthodoxy" of the Jacobin tradition. This sense of denial impelled him to write to Mazzini: "I don't believe, when it comes to Russia, in anything but a war waged by the peasants".¹¹ However, he did reconsider this statement when he expressed his populist vision during the years 1853-1855. While for him salvation had to come from the peasants, he did not discount the possibility of including the enlightened nobility among them. On the contrary, he drew attention to the impending cataclysm and the means of profitably assuaging it.

Although he was an emblematic figure of Russian populism, Herzen was not its sole representative personality. Nikolay Chernyshevsky's contribution to its doctrinal development was greater than Herzen's. Georgi Plekhanov also brought a contribution to building this edifice when he joined Herzen - before falling out with him, in 1879 - as the populists' nihilist wing was heading towards terrorism. Mikhail Bakunin (1814-

¹⁰ Entitled *Passé et pensée*.

¹¹ Quoted in Franco Venturi, *Les Intellectuels...*, vol. I, 155.

1876), above all, would have been more entitled than Herzen to assume the paternity of Russian populism had he not abandoned it in order to adhere to - or, rather, to set up - anarchism. What is certain is that this desertion did not prevent Bakunin from embodying two other human facets of the Narodnik movement: on the one hand, that of the aristocrat who had rallied himself to the cause of the people, who had been born in the midst of the enlightened and liberal nobility and had been a student officer in St. Petersburg before being forced to resign for his subversive opinions; and, on the other hand, that of the follower of a Messianic belief, who was driven by the will to truly merge with the people.

From 1847 on - when he encountered Herzen - Bakunin also experienced long years of exile that turned him from a representative of the nobility into a professional revolutionary, wandering from Paris to Brussels, Prague and Poland, before reaching, after a forced five-year stay in Siberia, England, Lyon, Marseilles and Switzerland, where he died. Like Herzen, he illustrated, at the highest level, the Russian populists' faith in their prophetic destiny. He said it himself: "What I want, God wants too; only then shall we be happy, only then will our suffering come to an end".¹² Moreover, Bakunin had the opportunity to know, to a certain extent, the popular classes, more precisely the craftsmen and the workers from La Chaux-de-Fonds, whom he frequented during his sojourn in Switzerland. What needs to be mentioned is the fact that the revolutionary aristocrat had already converted to anarchism; he had joined this movement in 1867 and - as an "anarchist" - the First Workers' International, which he actually left, in 1872, after having ceaselessly been in conflict with the "authoritarian" Marxists and after having outlined, during the following year, his doctrine in the work entitled *Statism and Anarchy*.

These leading figures of Russian populism were barely consonant with his militant circle, which was limited and almost lost in the social milieu. Its activists hardly amounted to several hundred members; sometimes, their number came down to a few dozen apostles, who were deprived of contact with their exiled inspirational figures and had to cope with a situation of utter spontaneity. Most of them were students of both sexes¹³ particularly from the faculties of medicine, in a country where the total number of university students was merely 3,000 in 1853, 429 of whom were in St. Petersburg. To these were added physicians who had

¹² *Ibid.*, 161.

¹³ In 1874, for instance, 612 young men and 158 young women suspected of having engaged in populist activities were brought to justice, Franco Venturi, *Les Intellectuels...*, vol. 2, 840.

completed their studies, members of the liberal professions, professors who had been forced to leave their departments because of their subversive speeches, officers or clerks without jobs, as well as idealists of other - especially aristocratic - extractions, like Bakunin or Prince Kropotkin. Moreover, this milieu was dispersed across the vastness of Russia's territory. Thus, in around 1873, the trend called "Those Who Turn to the People" included only 45 activists in St. Petersburg, 19 in Moscow, 11 in Odessa, and eight in Kiev.¹⁴ It is true that revolutionary exaltation makes up for a smaller number of members. By temperament, the populists were inveterate supporters of conspiracies, on a perpetual search for intrigues, obsessed - both out of precaution and by inclination - with a passion for the clandestinity and total isolation of groups that were as scanty as possible. This led them to cultivate an obsession with betrayal or deviation which, going hand in hand with this propensity for conspiracy, justified, in their opinion, the reality of summary executions.

This common feature could not put an end to the progressive erosion of a fundamental divergence that emerged between the two strands of Russian populism. The former comprised the followers of a trend in education and social work who were driven by a desire to be close to the peasants and the workers, while the latter rallied together the supporters of violence, who had become sceptical about the help that the people could give the revolution and would not accept any other solution than military action, led by a minority possessed by rage and the will to assassinate various personalities in the Tsarist Empire and to commit bomb attacks, without any concern for their innocent victims. The former prevailed until 1870 at the core of two secret societies: Land and Liberty (*Zemlia i Volia*) and Young Russia. This was the period of Sunday schools, of preaching the word of wisdom, and of promenades in peasant costume that were attended by Prince Kropotkin, a former member of the body of Pages in St. Petersburg. It was also the period of the populists' settlement in villages, of participatory fusion with their inhabitants, of sanitary actions that prefigured the kind of humanitarian commitment that is so widespread today and, less commonly, of exercising their apostolate in factories, of organising the first strikes, of collective apartments and shared wages in the style of the French worker-priests during the 1950s. This almost idyllic missionary phase, despite police persecution, was nonetheless darkened, starting from the 1860s, by the conjuration of Kazan, which launched the upward trend of a nihilistic current originally conceived by Nikolay Nekrasov (1821-1877). From that moment on, the military option started

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 805.

gaining ground. Despite being a poet, Nekrasov adhered to the Darwinian concept of the struggle for survival. Refusing to rely on the people, he believed that given the lack of any reaction from the masses, the only chance for a massive change to occur was if violence was exerted by a tiny minority, which would necessarily come from the middle and the upper classes.

Although he was but a modest self-taught teacher, the son of a serfist craftsman, Sergey Nechayev (1847-1882) became the technical inventor of this nihilism, whose intellectual foundations had been laid by Nekrasov. Obviously inspired by N. V. Tchaikovsky, the group "Those Who Turn to the People" maintained, after 1869, the tradition of a relatively pacifist moralism, in which the project of systematically sabotaging the existing order was instilled. Hence, its opposition to the creation of cooperatives, credit unions and socialism, which could change things only on the surface, leaving the core problem of the poor peasants' serfist condition unchanged. Under the influence of Kropotkin and his project for training the peasant armed bands, this group increasingly opted in favour of the possibility to use force, while not definitively adhering to it. Their final adherence was manifested in other circumstances, having been triggered by events that were fairly similar, in the beginning, with those involving the members of the group Land and Liberty.

Turned into a strong revolutionary party, organised into and supported by many rural centres, the movement Land and Liberty was, indeed, the victim of a schism after 1870. This led to the separation of its right wing, which continued to be engaged in creating quiet populist colonies, from its left wing, which had adopted the tactics of assassination attempts. These were, for now, mere velleities, but the one who translated them into action was Nechayev. He had initially believed that Alexander II's abolition of serfdom in 1861 would cause a peasant uprising. Seeing, however, that nothing had happened, he started to get impatient. Together with Bakunin, who hailed Nechayev as a "young fanatic", he drafted a revolutionary catechism in ciphered code and in Latin characters, full of practical advice for clandestine actions and insisting, above all, on discipline and blind obedience to one's superiors. This catechism stipulated in inflexible terms that "all warm and soft sentiments of kinship, friendship, love, gratitude and even honour must be stifled in one's soul [of the clandestine activist] through sheer glacial revolutionary passion".¹⁵

The state of pure action was achieved even outside any other doctrine than the anarchist rejection of the state by principle; the paradox was that

¹⁵ Quoted by Franco Venturi, *Les Intellectuals...*, vol. I, 636.

Nechayev, whom Switzerland had handed over to Russia and who had been locked up in the Peter and Paul Fortress of St. Petersburg, where he would die in 1882, never participated in it. The violent factious section of Land and Liberty, which became The People's Will (*Narodnaya Volya*), took his place, continuing to obey his directives and launching terrorist operations in 1878, when General Trepov, the Governor of St. Petersburg, was assassinated by Vera Zasulich (who was triumphantly acquitted afterwards). The executions, the spectacular *coups* and the fund extortions committed by certain combat groups of these populists, who were totally disengaged from the people, proliferated later and culminated on 1 March 1881 with the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, the liberator of the serfs.

We should remember that nothing in the historical context of mid-19th century Russia seemed to have called - in any fatal way - for the emergence and peculiar nature of this founding event of populism. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the form it embraced owed much to the abolition of the peasants' serfsh condition, which represented the major breakthrough of this period. Ever since 1820, the liberation of the serfs had triggered a vast debate on a twofold issue: their civilian emancipation proper and the question of whether this would be accompanied by land allotment. This crucial matter was raised again with the Crimean War, marked by the mass mobilisation of conscripts from all walks of life, as decreed in 1855. From that moment on, for a few years prior to 1861, rumours were spread in the villages, insinuating that receiving weapons meant becoming free and that a *ukase* issued by the tsar, which was to suppress serfdom but had so far been kept secret, was on its way to being ratified. No one complied with *corvées* any longer, especially in the Kiev region; delegations of peasants tried to reach Paul I to express their gratitude and love. In the course of the same year, 1855, immediately after the Russian defeat in Crimea, the rumours announcing the emancipation of the peasants became stronger, having been reinforced, among others, by the coming of Alexander II to the throne. Humiliated by the defeat, the peasants set off numerous riots: 25 in 1856, 40 in 1857, 70 during the first four months of 1858, and nearly 100 in 1860.

Still, the decisive event occurred in 1861 with the real abolition of serfdom. No means of implementing it had been provided, the administration proving incapable of taking over responsibility for the peasants in the noblemen's stead, who had suddenly been deprived of this privilege. The former serfs wanted the land they had toiled and imagined they were entitled to appropriate it even though the law had not granted

them this right.¹⁶ This engendered a terrible state of dissatisfaction. Seething violence became the order of the day, religious sects of millenarian persuasion using it in Bedzna, near Kazan, where an old faithful man, named Anton Petrov, gave his own “interpretation” to the manifesto for the peasants’ emancipation, causing the surrounding villages to rise in rebellion and instantly acquiring the figure of a prophet whose subsequent execution was unable to calm things down. A legend was born saying that Petrov would soon return from the grave to guide his people. The populists intervened in this seething climate, worsened by the prospect of brutal industrialisation.

Later, although they had largely vanished by 1900, they left an important legacy from several points of view. Literary populism was derived thereof, as illustrated by Turgenev, Leo Tolstoy, who was revolted by inequality before the law, and then by Dostoyevsky, who awaited the emergence of the “new man”. In parallel, from 1890 on, what gained shape was the option for legal action, giving birth, in 1901, to the Revolutionary Socialist Party; this, after the peasant uprisings of 1902, clearly focused its interest on the peasantry. From now on, harbouring a minority Marxist faction in their midst and being dominated by the liberal group, the socialist-revolutionaries enjoyed an audience that would exceed - by 1917 - that of the Menshevik socialists and of the Bolshevik communists, Lenin managing to defeat them only by violently imposing his own revolution and eventually crushing them with the help of military force in the spring of 1918. With them, the Russian people’s last shreds of liberty disappeared, as did the pure populist doctrine, devoid of the nationalist extremism fostered by most of their counterparts.¹⁷

Moreover, beyond its borders, Russian populism inspired - admittedly, conservative - literary trends, particularly among the Balkan intellectuals and, above all, in Romania, with Titu Maiorescu and the poet Mihai Eminescu. Still, it best survived amidst anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism, whose epicentre moved to Spain during the first third of the 20th century, the Spanish anarchists actually resuming the catchphrase “Land and Liberty”, so dear to “Those Who Turn to the People”.

¹⁶ The Tsar alone was entitled to redistribute the domains.

¹⁷ Socialist-revolutionary intellectuals rejected the nationalism of “Greater Russia” and were, for instance, in favour of Poland becoming independent.

Boulangism

Giving their name to populism, the Narodniks inaugurated its utopian and romantic form of expression, characteristic of the circles of marginal intellectuals; their isolation gave way to an activist passion that entailed, for a tiny minority, the elevation of terrorism to the status of an absolute moral imperative. The Russian populists turned from supporters of the current "Those Who Turn to the People", who humbly abided by its lessons in the beginning, into a warrior, elitist sect. This went so far as to forget about the real people and its initiates believed they would have to strive in Promethean manner for the salvation of the amorphous masses, which they ultimately despised. They moved thus from mystical ethnic-cultural nationalism to sheer subversive anger.

Several decades later, in the late 1880s, Boulangism played, in its turn, the even starker role of a foundational factor. The nature of the second populist strand it inaugurated was, however, entirely different, given its social and political context, its strategic plan, its sheer magnitude as a movement with a vast impact in terms of its popular receptivity, and the instrumental central function it performed thanks to the personal ascendancy of its leader, General Georges Boulanger. Boulangism appeared in France, a developed industrial country, which, at that time, had recently acquired a parliamentary democracy, as yet unconsolidated and barely into the era of electoral politics and party combinations. The context was that of a society that had only just overcome the traumatic experience of the Paris Commune - the latest uprising of the French workers - and was very affected by the humiliation of its defeat in 1871, as well as by its subsequent loss of Alsace-Lorraine. Finally, France had been afflicted, since 1855, by a protracted economic recession, exacerbated by commercial liberalism, which had exposed its industry and agriculture to an international competition that it had been unable to cope with. In short, the backdrop of Boulangism foreshadowed the context of what would become classical populist outbreaks in Europe, as well as, later, in all the countries that would come into contact with the industrial age. This context had been shaped by the crisis situations generated by the mutations and bouts of weakness of the modern democratic societies. It was against this background that Boulangism brought to light the premises of the mutation populism had undergone, by shifting from the idealist left to the radical right, and the transformations nationalism had registered, from an initially Jacobin and republican stance to a conservative and reactionary position.

However, there is no need to place Boulangism under the burden of accusations. Although the nationalist orientation of Boulangism revealed, without a doubt, an authoritarian and militaristic approach, it nonetheless pursued a heterodox democratic project, which never ceased to be present in the - essentially mobilising rather than populist - currents that succeeded it in France and elsewhere (including incipient Gaullism). Denouncing party factionalism and the governmental impotence this had caused, and claiming that it could transcend the left-right divide, Boulangism proposed - as an alternative to the dominant model, at that time, of the weakened state of parliamentary democracy - the project of a unifying plebiscitary democracy, capable of supporting a strong state, which would be legitimised by universal suffrage. These were the bases of anti-parliamentary populism: promised as the great future, this would attempt to "popularise" democracy, wresting it from the hands of the election specialists, who had monopolised it in the name of the - by now - mandatory principle of power devolution.

The watershed moment Boulangism represented was not limited to this aspect. It marked the emergence of populism as a rather overt mass movement, which was impervious to the confidential and clandestine logic that had characterised its sham Russian precedent. The fact that this movement was not formed spontaneously cannot take away its merits. Orchestrated, no doubt, by people whom we might qualify today as experts in communication and serving the strategic purposes of various political personalities who took advantage of General Boulanger's sudden acquisition of popularity, Boulangism responded, in like manner, to the receptiveness of an immense public that was outraged by the daily exercise of power and was apparently willing to hail the advent of a redeeming knight. That being the case, we should mention that Boulangism was a manipulated movement rather than an organised party, relying on all manner of artifices to counter the risk of failure it had exposed itself to. And yet, this was not a sign of unfulfilment. It would be more appropriate to consider that if populism had ossified itself into a party, it would have automatically lost the game or would have done its utmost to lose it, and that despite its spokesmen's routine protests, its sole purpose would have become that of maintaining itself on the rostrum of the existing state of affairs, which it would have altogether ceased attempting to unsettle.

In addition, Boulangism inaugurated a form of charismatic populism that was presented as typical, without necessarily being so. At an exceptional moment in France's national history, the characteristic form it adopted was the embodiment of the popular will in a leader who was seen

as providential and whose rationally inexplicable power of fascination and control could be understood only in light of the loyal faith that the enthralled crowds had in him. It is known that in its typical version, populism reflects itself in the charismatic “fusional” power whereby the people identify themselves, in bodily terms, with their hero and saviour. Who was Georges Boulanger (1837-1891) to deserve such honour? He was a general with meritorious service, who had been promoted to this rank excessively fast and who became, in 1884, chief of the occupation forces in Tunisia, when the French Protectorate was established there. He was known especially as an officer with republican views, serving in an army whose high command was primarily ensured by Bonapartists with a nostalgia for the Second Empire or by royalists awaiting the return of the monarchy. In addition, Boulanger impressed by his stature and by his posture, as the martial spirits confessed. He was seductive, taunting, but in the right degree, astute by nature in his patriotic and demagogic speeches, which people found appealing. According to Octave Mirbeau, who abhorred him, he satisfied “a taste that has remained very much alive in the hearts of the people, a taste for the brave, cheerful and fierce soldier”.¹⁸ He was also opportunistic, switching from Bonapartism to Orleanism¹⁹, republicanism and military authoritarianism. For these reasons, the republican Georges Clemenceau, who was his intimate friend and would later consider him a black sheep, had his eyes fixed on him; this happened just around the time when the Duke of Aumale, the son of former King Louis-Philippe and an active division general, was helping him to advance in his career, describing him as a “good, intelligent but ill-mannered officer”.²⁰

Recommended by Clemenceau, whose opportunism was as great as his, Boulanger thus became Minister of War in January 1886, at the age forty-nine, a position he kept until March 1887, in the Freycinet and Goblet Cabinets. In this capacity, he revealed his adherence to the republican ideas by removing certain officers from the army and prohibiting the royal princes - including the Duke of Aumale, his former protector - from residing on the national territory. Barely installed in office, he prohibited the soldiers from using their weapons against the striking miners from Decazeville, suggesting even that they should share their rations with the latter. In parallel, Boulanger quickly created a popular image among the army, improving the soldiers’ deplorable living

¹⁸ Octave Mirbeau, “Boulanger”. *Le Gaulois*, 18 juillet 1886, in *Combats politiques* (Paris: Librairie Séguier, 1990), 96.

¹⁹ Constitutional royalism.

²⁰ Octave Mirbeau, “Boulanger”, 94.

conditions, replacing their layers of straw with mattresses, having their tin plates filled with more food than before, eliminating the Sunday roll call to allow everyone to enjoy a full day of rest a week, assigning five leave days at Christmas and seven at Easter, and also catering for the needs of the non-commissioned officers, for whom he created canteens.

Since there was no French citizen who did not have a son, a husband or a father as a soldier, Boulanger's popularity was quick to expand among the civilian population too, rendering him as the country's most highly appreciated Minister of War of all time. In 1886, at the 14 July parade in Longchamp, the general was welcomed with enthusiastic cheers that later fed into the couplets of boulevard songs (especially in "Coming Back from the Parade" by the composer Paulus). He also enjoyed the trust of the most diverse political sectors, both right- and left-wing. It was certainly not surprising that nationalists of all stripes appreciated his vindictive statements against Germany, his firm attitude to the Schnaebelé²¹ affair or the measures he took for improving the military equipment, which led to accelerating the process of manufacturing the new model of the Lebel rifle. However, Boulanger provided shelter around him to all sorts of disgruntled people: democrats who advocated the reunion, resenting the ministerial instability of the still young Third Republic and endorsing the idea of a strong state, based on universal suffrage; nostalgic Bonapartists lamenting for Napoleon III's imperial power; moderate monarchists, who had sided with the dynastic branch of the Orleans family, represented by the Count of Paris;²² and the numerous left-wing currents, ranging from the remnants of the Communard movement to the faction of the radicals. This was the case, for instance, of the trend represented by the newspaper *La Démocratie du Midi*, which clamoured in favour of a direct form of democracy, capable of leading to the formation of a government that was "truly representative and that denounced the corruption of the parliamentary regime, demanding that its leader should take manly action".²³ The diversity of the supporters of Boulangism may explain why its potential electoral clientele proved to be rather heterogeneous, encompassing all walks of life, from the bourgeoisie and the petty

²¹ Caused by the arrest of the French police commissioner Schnaebelé, on 21 April 1887, for espionage in the Moselle region that had been annexed by Germany; in connection with this arrest, Boulanger had tried in vain to compel the government to send an ultimatum to Berlin.

²² The liberal branch descending from Louis Philippe, a Jacobin in his youth, which was opposed by the intransigent legitimists, who were loyal to the Count of Chambord and to the line descending from Louis XVIII and Charles X.

²³ Marc Crapez, *Naissance de la gauche* (Paris: Michalon, 1998), 43.

bourgeoisie, on the one hand, to a massive group of proletarian adherents, on the other. This was all the more the case because France was succumbing under the weight of several accumulated crises.

The long cycle of economic decline that the country had suffered from since 1873 was aggravated by a financial crash in 1882. The ensuing unemployment situation affected between 200,000 and 300,000 workers. It contrasted with the years of prosperity and the open job market from the time of the Second Empire and was accompanied by incessant strikes that culminated with the looting of the bakeries in Paris for the first time since 1789, in 1888, that is. The wounds incurred in the lost war of 1870-1871 had kept bleeding, as did those caused by the casualty-filled defeat of the Commune, which disorganised the workers' movement and left them confused, prey to the mercy of all sorts of demagogues. Under these circumstances, the disclosure of scandals involving high state dignitaries managed to destroy completely many of the French people's confidence in the leaders of the young Republic. The most notorious of these scandals was the Wilson affair. In 1887, the French found out that Daniel Wilson, a former Under-Secretary of Finance, from 1879 until 1881, and the son-in-law of the very "upright" President of the Republic, Jules Grévy, had taken advantage of this illustrious kin and engaged in influence peddling in the awarding of decorations. Before the Wilson affair leaked out, the Patriots' League had been created in a slightly different climate than that of 1882, at the initiative of rather diverse personalities, such as Victor Hugo, the poet of nationalist republicanism, Paul Déroulède or Léon Gambetta, a democrat par excellence and former Head of the National Defence Government of 1870-1871. In 1886, in the same atmosphere of material and moral decadence, Édouard Drumont published a pamphlet entitled *La France juive*, which led to his being triumphantly elected as a deputy of Algiers by the proletarians from Bab-el-Oued and which reflected the opinions of both the right-wingers and the *Proudhonian* or anti-Semite Blanquist leftists; Maurice Barrès, who was in perpetual search for a doctrine and, in his concern for social justice, also aspired to an authoritarian regime, should also be mentioned here. In this climate, between 1883 and 1887, Jules Ferry, who had inspired the opportunistic parliamentary republic, was the target of two assassination attempts, from which he fortunately escaped unharmed.

The political capital ensured by General Boulanger's popularity proved, therefore, lucrative for anyone who wanted to channel it towards steering the country on a downward path. For Philippe Levillain, the left was the first to take advantage of this, after its draft for a constitutional revision had been rejected by the opportunistic radicals in December 1886.

According to him, Boulanger's image had been "created entirely by the radical left-wingers, who had envisaged turning it into the Trojan horse of their leverage towards a revision of the Constitution, thanks to the republican guarantee it appeared to offer and the national authority their vindictive leaders had demonstrated".²⁴ In the opinion of Marc Crapez, the more general tactic of these leftists was subsumed to an egalitarian project fostered by the "fusion between a strong state and a direct democracy",²⁵ which would be more correctly described as plebiscitary. In a similar spirit and in a more concise manner, Odile Rudelle interprets Boulangism as an alternative republican movement.²⁶ Still, while these future deputies occupied the majority of the seats reserved for the extreme left, the right wing also exploited Boulangism to the same extent and its successor drew closer to the position of conservative and militaristic nationalism.

At the level of the facts, the course of events changed after the perplexing parade of 14 July 1886, after General Boulanger's forced departure from the Ministry of War, in March 1887, and, then, after his success (with 12%, on the average, of the cumulated votes) in the May partial elections, in which, however, he had neither been a candidate, nor had he been eligible to be one because of his military status. Terrified, the government "banished" him, putting him in charge of a military district in Clermont-Ferrand. An impressive demonstration followed on 8 July, on his departure from Paris. During this demonstration, which was endorsed by the National Republican Committee that Henri Rochefort and Paul Déroulède had recently established, the crowd chanted "Boulangé, lange, lange, c'est Boulanger qu'il nous faut".²⁷ From this point on, "General Revanche" became both the protagonist and the instrument of this committee, whose vague and subversive program boiled down to three successive goals: dissolving the Chamber of Deputies, electing a Constituent Assembly and revising the Constitution. Afterwards, one thing just followed on top of another. In November 1887, the Patriots' League and the Republican Committee took over the streets of Paris. In December, the possibility of appointing Jules Ferry as President of the Republic

²⁴ Philippe Levillain, "1871-1898. Les droites en République", in *Histoire des droites en France*, ed. Jean-François Sirinelli (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 185.

²⁵ Marc Crapez, *Naissance...*, 100.

²⁶ Odile Rudelle, *La République absolue* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1982).

²⁷ A play on words based on the consonance between *boulangé* = a baker's trade, *lange* = a diaper, but also bread crust, and Boulanger = a baker, turned into a proper name (translator's note).

caused a veritable uprising.²⁸ The climax was reached, in effect, on 27 March 1888, with Boulanger's forced retirement, on account that he had been placed under strict confinement in Clermont-Ferrand but had taken the liberty of making a visit to Paris.

This scheme turned out to have been detrimental to the government, which was obliged to set the general free and allow him to legally submit his candidacy for the upcoming partial elections. The manner in which elections were organised at that time gave them that right, and he thus won an entire range of deputy seats, both in April 1888 and in January 1889: in Dordogne, in the North, in Somme, with 48% of the votes, in Charente-Inférieure, as well as in Paris, where several arrondissements voted in his favour. From that moment on, Boulanger revealed his agenda and promised to put an end to the parliamentary regime, replacing it with a strong presidential system.

Nonetheless, he gradually ceased to be regarded as the people's saviour after his ridiculous duel with the politician Charles Floquet, in which the civilian nearly killed the mighty officer. On 27 January 1889, the day of his electoral triumph in the districts of Goutte-d'Or, Javel, the Necker Hospital, Saint-Denis and Sceaux, his fate was irreversibly sealed because Boulanger did not have the courage to participate in the Champs-Élysées parade despite the fact that the crowd urged him to do so and he had the support of a part of the army and the police. Relieved, the government resumed the reins of power, suppressing, on 19 February, the possibility for a candidate to run for office in several constituencies simultaneously. In his turn, the general committed the error of providing the justice with self-incriminating arguments; on 1 April, he took refuge in Brussels. His trial was conducted *in absentia*, ending not with the verdict of acquittal that everyone had expected, but with a life imprisonment sentence. After toing and froing between Belgium and London for two years, while his political friends secured only 48 seats in the legislative elections of September and October 1889 (compared to the 350 of the Republicans and the 162 of the Conservatives), Boulanger ended his action by committing suicide, on 30 September 1891, in the Ixelles Cemetery from Brussels, on the grave of his former mistress, Marguerite of Bonnemains.

²⁸ Jules Ferry's lack of popularity proved to be extremely high in Paris. The working masses remembered him especially in his role as the head of supplies during the siege of 1870-1871, when he had earned the nickname of "Famine-Ferry" before he was forced to leave the capital on the eve of the proclamation of the Commune. In addition, his secular dogmatism and hostility to the Catholic schools did not do him any service with the wealthy classes.

What emerges, above all, from this brilliant populist adventure is that it represented the work of a man who was overwhelmed by the cult of his own personality and failed to regain his perspective or to meet the hopes of his supporters. However, if the hidden meaning of things were examined, this flaw of character did not cancel out the significance of Boulangism as a phenomenon, especially in the eyes of those who supported him, and of what today might be called his logistics or method of communication. Insofar as his supporters were concerned, we ought to highlight the fact that, without excluding a few small rural areas, such as Dordogne, the electorate of Boulangism was very different from the peasantry, which adamantly supported Bonapartism during the Second Empire and afterwards. A typically urban phenomenon, it was concentrated in the large conurbations of Paris, Lyon, Marseille and Bordeaux, as well as in the northern industrial areas. Hence, the more proletarian profile of its electors compared to the supporters of Bonapartism, even though there also existed Bonapartist workers who switched to Boulangism. Notwithstanding all this, the substantial proletarian element did not prevent its clientele coming primarily from the ranks of the cities' middle and even upper classes, even though it included all the social categories.

Thus, while Boulangism already pertained to the era of industrial and democratic modernity, Bonapartism, whose objectives were aimed, indeed, at modernisation, made reference to Napoleon III and was still largely based on rural, past-oriented support or, more precisely, on preserving the advantages - the right to property - that the peasants had enjoyed since the Revolution. Moreover, in terms of its specific populist nature, the Boulangist movement defined itself as a phenomenon belonging to modernity, thanks to its urban foundation comprising all the social groups that today are included in the National Front or the Scandinavian populist formations. Thus, its modernity can also be detected in the manner of its emergence and in its ephemeral nature as a movement, which was, from the beginning, exposed to convulsions that, under the impact of the economic, political and moral crisis, tend to affect chronically advanced societies. Boulanger's followers and, later, his successors responded to economic crises by putting the caste of the notorious representatives of the people in the pillory, as well as by trotting out chauvinistic and often xenophobic jingoism. Still, in accordance with the populist tradition, the target of choice was not dictatorship, but the plebiscitary plebeian democracy, presented as the sole force capable of restoring the authority of the state, which warranted, in turn, the restoration of the social order.

Speaking of the manner in which Boulangism was capitalised upon, it introduced a mobilising technology that would not remain the populists' privilege exclusively: that in which the top of the bill was actually the result of a summons. On a larger scale, this was, indeed, the invention of a team of specialists holding a particular political belief, whose talents anticipated those of the current electoral marketing experts, even though in this case they exercised this talent with the subversive aim of occupying the streets. A Republican soldier, the poet Paul Déroulède participated in this innovation as the author of "libretti" demanded by the cause he served. Moreover, Henri Rochefort intervened as Boulanger's mentor and promoter. The Marquis of Rochefort-Luçais, known as Rochefort, had a remarkable talent as an agitator and a professional specialist in communication, coupled with a perfect career as a Republican enemy of the Second Empire - which actually led to his proscription. The unworthy son of a Legitimist father, he entered politics in the 1860s, featuring in the newspapers *Le Nain jaune*, *Le Soleil*, *Le Figaro*, and then in his own weekly, *La Lanterne*; elected in Belleville, in 1869, as a deputy for the Empire's radical opposition, he then joined the Paris Commune, being later deported, on this ground, to New Caledonia, whence he escaped in 1873, seeking refuge in Geneva. Having been pardoned in 1880, he returned to Paris, where he founded a major daily newspaper, *L'Intransigeant*; he was elected as a deputy in 1885, handing in his resignation the following year in order to devote himself and his newspaper to the Boulangist cause. Making use of all the propaganda tools available at that time, from general information broadsheets to songs, from satirical leaflets and pamphlets to the Épinal prints,²⁹ Rochefort dedicated himself to promoting this cause with exceptional efficiency: too exceptional, perhaps, because it exceeded even Boulanger's strategic qualities. Faithful, however, to Boulanger, Rochefort followed him in his exile to Brussels.

The People's Party of the Small American Farmers

Only one year after General Boulanger's death, the third foundational version of populism was added to those that had emerged in Russia and in France. This North American version was distinguished by its mode of organisation, which was, from the very beginning, that of a party in its

²⁹ At Épinal, in the Vosges Mountains, there was the Peller textile factory, which used the images of popular heroes in its fabrics; these were the so-called "Épinal prints" (translator's note).

own right. Moreover, this new current was different from the previous ones by two even more significant traits. First, it was born out of a genuine popular protest, expressed by those who formed its human basis: the small farmers in the West - the Grangers - and, to a lesser extent, miners, prohibitionists, Christian socialists, women from modest social environments and several other layers, also derived from among the peasantry. Second, it presented the particularity of not questioning either the core values of American democracy or the United States Constitution. It was thus that it defined the archetype of populism in this country. On the one hand, this populism was reformist rather than subversive, given that it limited itself to denouncing the abuses committed by the political class and the business tycoons. On the other hand, this was, in a sense, an ethnic strand of populism, translating the fear of social decadence experienced by a mass of "White" people, who were convinced that they were the sole descendants of a genuine first immigration wave from Northern Europe. From this perspective, Will Kymlicka rightly contends that it would be a mistake to regard the American national feeling as a sample of "civic nationalism". According to him, for a long time, "the Americans, as much as the English, conceived of national membership in terms of participation in a common culture".³⁰ In other words, they adopted an ethnic and cultural perspective whose civic dimension, based on the abstract principles of freedom, equality and democracy, was nothing more than an almost peripheral drift.

The People's Party was founded in Saint Louis, in 1892, on the anniversary of George Washington's birth, at the end of a meeting of the activists who, for four days, had striven to create an organisation that would not only rival the two parties in power (the Republicans and the Democrats), but was openly hostile to them. The preamble or its founding document, read by Ignatius Donnelly, set the tone: "We meet", he said, "in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin. [...] A vast conspiracy against mankind has been organised on two continents and is rapidly taking possession of the world".³¹ This reveals the arguments of a new populism, which, unlike Boulangism, was not federative, but rural-oriented and anti-elitist, in the most aggressive manner possible: by upholding the postulate that the national decadence had been deliberately caused, by stigmatising the planetary-scale plot that aimed to spread everywhere and, finally, by implicitly stating that only the

³⁰ Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 200, note 15.

³¹ Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 28-29.

people, composed of honest citizens, could rid the country of such filth. Typically, American populists tend to distinguish between two kinds of peoples: “those that Labour for a Living and those that get a Living without Bodily Labour” in the words used long before by a New England farmer, called William Manning.³² What they resumed, after all, was the somewhat demonising rhetoric of the millenarist apostles, who, having committed themselves, body and soul, to save the “black hands” and being convinced of the perdition that awaited the “White hands”, had already summoned the Andalusian fields to revolt before they made their appearance in Brazil.

Yet American populists should be distinguished from the others: they belonged to a modern society, by comparison with those of Russia, Andalusia, or Latin America during the second half of the 19th century, which were all characterised, at the time, by the subjugation of huge masses of landless peasants to a tiny oligarchy of vast estate owners. The small farmers in the United States owned their land; they were rarely poor and, unlike the Russian, Mediterranean or Latin American day-labourers, they did not live in an unchanging communal and material universe, whose sole anguish derived from waiting for the miracle of collective salvation. On the contrary, they belonged to a semi-industrial individualistic society, which they very often rejected when it crushed their autonomy as independent workers, as was the case under the pressure of the big capitalist monopolies. In short, their mentality was that of “producers” who, although inserted in a flexible society, resisted - in the name of their homonymous ideology - the producerism of the “non-producers” who abused their power in a rapidly changing environment. The American populists’ program included all the elements that could attest their modernity, both real and relative.

Paving the way for peasant populism, the People’s Party materialised, thus, a new variety of contemporary populism that had nothing in common with the Narodniks’ sect and that did not waver, like the Boulangists, between the legal path of conquering power through electoral means and the other, illegal path, of plots and *coups d’état*. The People’s Party opted, from the very outset, for the register of respectability; it is true that it denounced the top power holders and the tyranny of the great landowners, but at the same time it proclaimed its allegiance to the existing institutions and made recourse to electoral strategies rather than to street demonstrations. Being electoralists and legalists, the American populists from the 1890s claimed to express the national will, without, however,

³² *Ibid.*, 13.

going so far as to pretend, from the very beginning, that they were its exclusive spokesmen, and expressing their confidence - in a pluralistic rather than plebiscitary spirit - that the verdict of the polls could demonstrate this. Moreover, the People's Party showed a strong attachment to the American political creed, as well as to its civic values and historical heroes. It identified itself with Thomas Jefferson and his slogan, demanding "equal rights for all, special privileges for none". It also found its ideal more fully reflected in the person of General Andrew Jackson, the first plebeian president who wanted to "save the Republic from falling into the hands of her enemies" and condemned, in as early as the 1820s "the power of money" in the very name of the political tradition started by the Declaration of Independence. In addition, at the level of the civic values, it most brilliantly illustrated the adherence to the guiding principle of American democracy, based on the belief "in the ability of people to handle their own affairs".³³

The leaders of the People's Party would not, however, have been called populists had they not belonged to the tradition of extreme zelators in the service of this American creed: this tradition also included intransigent devotees, derived from the popular Protestant movement of the puritan, pietist or the sectarian and rigorist types, represented especially by the Knights of Labour and the prohibitionists. Their adherence to this tradition was confirmed by their underlying Christian rhetoric and by the rather poignant mark left among them by the religious revival of the 1870s and 1880s, as expressed, for instance, in the sermons of Pastor Dwight L. Moody or in the preaching of the missionary societies, which bitterly condemned the "worship of Mammon". The Knights of Labour, in particular, had formed a sort of brotherhood that placed capital and the Antichrist on the same par, in a quasi-millennarist expectation of the "New Pentecost" that would bring mundane salvation to the true believers. Considering that the great egalitarian hope born with the American Civil War - which most of them had directly experienced - had been betrayed, and imbued with the conviction that the American ideal had been perverted by this ordeal, the American populists strove to revive a moral community that would uphold this spirit of piety, curiously juxtaposing, next to this project, ideas borrowed from various secular utopias, such as that of the single land tax proposed by Henry George. However, alongside this honourable, albeit primitive spiritual dimension, a less constructive element intervened. The People's Party blatantly positioned itself in the

³³ Jeffrey Bell, *Populism and Elitism. Politics in the Age of Equality* (Washington, D. C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1992), 11.

other line of American nationalism with racist overtones, with the mention that racism enjoyed a good repute both in North America and in Europe at that time.

Indeed, American populists and their large number of partisans adopted the anti-Asian or “anti-Mongol” attitude the Knights of Labour had espoused when they assimilated the immigrants from the Far East or even from Russia with “poor” creatures that Americans had every reason to fear both in terms of their jobs and public safety. Simultaneously, the sole aid they provided to the Black farmers was economic, refraining from defending them as regards the effective exercise of their citizen rights. The truth is that this attitude was paradoxically accompanied by progressivist claims. In the beginning, at least, these were expressed through their projects of nationalising the railway companies or supporting the women’s suffrage movement (since women potentially represented, especially in the prohibitionist current, a good portion of their clientele). The trajectory followed by the People’s Party amounted to no more than a flash in the pan, which briefly shone during the presidential elections of 1892 and went out during those of 1896.

In the 1892 presidential elections, its candidate, James Weaver, managed to rally only 8% of the votes: these were concentrated in Colorado, Idaho and Nevada, where he won the majority of the ballots. At the legislative elections of 1894, the People’s Party improved its results, obtaining 1,500,000 instead of the 1,000,000 votes it had secured two years earlier. Still, this trend was not decisive. It brought it only seven seats in the House of Representatives, six in the Senate and a resignation gift represented by several hundred elected members to numerous state offices. Even more, the trend was reversed with the 1896 presidential elections, in which the populists failed to agree on the candidacy of William Jennings Bryan. Running again in 1900 and 1908, Bryan gained increasingly marginal results, losing to Presidents-Elect McKinley and Taft.

The reasons for this collapse pertained, first of all, to the People’s Party itself, to its internal conflicts and their electoral consequences. In this regard, the People’s Party set the first example - which turned into a benchmark - of disputes, political biases and fights among leaders, which have never ceased to define the factionalism of the populist formations that are also found today in the National Front or the Scandinavian Progress Parties. Without the strong traditions and structures that may ensure the relative cohesion of parliamentary parties, these formations are at the mercy of both personal ambitions and the utopian derailments that undercut them. This is exactly what happened with the American populists. In 1896, especially, they went at each other’s throats, as it is

well known, over Bryan's nomination: some went so far as to request asylum in the Democratic Party before unsuccessfully trying to obtain its acceptance of Tom Watson's candidacy for Vice President. In a more general sense, the People's Party stumbled against an insoluble contradiction, in their attempt to soften their message and to expand their electorate, which, aside from the small urban areas in Chicago and San Francisco, had been confined to the relatively poor areas from the Deep South and east of the Mississippi River. Indeed, by opportunistically kerbing its enthusiasm from the earlier period and mellowing its tone as regards the women's suffrage, on which it no longer insisted, the prohibition or the nationalisation of the railways, the People's Party lost its most radical supporters, without managing to win others in the large cities on the eastern coast, among the middle classes or in the modern working-class milieus.

A more comprehensive explanation of the reasons why American populism got stranded comes from the evolution of its external environment. Both the Democrats and the Republicans were very quick to absorb it, appropriating its rhetoric of identification with the average American who made an honest living through work. Democrat President Stephen G. Cleveland had resorted to these tactics in 1892-1893, but he had swiftly changed his opinion, breaking the workers' strikes in Chicago. The one who nonetheless pursued these tactics was the leader of the radical trend in the Republican Party, Robert M. LaFollette, who resumed, in 1920, the proposal for the nationalisation of the railways and created, in 1924, an ephemeral Progressive Party, to which five million electors adhered. To sum up, the People's Party launched a discursive style that it did not take advantage of and that others - both within and beyond political class - exploited in its stead: these were the new post-1890 tycoons of the popular press, represented by Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, or the members of the leftist academic milieu, led by Thorstein Veblen³⁴ and John Dewey.

In even broader lines, this founding episode of American populism coincided with the expansion of a trade union movement that was its most fierce competitor. Born in 1886, the American Federation of Labour - AFL - was led by Samuel Gompers until 1924;³⁵ his charismatic figure turned out to be invincible among large segments of the population that represented the target of the populist phenomenon. Moreover, despite abandoning its original Marxism and denouncing, in effect, any form of

³⁴ The author of *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, New York, New American Library, 1953, originally published in 1899.

³⁵ Except for one year.

socialism deemed to be “non-American” and “unhealthy” before adhering to reformism, Gompers appropriated their slogans, such as “patriotic producer”, “mobilised wage earner” and defender of the “citizens’ rights” in the face of the big capital. Aside from that, he developed an increasingly hostile attitude towards immigration; this position was expressed unequivocally in the Bill of Grievances which the AFL published in 1906 and on which J. W. Sullivan commented, saying that the recent immigrants had done nothing but bring “more voting cattle into our political stockyard”.³⁶ In addition, the populists faced the less direct competition of the revolutionary sector of American syndicalism, gathered around the Industrial Workers of the World³⁷ and the Socialist Party; under the direction of the Indiana-born Eugene Debs, the latter oriented itself towards a “cooperative commonwealth” project and won a seat in Congress in 1910, before the 1915 schism of an overtly populist faction - the Nonpartisan League (NPL) - which was formed in North Dakota.

As with the Russian populists, the rapid downfall of the People’s Party did not mean, however, that it left no trace. On the contrary, the presence of American populism has remained almost constantly felt, and it is known that its role has been limited to that of an exhaust valve, meant to evacuate a social pressure that is doomed to dissolve itself into political futility. The progressive movements that became increasingly powerful in the United States before the 1929 economic crisis carried on its legacy, even when they contributed to the collapse of the last vestiges of the People’s Party. Later, in reaction against the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited any practice of discrimination against the Blacks, the Southern Segregationists followed in its footsteps, in the sense that they adopted the populism of the “White man”, orienting it towards the radical right. Their leader, George Wallace, the former Democratic Governor of Alabama, achieved unexpected success in the first round of the 1964 elections, before gathering, in 1968, the highest number of votes ever obtained by an independent presidential candidate since Theodore Roosevelt in 1912³⁸ and running again for president in the 1972 elections. Finally, more recently, Ross Perot’s Reform Party maintained the tradition of a populism that had plenty of electoral supporters but had no political perspective.

The Canadian version of North American populism has remained quite vivid, especially in the agricultural provinces from the vast Western Plains. Like in the United States, populism appeared in Canada at the end of the 19th century, its original feature being that it was less vocal about

³⁶ Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion....*, 53-59.

³⁷ IWW, Industrial Workers of the World.

³⁸ Wallace won the majority of votes in five southern states.

the power of the banks and finances than about the domination the central provinces of Ontario and Québec exerted over the country. It is remarkable that this movement later gave birth to a social-democratic formation whose long-lasting character was rather little taken advantage of in North America, which did not prevent the Canadian populists from diversifying as much as their counterparts in the south. Leaning to the right, some of them created the Social Credit in the 1960s, introducing it especially in the rural Protestant areas of Alberta, before the appearance, in 1987, also in the Western provinces, of the ultra-liberal, anti-State, anti-fiscal Reform Party, which is opposed both to immigration and multiculturalism and, moreover, is hostile to Anglo-French bilingualism at the federal level.

The multiple directions set by the Russian, French and American forms of foundational populism appear now in stark outline. The populism of the Narodniks gave rise to an intellectual and romantic trend of a rather confidential nature that did not outlive them. There followed a second revolutionary trend, promoted by a minority of activists or even terrorists, whose conceptions had a discreet influence on Lenin.³⁹ Finally, the Russian prototype foregrounded the third populist version, whose anti-Western outlook anticipated some of the features of the future populisms from the Third World. In any case, this genealogy conceals, admittedly, an important paradox. None of these versions seems to have taken into account the people whose guardians they purportedly were. Influenced by the trends or the periods in which they manifested themselves, either by excessively idealising any resemblance to the people or despising the people's condition of political ignorance, the sheer diversity of the forms of populism prevents us from talking about the populists in the sense of lovers of the people who will not admit that they have to listen to the popular will. In fact, the Russian populists' people were limited to what the populists wanted them to be, without their even bothering to suggest the contrary.

³⁹ Sentenced to death in 1887, Lenin's older brother was a member of The People's Will. Furthermore, his article entitled "What Is to Be Done?" was a deliberate homage to the one Chernyshevsky had published in 1863, in spite of the fact that Lenin had spent the first years of his political career, from 1893 to 1900, denouncing populism as a petty bourgeois ideology. From Chernyshevsky, he retained, nonetheless, the importance of a well-structured secret organisation, the idea that the proletariat represented the vanguard, the refusal of any compromise with liberalism and the attention that the peasantry had to be granted. See R. Lew, "La spécificité et l'héritage du populisme russe du XIXe siècle", in *Populismes du tiers-monde*, ed. René Gallissot (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997).

The populist families stemming from and remaining more or less close to the Boulangist movement have proved to be just as diverse. A champion of ambiguity, Boulangism founded, first of all and in the same way, two rather different populist legitimacies, derived from two populations that were hardly reconcilable: one that was national or nationalist, rallying the majority of the French people whose common patriotic fibre it stirred, and the other that was plebeian and whose resentment against the privileged and corrupted, unworthy elites it exploited, clamouring that they should be banished from among the honest citizens. Second, the Boulangist phenomenon was also at the origin of two apparently equally antagonistic populist projects: one that was authoritarian and the other that was fairly Jacobin, from both a statist and a social egalitarian perspective. In fact, insofar as its conception about the political community was concerned, it opened the equally contradictory path of the great unifying movements, which denounced the internal divisions of the parties and upheld democratic convictions, postulating that the citizens' respect was not incompatible with the plebiscitary style and the idea of a strong representative state. It is a fact that, although disparate, these features were not contradictory. They all advocated the populist nature of Boulangism and of the tradition that it had inaugurated. In a disorder that was symptomatic of the phenomenon, they characterised it as their main archetype, in light of both its identification with the popular will, whose mirror it aimed to be, and of the primordial place it granted to the force of discourse rather than to that of action, or to the enunciation of a more or less consistent platform.

As for the American People's Party, it left a mark that was as distinctive as it was general. In a rather peculiar manner, admitting no other legitimate reference and no other horizon than the orthodoxy of the democratic creed, dating back to the time of the Fathers of the Constitution, it encompassed among its descendants all the North American populist trends, the xenophobic and anti-fiscal reactionaries, and the statist progressives. Moreover, its specificity also transpired through its conception about the plebeian people, who were rather unique in the sense that they consisted not of disowned individuals, but of honest workers, imbued with personal responsibility and leading, therefore, a decent life, which was threatened, it seems, only by the tycoons of the capitalist economy, by state usurpation or by the unfair advantages given to groups that did not share the same ideal of self-sufficiency through work. These elements illustrated the ambivalent nature of populism across the Atlantic. This incontestably pertained to a register of universal validity, given that its attachment to democratic values was nonetheless nurtured by the

equally patent presumption that these values were the prerogative of the American people, who had been chosen by destiny to practise freedom in a privileged manner. It is through the paradox of this ambivalence that the American precedent has found its general significance.

Indeed, American populism should be regarded as more than the first manifestation of the agrarian version of populism, to which it was not limited. In parallel, it should be noted that Scandinavian social democracy and even the Labour movement, in its early phase, shared some of its aspects, when it came to feminism and, especially, to "Puritanism" - in its general, rather than theological, sense - as promoted by the anti-alcoholic leagues, by the sectarians of productive work or by those who advocated the standardisation of lifestyles and the abolition of any sign of social difference. Another aspect that should be acknowledged about this strand of populism, at the antipode of its socialist affinities, is that it was marked by the refusal of blind solidarity with those who were considered to be different from them and that it may also be found, albeit in a different form, in the xenophobic and separatist formations from Western Europe, whose watchwords echoed, in many respects, those of the American Grangers from the 1890s.

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POPULISM AND POLITICAL SCIENCE: HOW TO GET RID OF THE “CINDERELLA COMPLEX”

MARCO TARCHI

Introduction

Used and abused by journalist-style analysts and providers of opinions, the concept of populism has always struggled to command respect in the scientific arena. The difficulties of defining its essence and circumscribing its range of applications have determined a contradictory destiny among political scientists, sociologists, philosophers and historians, with sudden bursts of popularity or long periods of abandonment, and critical reinterpretations leaning towards scepticism. And yet, while the academic discussions focused on the congruence of the notion, with no apparent solution being patched together, the phenomenon to which they related periodically re-emerged on the political scene, and the temptation of definitively putting it aside was forgotten. Over the past decades, the subject has attracted a large scholarly production, in sharp contrast to a simultaneous weakening of interest in anything that has to do with ideology. Moreover, it is still doubtful that in the case of populism, one can even refer to ideology. It is exactly from this point that one can attempt to briefly encompass the achievements of political science research on this topic and to grasp some of the points of intersection with other more traditional and developed lines of analysis, such as those concerning democracy and authoritarianism.

Ideology, Political Style or Mentality?

The various faces of the phenomena to which the label of populism has been applied have created confusion, both for those who have aimed to analyse its empirical manifestations and for those who have attempted to

extract a unified theoretical substance from these case studies. Its wide geographical coverage¹ and chronological breadth² have emphasised its heterogeneity rather than common matrices. It has been stressed that populism occurs from time to time in various guises, being expressed through movements, regimes, discursive styles and rhetorical strategies, states of mind and psychological behaviours. As such, specialised literature has emphasised its chameleon-like ability³ to adapt to a wide variety of contexts, overstepping the usual dividing line between left and right. To give an idea of this paradoxical synthetic vocation, one can refer to the lengthy and varied array of characters considered populists, such as Chirac and Le Pen, Berlusconi and Castro, Peron and Haider, Pim Fortuyn and Chavez. In reaction to the various attempts to redefine the boundaries of the concept, attention was switched to admonitions to discard populism as a solid conceptual framework; hence, it was argued that “populism” was a fictitious entity and that it would be futile to try to capture it.⁴ Moreover, it has been said that because definitions were only “happy formulas that students treasure, but other experts are quick to disqualify”, populism could certainly be better understood “in the confused light of the cumulative forms that it coated in time and in space, rather than through an intellectual synthesis which inevitably tended to be simplistic”.⁵

The extremist character of these statements is already evident in the fact that these quotations are linked to scholars who, in the search for this Phoenix-like genre, have devoted a substantial amount of intellectual energy to it. One may therefore consider them as provocations dictated by a dissatisfaction linked to the media’s tendency to inflate the use of a concept to the point of deforming its meaning; but one should not take them *ad litteram*. Populism has not been historically identified as a homogeneous type of political regime and it has not exhibited the same content in all the movements that have been the vehicles of its message.

¹ There is almost no country in which populist traces have not been detected yet.

² Most of the scholars tend to date its origin back to the late 19th century by identifying its prototypes in the People’s Party from the USA and in the Russian *narodnichestvo*, but the quest for its historical roots has led other scholars to consider even the medieval peasant revolts as “proto-populist”. An example of this extensive chronological use is provided by Peter Worsley, “The Concept of Populism”, in *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, eds. Ghiță Ionescu and Ernst Gellner (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 212-250.

³ Paul Taggart, *Populism* (Buckingham PA: Open University Press, 2000).

⁴ Pierre-André Taguieff, *L’illusion populiste* (Paris : Berg International, 2002), 78.

⁵ Guy Hermet, *Les populismes dans le monde. Une histoire sociologique XIXE-XXE siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2001), 53.

Furthermore, it cannot be connected to an articulate vision of the world, understood according to the canons of the classical *Weltanschauungen* or to a political program that is fully shared by all of its members. Still, this does not make it impossible to grasp the phenomenon's unitary essence. Indeed, the belief that populism possesses many of the attributes of an ideology, although not all of them⁶ can be turned upside down and be used to demonstrate that populism has its own visible nucleus, a soul, a heart made of "elements, recurrent in time and space, that make it similar to an ideology"⁷; these characteristics can be detected even when some of its style or content elements are absorbed, for a purely instrumental aim, by subjects that are insensitive to its credo and, as such, they can be mixed with practices or programs that are, in substance, alien to its core being. As it has already happened to many of the doctrines that compete in the democratic arena, liberalism or socialism for example, populism has been subject to contradictory formulations and has been made up of discordant tendencies; this does not exclude it from the category of political trends that have exerted a significant influence in our contemporary societies. It is precisely this ability to influence practice that has led the scientific community, on several occasions, to engage in an attempt to frame a definition of the phenomenon that may account for both the unity and the polysemy that distinguish it.

The first efforts in this direction were made collectively by the participants in the symposium organised by the journal *Government and Opposition* at the London School of Economics in May 1967. For a long time, the word "populism" had been used in the social science jargon, being applied to both the analysis of the Third World experiences of politically integrating the masses, which had been under way for several decades, and to the identification of trends typical of pluralist systems, starting with the United States of America. Ironically, note should be taken that despite its "elusive and protean" form, populism had replaced communism in the role of the spectre that obsessed the world. The organisers of the 1967 symposium wondered if there really was a unique phenomenon corresponding to that name and, in case of an affirmative answer, whether one could categorise it as an ideology, a movement, or a mentality resulting from a particular social situation or a psychological

⁶ Paul Taggart, *Populism*.

⁷ Loris Zanatta, "Il populismo. Sul nucleo forte di un'ideologia debole", *Polis* XVI (2) (2002), 263-264.

predisposition.⁸ The opinions received on the basis of a survey covering four continents in the 1960s were divergent: Donald MacRae believed that one could talk about a populist ideology, Peter Wiles retorted that it was more the case of a syndrome and not a proper doctrine, while Kenneth Minogue gave priority to its dimension as a political movement and Angus Stewart pointed out the identification of the social connotations that gave populism a specific identity.⁹ Isaiah Berlin summed up the debates, pointing out that with their claim of identifying a pure type of populism, scholars were running the risk of developing a “Cinderella complex”, out of a frustration that came from not being able to find objects in the real world that were perfectly compliant with the requirements of theory.

The reasonableness of this warning and the authority of the scholar who had issued it contributed to dispelling the various attempts to enclose populism in a comprehensive definition, but the hope of reaching an agreement on the essential characteristics of populism did not die out and provided a fertile ground for a particularly vivid debate that is still going on today, with cornerstones that are, for the most part, those laid in the 1960s and even earlier. Indeed, one can trace these characteristics back to Edward Shils. In the mid-1950s, he wrote on the topic by articulating the original belief that populism was expressed in an ideology which proclaimed that “the will of the people as such is supreme over every other standard, over the standards of traditional institutions, over the autonomy of institutions and over the will of other strata. Populism identifies the will of the people with justice and morality”.¹⁰ Since then, it has become commonplace to accept that this appeal to the people is the cornerstone of a fair and legitimate order, and that it underlies every political demonstration of this phenomenon; still it is on these grounds that various dissonant proposals have flourished and integrated additional elements to that undisputed core.

During the conference in London, MacRae found himself isolated in supporting the need, for anyone who was interested in understanding the meaning of populism, to treat it as - though not exclusively as - an ideology, as a special form of primitivism that idealised, according to the cases examined, the agrarian community or the good old days from before

⁸ Ghiță Ionescu and Ernest Gellner, “Introduction”, in *Populism - Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, ed. Ghiță Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson), 1-4.

⁹ See the various contributions of the above mentioned volume edited by Ghiță Ionescu and Ernest Gellner.

¹⁰ Edward Shils, *The Torment of Secrecy. The Background and the Consequences of American Security Policies* (Glencoe: Free Press 1956), 98.

the dark phase of colonialism. MacRae underlined the importance that populists gave to a sense of belonging to a specific local context and their propensity to refer to plots orchestrated by outsiders - Jews, foreigners, bankers, heretics, etc. - when explaining the difficulties that ordinary and honest people faced in their everyday life. This allowed MacRae to develop his notion of ideology into a theory of personality, which chose as its model a man who had “evaded all the consequences of Adam’s fall”, who could fully develop his freedom only in relation to social uniformity and within the identity of character with its fellows.¹¹ Wiles expressed his belief that “any creed or movement based on the following major premise: virtue resides in the simple people who are the overwhelming majority, and in their collective traditions” could be defined as populist; he also argued that this premise “causes a political syndrome of surprising constancy”, composed of a variety of symptoms, including moralism, the refusal of party bureaucracies, the reliance on leaders with outstanding qualities (“in mystical contact” with the masses), the lack of trust in intellectuals, strength in the financial and in any other arenas of the establishment, a conciliatory social conscience, opposition to socio-economic inequities, and an isolationism that was hostile to militarism and racism.¹² Worsley explicitly excluded the possibility of matching populism to a particular type of ideological system or organisation, and spoke, referring to Shils, of “a dimension of political culture in general” which implied the allegiance to two cardinal principles: the supremacy of the will of the people upon every institutional prescription and the institutional desire for a direct relationship between the people and the leadership.¹³ These principles were translated, according to Worsley, into a quasi-religious belief in the virtues of uncorrupted ordinary people, into a homogeneous and anti-class representation of society, into an emphasis on the conflict between the ordinary human being and the surrounding world, and into resentment against the order imposed by the ruling class. Many Third World regimes, born in the wake of decolonisation, implemented these beliefs through a dominant party focused on the communitarian integration of the nation’s masses.¹⁴

Following the exchanges of ideas from the London School of Economics, it was once again Isaiah Berlin who tried to synthesise the

¹¹ Donald MacRae, “Populism as an Ideology”, in *Populism - Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, 154-160.

¹² Peter Wiles, “A Syndrome, Not a Doctrine: Some Elementary Theses on Populism”, in *Populism - Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, 166-79.

¹³ Peter Worsley, “The Concept of Populism”, 245.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 212-250.

issues that had emerged from the discussion, by arguing that on the basis of the studies conducted on the subject so far, six basic characteristics of populism could be identified: (1) the idea of a cohesive society closely related to the organic community described by Tönnies in the famous *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*; (2) a trust related more to society than to the State; (3) the interest in bringing the people back to the lost harmony with the natural order, (4) a tendency towards a nostalgic emphasis on values linked to ancient times, (5) the conviction that populism spoke in the name of the majority of the population; (6) the tendency to occur in social contexts in which a process of modernisation was already in progress, or in an advanced stage of incubation.¹⁵ Echoes of this communitarian image can be traced in many of the subsequent studies, which have, however, left the issue of the profound nature of populism unresolved: an ideology for some, a mentality or a political style for others.

The essential features of populism proposed by one of the first scholars who wrote on the subject after the conference in London, Ludovico Incisa di Camerana, are related to the requirements of an ideology.¹⁶ Although he admits that “a theoretical and systematic elaboration” does not fit the phenomenon of populism and he prefers to refer to political formulas (plural) “for which the chief source of inspiration and a constant term of reference is the people, considered as a socially homogenous aggregate and as the exclusive depositary for positive, specific and permanent values”, people who are not rationalised by the populists but are rather “intuited and apodictically postulated”. In other words, regardless of one’s social-professional role or place on the social ladder, one feels oneself as a part of the people to such an extent that it becomes a myth. Moreover, as an ideology, according to Incisa, populism plays a typical function whenever it emerges as the result of a political and/or social crisis, using an anti-class appeal, in a synthetic and healing manner, with the aim of erasing all the traces of the social conflicts that have dismantled the connective tissues of the community and returning the latter to its original homogeneity.¹⁷ This occurred in some Latin American countries during the accelerated modernisation phase, between the 1930s and the 1950s,

¹⁵ Isaiah Berlin et al., “To Define Populism”, *Government and Opposition*, 3(2) (1968): 137-80, available at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1477-7053.1968.tb01332.x/pdf>.

¹⁶ Many of his writings appeared under the pseudonym of Louis Garruccio, while the author practised the profession of diplomacy.

¹⁷ Ludovico Incisa di Camerana, *Fascismo Populismo Modernizzazione* (Roma: Antonio Pellicani 2000), 351-352, 359.

when national-populism, as defined by Gino Germani, served as the basis for the political mobilisation of large sectors of the population that had hitherto been strangers to the national society. This occurred in the context of the industrialisation process, which explains the success that this formula experienced in various Latin American countries and its constant reassertion as a source of popular support.¹⁸

The conceptual settings of Incisa di Camerana and Germani reflect the tendency to link the emergence of populist movements to the social reconstruction of several Third World countries and to emphasise the anti-pluralistic, organic and authoritarian characteristics of the phenomenon, which seem, at least partially, to coincide with the rise of civil-military “dictatorships of development”. Subsequent analyses have further broadened the geographical framework and attempted to better articulate the link between populism and its ideal referent. The “mythical-symbolic transfiguration of the idea of people” and its “sacralisation” as the foundation of any social and political value, underlined by the anthropologist Carlo Tullio-Altan, are often called into question in this new phase of discussion on the contents of the concept.¹⁹

Margaret Canovan, the author of a work that served as a benchmark for studies in the field, abandons the search for the definition of an ideal type, which she considers not to be very fruitful, opting instead for a typological approach that leads her to distinguish the features of 19th-century agrarian populism from the subsequent urban political populism.²⁰ Nicola Matteucci identifies an apocalyptic psychological orientation within the idea of society praised by populists, which is “dominated by the need for a reunion with the people, according to a sentimental image, if not stereotyped, [...] by a rough and Manichean conception of social conflicts”, encompassed as “eternal struggles between predators and prey, and by the desire to definitively eradicate Evil from the community within which it has been installed”.²¹ Marc Lazar further develops the idea of populism as a syndrome, based on the exaltation of the people and on anti-elitism, by

¹⁸ Quattrocchi-Woissou considers nationalism, anti-imperialism, a preference for social justice in relation to individual liberties, and an integration of the masses as characteristic features of the Latin American populist governments. Diana Quattrocchi-Woissou, “Les populismes latino-américains à l’épreuve des modèles d’interprétation européens”, *Vingtième siècle*, 56 (56) (1997), 181.

¹⁹ Carlo Tullio-Altan, *Populismo e trasformismo* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1989), 42-43.

²⁰ Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981).

²¹ Nicola Matteucci, *Dal populismo al compromesso storico* (Roma: Edizioni della Voce, 1976), 75-76.

connecting it to a political style that can give concrete forms to symbolic data.²² Alfio Mastropaolo also insists on the crucial importance of stylistic elements based on the rhetoric of the moral integrity of the people, understood “as a (national) community, without distinctions of class, interests, values and without the tragic divisions generated by politics and, in particular, by parliamentary manoeuvres and parties”. The scholar considers that, in addition to this style, the movements that appeal to populism share a specific goal: to reinstate the people, the repository of all virtues, on the legitimate throne “by defining its manifestations of will as superior to any value, as well as to any rule” and articulating thus a “plebiscite inspiration”.²³ As for the alleged ideological character of populism, within the wave of studies carried out during the last decade of the 20th century, the conviction expressed by Surel and Mény seemed to prevail: according to this perspective, one can only speak of a populist ideology if one refers, in line with Clifford Geertz, to a cognitive system which is “culturally and historically determined”, and through which “interests or resolved social tensions can be expressed, especially when the tested cognitive and normative structures do not seem to work”.²⁴

Otherwise, it is preferable to assimilate populism into an “ideological scheme” and a “register of discourse” based on the belief that, politically speaking, the *people* are a sovereign entity entitled to the monopoly of legitimacy that the ruling classes betrayed while still in doubt with their capacity to govern; it is therefore the duty of the people to restore its primacy.²⁵ But the point remains controversial; one of the political scientists who has devoted attention to the most recent empirical manifestations of populism in the European context, Cas Mudde, indicates a “clear and new” definition of the phenomenon, described in terms of an ideology which considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite”, and

²² Marc Lazar, “Du populisme à gauche: les cas français et italien”, *Vingtième siècle*, 56 (56) (1997), 121-122.

²³ Alfio Mastropaolo, *La mucca pazza della democrazia. Nuove destre, populismo, antipolitica* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri).

²⁴ Yves Mény and Yves Surel, *Par le peuple, pour le peuple. Le populisme et les démocraties* (Paris: Fayard, 2000), 170.

²⁵ Yves Surel, “Berlusconi, leader populiste? “, in *La tentation populiste au coeur de l'Europe*, ed. Olivier Ihl, Janine Chêne, Éric Vial, Ghislain Waterlot (Paris: La Découverte, 2003), 114-116.

which deems that policies should be an expression of the general will of the people.²⁶

Two alternative approaches to the interpretation of populism as an ideological sub-species can be identified: one that reduces populism to a mere political style, and another which focuses on the psychological dimension of populism and considers it a mentality. The first has been summed up in the clearest manner by Pierre-André Taguieff in two successive formulations. At first, Taguieff argued that

the only way to conceptualise populism is to designate a particular type of social and political mobilisation, which means that the term can indicate only one dimension of political action or discourse. It does not embody a particular type of political regime, nor does it define a particular ideological content. It is a political style suitable for various ideological contexts.²⁷

Then, in order to strengthen his argumentation, Taguieff added that “a democracy or a dictatorship may have a populist dimension or orientation, they can have a populist style”; furthermore, he suggested the consideration of populism as “a political style susceptible to refer to various symbolic materials and to settle in different ideological places, by assuming their political colours” and “a set of rhetorical operations implemented through the symbolic exploration of certain social representations”.²⁸ According to the scholars who defend this approach, populist arguments are a constant feature of the political discourse that is most often used by outsiders. They are also present in the language of institutional actors who aim to guide the public opinion towards polemic targets, which may be identified thanks to a Manichean pattern that pits the common people’s generosity and common sense against the contorted reasoning and privileges of the caste of professional politicians. While accepting that this is not the only possible interpretation, Margaret Canovan suggests that populism consolidates into a political style especially when the rhetoric of an appeal to the people connects with the emergence of charismatic leadership, electoral campaigns based on racial

²⁶ Cas Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist”, *Government and Opposition* XXXIX (4) (2004), p. 543.

²⁷ Pierre-André Taguieff, “La scienza politica di fronte al populismo: da miraggio concettuale a problema reale”, *Trasgressioni*, XV (3) (2000), 43.

²⁸ Pierre-André Taguieff, *L’illusion populiste*, 80.

or ethnic prejudices, referendum mechanisms, or proselytising efforts that deny class differences.²⁹

The interpretation of populism as a characteristic mentality feature, which had already emerged in the debates of the 1960s, provides the background, albeit not always in an explicit manner, for various more recent analyses. A contribution to this reading is provided by the same Canovan, who recognises in this phenomenon, beyond the general exaltation of an idealised people, the expression of the pathos of the ordinary man, based on an appreciation for the exemplary civic virtues of ordinary citizens, as opposed to the vices of their governing leaders.³⁰ Hans-Georg Betz emphasises that the populists “pronounced faith in the common sense of the ordinary people” as one of the unifying conceptual characteristics of the European populist movements and leaders.³¹ Guy Hermet considers that the dream of finally abolishing the barrier that has always separated those from below and those from above³² is the essential psychological feature of populism. Even Taguieff, while otherwise insisting on stylistic criteria, claims that “the populism of protest” exalts the image of active citizens who distrust the mechanisms of representation from which they feel expropriated and by which they are conditioned. He also highlights “the direct communication with ordinary people, who are equal in terms of the simplicity, honesty and ‘health’ they each are believed to possess and illustrate”.³³ Finally, to name only few of the authors who most have frequently participated in the debate, Paul Taggart argues that in line with the idealisation of the past, the general features of the populist discourse refer to a world that embodies the collective way of life and the common sense of the people who built it.³⁴

Combining these and other ideas, populism can be defined as a specific *forma mentis*, connected to a vision of the social order that is based on a belief in the innate virtues of the people, whose primacy is claimed as the source of the legitimacy for political and governmental action. This concept can be expressed in various ways: as an ideological schema for

²⁹ Margaret Canovan, “Il populismo come l’ombra della democrazia”, *Europa Europe*, II (2) (1993), 45-46.

³⁰ Margaret Canovan, “Two Strategies for the Study of Populism”, *Political Studies*, XXX (4) (1982), 552.

³¹ Hans-Georg Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 4.

³² Guy Hermet, *Les populismes...*, 16, 41, 45, 49, 52.

³³ Pierre-André Taguieff, *L’illusion populiste*, 80, 84; Pierre-André Taguieff, “Le populisme”, *Universalia* 1996 (Paris: Encyclopedia Universalis, 1996), 120.

³⁴ Paul Taggart, *Populism*, 13.

interpreting the social dynamics, as a style of political behaviour, as a set of beliefs and principles that form the basis of a political culture, as a rhetorical register, or as a formula of legitimation that can act as the basis of a regime. It presents different intensities depending on the context and circumstances that accompany it, which favour or hinder its expression and diffusion. This path might be a first step towards overcoming “the Cinderella complex”, by providing points of reference that are not excessively rigid in an analysis of the manifestations of populism in the political framework, without succumbing to the temptation to use the word indiscriminately. Still, in order to finally get over the frustration of searching for an elusive object, further clarifications are required.

Which People?

A further clarification can be made by specifying which people’s mentality is referred to when the term *populism* is used. A review of the meanings that the populist protagonists assign to the object of their veneration offers somewhat divergent answers to the aforementioned question. Margaret Canovan, who builds her explanatory framework on the connotations of the term *people* in English, identifies four aspects within the anti-establishment campaigns. The first appeals to the “united people” or the nation, understood as a cohesive entity that parties tend to divide; in this case, the function that populism assigns itself is to lay the foundations of a unique representative organisation of the people, placed above the ideological and class divisions it aims to discard. A second populist version uses the *people* in reference to the common people, the populace of the dispossessed, the poor, or the humble workers, whose resentment is used in the polemic against the ruling classes, which exercise power in order to become rich. By contrast, if the appeal favours the ordinary people, or normal citizens, the populist target is the establishment of the professional politicians and their arrogant indifference to basic demands that are not consistent with their interests, the lack of transparency in their actions, and their deafness to the protests from below. Finally, the ethnic people represents the specific community, the so-called “our people”, characterised by an identity and a tradition that share particular cultural, linguistic, religious and racial roots, whose persistence must be defended and used to create a barrier against strangers, foreigners and/or immigrants, who can never be fully assimilated.³⁵

³⁵ Margaret Canovan, “Il populismo...”, 54-57.

Mény and Surel distinguish three meanings of the word, each connectable to different uses. The *sovereign people* is the foundation of the governments' political legitimacy. On its behalf, the populists challenge the alleged betrayals committed by the representative elites in power and claim tools of grass-roots control over decisions related to the public interest, such as referenda, bills of popular initiative and mechanisms for the revocation of public officials elected or appointed, in a sort of updated revival of the imperative mandate. The *people-class* refers to the common people, the humble part of the population, the microcosm of the neglected, the anonymous crowd who suffer the consequences of the processes that are decided and initiated by those with economic power and by politicians who look after their own interests, such as financial speculations, the dismantlement and transfer of productive structures, and economic reorganisations that burden the "ordinary people", or the "small people" with the social costs of unemployment or precarious employment. The *nation-people* is directly connected to the cultural connotations of an *ethnos*; it refers to a group whose cohesion is ensured by geographical, historical and biological bounds, "according to a particular intellectual tradition that makes this community a real body, which exceeds and dominates the will of all individuals". Based on this vision, one can refer to the *people* in order to fight the "threats" of the multi-ethnic society, within which the populists see the immigrants as instruments, the cosmopolitan intellectuals and the economic powers as creators and the conniving members of the political class as guarantors.³⁶

Even if they do not provide an exhaustive description, these two classifications illustrate the most striking feature of the notion of the *people* as used by the populists: its characteristic of being an "imagined community", mythologised, simultaneously in part and as a whole, as a total entity but also as a component that is elevated to the paradigm of an idealised set, which is better and more complete than its real manifestations. In the ideal image of the populists, the *people* is a fundamentally homogeneous totality, which is neither undifferentiated nor egalitarian, because it accepts and valorises the hierarchies and the functions that are considered natural; it is an organic community made up of traditions that have occurred and consolidated with the succession of generations; it is the custodian of positive virtues linked to experience and it is conscious of its own identity and interests, which coincide with the common good. In this perspective, one belongs to the *people* not because of a particular social or professional status, but because of a common

³⁶ Yves Mény and Yves Surel, *Par le peuple...*

destiny that tradition and circumstances have fated them: one feels part of the *people*, by instinctively accepting an identity experienced within, based on a sentiment of brotherhood.³⁷ Only those under the influence of the manipulative strategies promoted by the enemies of the community are subtracted from this group. The authentic *people* is a community in all respects superior to the individuals that compose it, and only as such can one feel that their actions have a fully satisfactory meaning and can be fulfilled.

For contingent and instrumental reasons, populists refer to the *ethnos* rather than to the *demos*, to the derelict rather than to the honest people. They cultivate an ideal conception of the people that emphasises unity, homogeneity and uniqueness. Every populist movement, leader or regime looks to “their” people while often expanding the Manichean vision of the eternal conflict between the exploited masses and the exploiting ruling classes into a universal rule of politics. It would make no sense to assume literally the expression the “people-class”, to which Mény and Surel refer, because according to the populist mentality, every form of division of the community into separate and non-communicating groups is unacceptable: those who support the existence of distinct classes, following distinct interests, may stir up pernicious internal conflicts. The use of *people-plebes* is more legitimate because it implies a polemical reference to the state of unjust subordination into which the crowd of “no names” is forced by those who impose upon it the burden of their own political, economic, intellectual or sometimes even religious power. In this case, the iconography to which one can refer is that of the “small” in opposition to the “big”, in a transposition of the battle between David and Goliath; nonetheless, the size issue - the number - is on the side of the good contender in this case.

By evoking the image of the people, but also that of the common people or the silent majorities subjugated and deceived by the noisy minorities, populists accuse the ruling classes of seizing power for their own benefit. Within this argumentation, the people are always depicted as victims to whom populists offer redemption and revenge, whether they are in opposition to the establishment (those at the bottom are asked to rebel against those who are undeservingly at the top) or in a position of seizing power. Once the responsibility of government has been assumed, populists are motivated to highlight the solidarity aspect of the populist message, to encourage commitment and total sacrifice for achieving the common goals

³⁷ This aspect is particularly developed by Ludovico Incisa di Camerana, *Fascismo Populismo Modernizzazione*, 353, 363.

that will benefit, above all, those who are on the lowest rungs of the social ladder, without penalising the other groups. The most praised virtues are usually those related to the “ordinary people”, starting with common sense and the work ethic, the object of a true *apologia* of everyday anonymous heroism. As it has been noted, populism proposes “a placid model of the society of the small, minute enterprises, of domestic ambitions, of close cooperation between partners driven by an almost familial, trusting mutual aid”.³⁸ However, if the appeal to the people is targeted primarily at preserving their identity, populists emphasise the reaffirmation of its ethnic connotations. The populist polemic is then directed mainly to another category of aliens: strangers and, more generally, those who are “different”, those who exclude themselves from the standardised rules and the common habits of the community. However, they are not always banned. In some cases they are asked to repent - if the diversity that distinguishes them is connected to ethically stigmatised behaviours - or to be assimilated through the services they render to the community and by renouncing the features that distinguish them from the other members of the community, like their cultural stigmata or religious beliefs.³⁹

Despite the various nuances of meaning it promotes, the substance of the populist message remains the same: the community must come together, stitch the wounds that have been inflicted upon it, assume direct leadership of the society that has fallen into inexperienced or dishonest hands, impose its good sense, find its lost cohesion, react to the risks of disintegration or decay, and reaffirm the precepts of the natural order. The *enemies of the people* fiercely oppose the achievement of these objectives.

The populist mental universe is, in fact, structured in a dichotomised and Manichaean form: those who do not belong to the people, who do not match its ideal image, who do not cultivate the values upon which the local traditions are based are the “non-people”: a threat, a snare, an obstacle to be removed. And the task that populists assume is to track down these enemies, even when they act behind the anonymity of institutions, to denounce the danger they represent and to fight them. Populists reassure their followers that they are willing to overcome their innate reluctance to get involved in politics - a sphere of action that they consider treacherous and impure, and unnecessarily complicated - by putting their energies into a replica of the myth of Cincinnatus, in the service of the common good.

³⁸ Guy Hermet, *Les populismes...*, 75.

³⁹ Not equally important is, in general, the colour of skin, which explains why populism has proved to be a successful political formula in societies characterised by a deep-rooted ethnic mixture, such as those from Latin America.

The keystone of the populist mentality is a distrust of anything that cannot be contained in the dimension of immediacy, simplicity, the direct and visible relationship with reality, customs and traditions. The populists' first enemy is not the elite as such, but the ruling class that has betrayed its commitment to meet the needs and desires of those who legitimise its position. Although its proponents sometimes claim otherwise, the populist project aims to cleanse politics; they do not aim to upset the social order through a revolution. Certain positions of social status, acquired through commendable work and productive commitment, are not called into question; populists blame and strike down the privileges that are obtained without merit, in an unclear manner. The populist hostility toward the elite is to be understood as the condemnation of a block of self-referential power, an oligarchic group that remains disdainfully aloof from the common people, whose procedures are blurred by the laws of *omertà* and confidentiality, according to the image, which is not always only metaphorical, of inaccessible buildings where the decisions that count are made.

To confirm this, the place of honour in the pantheon of the populist enemies of the people is granted to politics. Parties and professional politicians are considered responsible for society's unresolved problems and, as such, populism denounces the politicians' permeability to corruption and clientelism, their indifference to the wishes of the masses, their quarrelsomeness, their inconsistency, etc. Populism rebukes the spirit of caste that characterises those who make their living from politics, along with their obscure language exhibited as a status symbol, their sensibility towards the specific interests of those who can provide them with a re-election, and the unjustified wealth of those who "only know how to talk" in life and refuse to get their hands dirty with any "real" work. Populists deplore Parliament's waste of time, its hypocritical rituality, and its exasperated propensity to mediation and compromise. When this simplistic vision of social processes typical of populism is applied to politics, the result is the demand for quick and transparent political management, out of a belief that many solutions to old problems would be easily found if only politicians had recourse to the common sense each citizen uses to solve everyday problems. If this simple solution is not adopted, it is because it does not match the interests of this or that group of powerful and professional politicians, who can postpone solutions and blackmail their clients in order to obtain illegal benefits.

This way of seeing things has led to the systematic association or downright equivalency between populism and anti-politics; but although the association is quite frequent, the equivalence between the two

phenomena is not justified. Populists are actually driven by impatience and by the cult of simplification in their distrust of politics, which they depict as a place where laziness, corruption and parasitism reign; hence, they do not shy away from political competition for the achievement of consensus and the leverages of power. In fact, their imperative is to overthrow the professional political group and replace it with new men, forged through labour and competence, who are therefore able to present themselves as successful dilettantes, motivated solely by civic passion. Their action is anti-political when it is expressed in pure forms of protest, but every time they act in the arena of institutionalised competition, starting from participation in the elections, it becomes purely political action, even if it is explicitly oriented against the establishment.

Moreover, the populist mentality does not circumscribe its enemies to the political arena. Its vision extends to the whole society and targets other groups of parasites, the members of the oligarchy that the people should get rid of. In the economic field, populism accepts the formation of wealth built on work, intelligence and exhaustion - essential components of its praise for the common people - but it rejects the power of dematerialised, anonymous and cosmopolitan finances. As opposed to a productive capitalism considered "popular" and, therefore, healthy and legitimate, "usurer" capitalism is sometimes one of populism's favourite targets. The collusion between the power of the financiers (the puppeteers) and the politicians (the puppets) is often at the target of its invectives. Hierarchies based on money clash with the populist ideals and so the negative effects of the economy are linked to another bogeyman of populism: class struggle. Even in its socialist versions, frequent in the Third World, populism embraces an ideal of reconciliation for the community, founded on the primacy of paternalistically administered social justice, by whipping out the instigators of internal conflicts. Its leaders preach "emotional national meetings of old friends in which workers fraternised with the owners, the inhabitants of the cities with those of the rural areas, and from which the only people that should be excluded are corrupt politicians, bureaucrats furnished with diplomas but without souls, and other intellectuals".⁴⁰

The last two categories cited from Guy Hermet's work complete the album of populism's traditional enemies. Like technocrats and experts, bureaucrats are accused of blurring, in various simultaneous forms, the simple and natural vision of the society that is so dear to populists. Their language negates the simplicity and the immediacy of interpersonal

⁴⁰ Guy Hermet, *Les populistes...*, 73.

relationships; their slowness and the prudence that characterises their way of acting is not interpreted as a requirement for their position, but as a sign of ill-will and arrogance (when it comes to bureaucrats) or of haughtiness and detachment (when it comes to technocrats and experts). However, the real prototype of the arrogant time-waster, who is detested by populists, is the intellectual. Intellectuals increase their guilt by accusing of rudeness and stupidity those who describe them as slackers unfit for “real” work. Populists regard intellectuals, in particular those who came into the limelight of politics through the media, as sources of discord: their theories and ideas are seen to have the unforgivable defect of abstractness, serving only to distract the public attention from the problems of daily life by further complicating their resolution. To this parasitic caste, populists usually also attribute the responsibility for the corruption of the moral principles on which the people built their original cohesion, now corroded and in need of being rebuilt. In order to prove this causal link, their discourse often quotes the fact that, in general, intellectuals are the source of the much-needed solidarity with those who are “different”: homosexuals, the homeless, outcasts who refuse to work, and so on.

One last but important group of enemies of the people concerns the external agents that may harm the compactness of the society. The populist arguments often indulge in conspiracy theories about the harmful influences of strong powers, fifth columns, invaders, international organisations, and cosmopolitan groups. From this perspective, the leading role has for decades been assigned to persons suspected of being influenced or manipulated by foreign interests, such as the Masons or Jews. Recently, populist suspicion has focused on immigrants from other countries and on those subjects or organisations accused of orchestrating, preparing or facilitating their entrance. Internationalism and cosmopolitanism have always been abhorred, but they have gradually assumed the form of multi-ethnic and multicultural coexistence, aspects that are even more worrisome in the eyes of those who share a populist mentality, because they introduce an element of stable division in the society and further complicate the relationship between its members. This explains why contemporary populist movements have laid such a strong emphasis on preaching xenophobic opinions. Of course, the idealisation of the people and the ousting of its enemies are not the only important characteristics of populism: we should also mention the special cures proposed for getting rid of the dangers that threaten the community of which the people are the essential glue.

Because populism is generally represented as a reaction to the sense that the foundations of the community are crumbling, its first message

focuses on the reassurance that it is possible to overcome difficulties, fractures and internal conflicts. For this to happen, it is necessary to recover the ethical tension that has been lost due to political corruption and immorality. Populist moralism seeks to comply with the way of living and thinking and with the penchants of “ordinary mortals”, who are “in general, rigorous in their values, rebellious to the change or relaxation of moral behaviour, impervious, by conviction or by force, to corruption by money and subterfuges, and unsympathetic to the new behaviours of the increasingly permissive elites”.⁴¹ The bad habits that have been established by grafting foreign models onto the authentic popular culture must be eradicated, and when this work of restoration has run its course, the dream of a better future will come true. Moral redemption, however, is a prerequisite for this promise of regeneration becoming translated into a reality; still, it is not sufficient if it is not accompanied by adequate political tools and, above all, by the men and women who are capable of mastering them and putting them to the right use.

The presence of a leader who knows how to give a voice to the people, to adopt a similar behaviour, to capture and guide their aspirations, in short, who knows how to embody their characteristics and needs, is one of the fundamental features of populism’s political manifestations. It is almost always a single exponent that provides credibility to the movement, which chooses him as its leader and follows him, entrusting its fate to him. A populist leader, however, should not be considered as equal to a charismatic leader: the former may indeed exhibit uncommon qualities, but can never make the mistake of showing that he is made of ingredients other than those of the ordinary people he addresses. The first of his abilities consists precisely in never clearing out those characteristic features, such as the language or the gestures that support this similarity with his audience of followers. He acts as an example of the simplicity that the movement intends to return to politics. He has to demonstrate that the demands of the citizens can be expressed without recourse to the lengthy mechanisms of the representative process. The relationship of unlimited trust that binds followers to their leader in a pact of mutual solidarity is proof that a different politics, based on a face-to-face relationship between the rulers and the ruled, is possible. Once again, populism refers to the contrast that is at the basis of its assumptions: on one hand, the spontaneity of communication that takes place between ordinary citizens and the leader who immediately knows how to interpret their requests, and, on the other hand, the isolation of the ruling classes in locations that are

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

inaccessible to the ordinary people' requests, in which unnecessarily complicated procedural rites are celebrated, without solving the problems that irritate or anguish the common citizens.

“Shadow” or “Spectrum” of Democracy?

The populist distrust against the mechanisms of representation is evident, but it does not necessarily translate into a denial of democracy. The relationship between populism and democracy is controversial. Of course, the tendency is to rely on “strong men”, who rise to the position of exclusive spokesmen for the interests of the community, who can foster latent authoritarian temptations, in particular in contexts where democratic institutions are fragile. Still, in institutionalised democracies, they can act as demagogic or tribunitian ventilation valves for the tension and protests aroused by the lack of trust in the efficiency of the regime or by the disillusionment with the unfulfilled promises made by the political class. As such, they can help to maintain a crisis within the limits of an ordinary conflict and even to reinforce the demands for an increased democratisation of the relationship between the civil society and the institutions. In short, “while populism embodies an ideological corruption of democracy, it also expresses a need for participatory democracy and active citizenship, which the well-tempered functional system of representative democracy is not capable of satisfying”.⁴² Rather than rejecting the principle of representation, populists aim to modify its nature; the ideal democracy that they dream of relies on an imperative mandate, but, in practice, they ask for its simplification and integration with the tools of direct democracy. If anything, their framework leads to idealising the potential of ordinary men to become active citizens, aware of the need to participate in public life and keen to bear the costs of commitment and information in order to regain the exercise of the power that theoretically belongs to them.

From this point of view, populism is in opposition to the typical authoritarian mentality, which favours mass apathy in order to give free rein to the rulers; it can be described as an extreme form of democracy “because it seeks to maintain as much power as possible in the hands of the citizens [and] it is therefore hostile to parties and intermediary organisations”.⁴³ This fosters the argument that it can be “a resource, a

⁴² Pierre-André Taguieff, *L'illusion populiste*, 25.

⁴³ Mario G. Losano, “Peronismo e giustizialismo: significati diversi in Italia e in Sudamerica”, *Teoria politica*, XIX (1) (2003), 6.

moment of research, an electric shock for political settings that are undergoing a crisis of representation and that are increasingly unable to arouse the slightest emotion or passion, being perceived as ever more glacial and distant in comparison with the real life of the people"; it is considered an inevitable reaction to "the objective involution, in an oligarchic-bureaucratic direction, of the contemporary democratic-representative political regimes" and to the loss of democratic legitimacy in most of the public institutions.⁴⁴ Similar concerns about the risks of alienation between the public opinion and the institutions and of an isolation of the political class within an oligarchic compromise have, however, also generated the opposite interpretation: this condemns populism as "a highly regressive phenomenon, typical of a condition of economic and cultural underdevelopment [...], a simple reaction to modernity".⁴⁵

The diversity of opinions is only apparently paradoxical, since the democratic potentialities of populism are always conditioned by historical circumstances and the types of establishment. As such, populism may seem to be compatible with a liberal institutional framework (when it promotes the demand for a better and more faithful representation) or may oppose it (when it invokes overcoming representation in order to provide room for a more authentic popular power). In terms of ideal preferences, however, populism shows a marked distrust of pluralism. In some cases, this is considered "a pathology to be healed rather than a physiological condition of the modern society"⁴⁶ and it is usually tolerated as an inevitable imperfection of contemporary society; attempts are made to circumscribe its manifestations to the political-electoral arena and to avoid its development into an overly individualistic perspective, which would undermine the foundations of the feeling of solidarity that is the glue that holds together the organic unity of the people.

The limited appeal of pluralism, institutions and bureaucracy has always made the definition of a clear dividing line between populism and democracy problematic. Peter Worsley has argued that populism is not, in itself, either democratic or undemocratic: still, because of its propensity to encourage the citizens' direct participation in the management of the community, it has to be considered compatible with democracy.⁴⁷ The following considerations expressed by the majority of scholars have

⁴⁴ Alessandro Campi, "Populismo: oltre gli stereotipi", *Ideazione*, VII (2) (2000), 29-30.

⁴⁵ Nicola Matteucci, *Dal populismo...*, 5, 79.

⁴⁶ Loris Zanatta, "Il populismo...", 271.

⁴⁷ Peter Worsley, "The Concept of Populism", 246-247.

emphasised the ambivalence of this issue. Mény and Surel describe populism as characterised by a “game of rising democratic expectations”; they consider that it is close to democracy by virtue of its ideal reference - popular sovereignty - and far away from it as regards the different meaning that it assigns. What, in their opinion, more clearly separates the populist from the modern embodiment of democratic ideals, in other words from liberal polyarchy, is the different interpretation it gives to the principle of representation. In the case of populism, the principle of representation is based on the assumption of homology, similarity and proximity between the representatives and the represented, while the liberal perspective emphasises the autonomy of judgment and action of the former in relation to the latter. Far from being a minor difference, this does not lead populism to a frontal clash with liberal democracy, but to being its significant critical and dissident component.⁴⁸ A similar belief is expressed by Margaret Canovan when she writes that “populism is a shadow cast by the same democracy”: democracy “brings with it”⁴⁹ populism, and populism therefore reproduces the democratic profile, albeit with features that are distorted by the specific perspective it adopts. Populism challenges democracy on its own ground, in the name of unmasking the elites’ power behind the “bluff” of “a system in which the people are allowed to vote, but the real power is channelled away from them towards a more liberal and enlightened elite”, and in which popular sovereignty is nothing but “a necessary lie”, an “elaborate ruse” backed by “false promises”.⁵⁰

In this interpretation, populism is seen as another, different projection of the ideal premises of democratic theory, meant to bypass the institutions and reaffirm that only a respect of the effective will of the people legitimises the power of those vested with the task of representing them. Still, if populism can be seen as the shadow of democracy, it is also its spectre, a ghost that accompanies and haunts it. It is through this lens that B. Arditì regards populism as “a possibility included in the modern practice of democracy”,⁵¹ which can manifest in three different forms: as audience democracy or as a trust given to outstanding personalities made popular by the media and by non-institutional mechanisms; as a form of participation in public life that does not comply with current standards; as

⁴⁸ Yves Mény e Yves Surel, *Par le peuple....*

⁴⁹ Margaret Canovan, “Il populismo...”, 47; Margaret Canovan, “Margaret Canovan, Abbiate fede nel popolo! Il populismo e i due volti della democrazia”, 25.

⁵⁰ Margaret Canovan, “Il populismo...”, 49-50.

⁵¹ Benjamin Arditì, “Populism as a Spectre of Democracy: A Response to Canovan”, *Political Studies*, 52 (1) (2004): 135-143.

a mistrust of the institutional procedures that can result in a purely discretionary acceptance of the legal provisions. Depending on the form they take, these trends can fuel new forms of public opinion mobilisation and organisation, with positive effects in terms of balancing the political elite's increasing lack of transparency and legitimacy,⁵² by shaping populism into a kind of "internal periphery of democratic politics", or by spreading authoritarian tendencies at the level of the masses.⁵³

Whether it is a stimulus or a threat, it is undeniable that the populist mentality finds fertile soil for growth within democracy, confirming the hypothesis that wherever there is political representation, populism is ubiquitous, as a potential movement or a system of ideas that may be advocated by various political movements.⁵⁴ In other words, whoever can grasp the effective coordinates of populism can also measure the empirical extent - particularly broad at present - of the phenomena that refer to it. The possibility of verifying the extent to which this potentially ubiquitous phenomenon has currently materialised in today's democratic politics, as well as of denying the alleged (and overrated) abstract intangibility of the concept of populism, finally offers political science the opportunity to overcome the "Cinderella complex" from which it has suffered ever since it has been challenged by this object of study, considered mysterious for far too long.

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⁵² See on this topic the considerations of Jack Hayward, "The Populist Challenge to Elitist Democracy in Europe", *Elitism, Populism, and European Politics*, ed. Jack Hayward (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 10-32.

⁵³ Benjamin Arditi, "Populism as a Spectre...", 140-143.

⁵⁴ Paul Taggart, *Populism*, 115-116.

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PART II:

POPULISM IN THE WORLD

A LATIN-AMERICAN POLEMIC: POPULISM

YANN BASSET AND STEPHEN LAUNAY

Introduction

Latin America has not experienced the emergence of populism in the true sense of the word. Instead, it has been exposed to “consolidated” forms¹ of populism and has developed the most complex theories about it. However, these theories have been somehow cast into oblivion over the past two decades. The term tends to be used in the sense of what it stands for in other cultural areas, cursorily designating a political leader who constantly clamours or calls out to his people. In fact, Latin America has enjoyed the presence of many colourful personalities. After independence, the emergence of *caudillismo* ushered in the first signs of the various aspects that populism would entail in the future. However, *caudillismo* appeared in the political vacuum left by the disappearance of the Spanish Empire in the 1820s. And while it is possible to detect similar characteristics between “super-*caudillismo*” and populism, as the Venezuelan writer Rangel emphasises², the word “populism” appeared in the specialised literature of Latin America no sooner than in the 20th century; in the 1960s, to be more precise, with reference to events that had taken place in the 1930s and 1940s. If populism should not be confused with *caudillismo* (that is, with an exaggerated personification of power), it should much less be confounded with the numerous dictatorships, of various kinds, which the region has witnessed since obtaining independence. As we shall see, populism is closely and intricately related to the principle of the people’s sovereignty, whether it is applied to a leader, a movement, an ideology or a regime. However, the current usage of the term has spread so much that

¹ Guy Hermet, *Les populismes dans le monde. Une histoire sociologique, XIXe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2001), chap. VII.

² Carlos Rangel, *Del buen salvaje al buen revolucionario* (Caracas: Monte Avila, 1976), chap. IX.

the need to clarify its major theoretical and practical aspects has been acutely felt over the past few years.

Thus, the subject of populism is currently often cited in debates on the prevalence of the classical vs. the modern interpretations.³ This may conjure up images of the Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and his colourful speeches against the “Empire” of the United States of America and its allies. For other observers, populism is emblematic of the Argentinian Juan Domingo Perón and his wife, Evita, delivering speeches to the crowd of the *descamisados* from the balcony of the *Casa Rosada*, the headquarters of the Argentinian government in the 1940s-1950s. Of course, there are many similarities between the events of the two eras, especially the high importance of an aggressive and authoritarian type of presidential discourse, which may create deep rifts in the society, dividing it into supporters vs. opponents. Implicitly, the social inequalities in the Latin American political life, with their potential for social polarisation and instability, represent the structural background of these events. However, the differences between them are equally important and they cannot be reduced to the contexts of the two periods. These have led to different ways of approaching populism not only from an analytical, but also from an axiological point of view, which is probably much more important for understanding this debate.

The empirical variations of the populist phenomena point to the difficulty of developing a canonical definition of Latin American populism, in the manner of the definitions that currently exist for fascism and totalitarianism (although they are still subject to debate), and also to the need of squaring up these theoretical and practical changes of paradigm in the hope of outlining an ideal type. In fact, populism in Latin America does not represent a homogeneous reality at all, as the term tentatively encompasses both the common and the divergent characteristics of diverse political phenomena. This is the paradox that needs to be clarified in the Latin American context. This chapter does not aim to assert the supremacy of one theory over another or to propose a new one. Instead, it will critically overview the main stages of the Latin American populist current by resorting to an elaborate comparative method. Each of

³ We shall adopt here the image used as the title of a work on this theme by Guy Hermet, Soledad Loaeza and Jean-Francois Prud’homme, published 10 years ago by the College of México: *Del populismo de los antiguos al populismo de los modernos* (México: El Colegio de México, 2001). For a general theoretical overview that starts from the cases of Argentina, Bolivia and Peru, see Yann Basset, *Les transformations du populisme en Amérique Latine. Réflexions à partir des cas argentin, bolivien et péruvien* (PhD Diss., University of Paris III, 2009).

these stages will be based on cases considered to be emblematic of populism, despite the widespread dissemination of the phenomenon in the region.

The Populism of the Classics

First of all, the limits of the image used previously need to be pointed out. The classics are not as ancient as one might think, and the moderns are not exactly our contemporaries. The theoretical references of the former date back to the 1960s, while those of the latter go back to the early 1990s, when Lieutenant-Colonel Chávez was but a military who had been imprisoned for a military *coup* attempt. This allows us to observe in passing that the theme of populism cannot be extended beyond the 20th century. The traditional *caudillo* politics that has been characteristic of political life in the region ever since the revolutions of independence from the beginning of the 19th century has certainly represented a phenomenon that can also be found in the populist manifestations. However, it appears that these are not limited to the tendency of granting disproportionate power to certain messianic political figures, despite the insistence of most Latin American literature. In addition, the emphasis on *caudillismo* may lead to neglecting other - civil and legal - aspects of Latin American politics, which, even though violently contested by the populist experiences, have not disappeared completely, as demonstrated, for instance, by the tendency to propose new constitutions.

In 1969, Ernest Gellner and Ghiță Ionescu published the first attempt to develop a theory of populism in general. The first part of this work began with an examination of each individual region. The case of Latin America was then the subject of a study by Alistair Hennessy, who analysed the characteristics of Latin American populism and examined - somewhat sceptically - the Mexican revolution, the Indian uprisings in the Andean regions from the Spanish epoch until the 1952 National Revolution in Bolivia and the Revolution from Cuba. The uses of the concept of populism to describe Peronism and the similar movements of the 1940s and 1950s across the continent led him to write:

Although, at a very general level, it would make sense to classify [as populist] these reformist parties that are in opposition to the initially limited oligarchic parties, this definition appears to be too broad and, because it requires a wide range of “sub-populisms”, it lessens the value of the original concept.⁴

⁴ *Ibid.*, 39-40. Translated from Romanian into English [translator's note].

Hennessy chose to rely on the meaning granted to the concept of populism in other cultural areas, particularly in the United States, Russia and Eastern Europe, in his attempt to find a Latin American equivalent in the movements associated with the peasantry. Given the sheer distance, the epistemological choice made by Hennessy is surprising, to say the least. Since then, the 1970s have consecrated what might be called - in a slightly forced manner - the “classical” theory of Latin American populism, the theory of the classics, which has many adherents. This classical theory is actually quite varied, having been adopted and influenced by different currents, ranging from developmentalism to the dependency theory and including Marxism as well. In short, these versions differ primarily through their doctrinal nuances. From an analytical point of view, they can be deemed to be complementary; this has certainly contributed to the success of the classical theory, which has been used by the conservatives, the liberals or the Marxists.

The Italian-Argentine sociologist Gino Germani is considered to be the father of the classical theory of populism, which he elaborated in a study on the changes occurring in the Latin American societies from the early 1960s on.⁵ In this work, Germani deployed an impressive theoretical arsenal, based on North American sociology, in order to analyse the paradoxical process of modernisation affecting the societies in the region and, in particular, his adoptive country, Argentina. Germani mainly dealt with the “asynchronous” phenomena triggered in the mental and social structures by the late albeit swift urbanisation. The Latin American cities were populated by an industrial proletariat, which remained deeply marked by a traditional culture stemming from the rural environment and preserved its authoritarian and conservative values. Unlike the first generation of workers from the beginning of the 20th century, who were socialised into unions by workers who were influenced by anarchism and socialism, mainly because of the immigrants from Southern Europe, the second generation was to become an “available mass”, lending itself to manipulation by the authoritarian power. Germani elucidated the paradox of these “national-popular” movements, which had brought to power people like Perón in Argentina, Vargas in Brazil, and many others. They were either reformists or nationalist conservatives, supported by the labour movements, rather influenced by the internationalist tradition, authoritarian and synonymous with the liberation and integration of the urban popular

⁵ Gino Germani, *Authoritarianism, Fascism, National Populism* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Inc., 1978).

sectors that had been relegated, so far, to the margins of society and away from political life.

However, Germani did not use the term “populism” in this paper. His colleague and former student Torcuato Di Tella was the one who introduced it three years later in an article in which he resumed Germani’s analysis, by way of a comparison that he extended to other movements he considered to be similar, from various developing countries, such as the Congress Party in India or Nasserism in Egypt.⁶ Therefore, the term “populism” was imported in Latin America to refer to the popular national movements exposed by Germani, based on their similarity to other phenomena with common characteristics, which had previously already been the subject of such characterisations. What distinguished *a priori* classical Latin American populism from other forms of populism - its type of urban movement - was actually interpreted as a false distinction. Behind this urban character there lay a traditional idiosyncrasy inherited from the rural environment.

Subsequently, the use of the term populism spread in Latin America thanks to the contributions of two major schools of thought in vogue at that time. The dependency theory adopted the concept of populism from the famous work of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Falletto, *Dépendance et développement en Amérique Latine*⁷ [*Dependency and Development in Latin America*] (1969), whose prestige in the region was linked to that of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC or CEPAL), and to its political programs of “import replacement”. For these authors, populism could be explained less by the rapid and unequal modernisation of the societies in Latin America than by their dependence on central economies, where development took place in the region. The result was a strong structural dualism between a dominant sector, oriented towards the export economy, and a dominated domestic sector. Populism was based on actors associated with the latter, and sought especially to eliminate the dependency relationships in order to allow the internal market to develop, particularly in the industrial sector, with a pre-established intervention margin on the part of the state.

On the other hand, Marxism developed its theories with an emphasis on the class structure of the Latin American societies and their political

⁶ Torcuato Di Tella, “Populismo y reformismo”, in *Populismo y contradicciones de clase en Latinoamérica*, ed. Octavio Ianni et al. (México: Era, 1973 [1965]), 38-82.

⁷ Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Falletto, *Dependencia y desarrollo en América Latina* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1969).

consequences.⁸ The existence of a peripheral and delayed capitalist system in Latin America had allegedly led to the poor development of the modern bourgeoisie and the proletariat, against a background that included: a rural oligarchy that was still strong and had rallied itself to the agro-exporting system; a large dominated peasant class; and weak middle classes, with a role in the development of the state. The decline of the agro-exporting system after the 1929 crisis had weakened the oligarchy without leading to its complete disappearance; this engendered “a state of compromise”, in which no class managed to impose its hegemony. This then led to the emergence of populist movements, which featured a “class alliance” between the proletariat, the industrial bourgeoisie and the middle classes, against the interests of the rural oligarchy. The state could benefit from a high degree of autonomy, which allowed it to intervene towards strengthening the domestic market through authoritarian methods, a model that could be compared with Bonapartism, as it was interpreted by Marx.

These three versions - the sociology of modernisation, the dependency theory and Marxism - had several elements in common. First, an assumption according to which populism was a necessary “phase” in the development of the Latin American societies. Second, this stage was regarded as an “anomaly” in terms of the “normal” development of the modern societies. The case of Western Europe was now an implicit model and the idea of populism worked as an explanation for non-compliance with the model.

An additional reason for the success of the classical theory is the idea adopted by a significant number of Latin American progressive intellectuals: the need to collaborate with the populist movements. This commitment was explicitly stated in Di Tella’s 1965 article. The populist movements were actually the equivalent of the European socialist movements, which could not have occurred as such in the Latin American societies for all the reasons already mentioned above (contradictions in the process of modernisation, dependency, the weak class structure, etc.). Despite their authoritarian and aggressive nationalism, they had performed the “historic role” of accelerating modernisation, development, as well as the emergence and integration of the working class. Consequently, they had to be favoured. The idea was taken over by the “National Left” that relied on an “anti-imperialist” and “anti-oligarchic” discourse and integrated the populist movements that had previously been regarded with contempt by the progressive intellectuals.

⁸ Octavio Ianni *et al.*, *Populismo y contradicciones de clase en Latinoamérica* (México: Era, 1973).

Paradoxically, when the national left formulated this proposal, the “historic moment” of “class alliances” seemed to have passed. Some Marxists had already warned that populism was entering a period of decline with the proliferation of the military *coups*.⁹ In particular, the 1964 *coup* from Brazil, which overthrew the populist government of Joao Goulart, Vargas’s political heir, was seen as an intensification of class struggle, which generated a polarity that would preclude the alliance between the proletariat and the national bourgeoisie from continuing. Radicalisation in both camps gave rise to serious tensions, to the point where the military felt compelled to put each in its place and obtain the support of all the majority classes, united against the “communist threat” once again. In other words, populism became a victim of its own success. In the more advanced countries, it managed to develop a modern capitalist industrial sector, which fostered the class struggle it claimed to eschew by assuming the role of an arbitrator between the employers and the unions. In fact, the political context should also be carefully observed in order to understand the fate of the populist movements. They reached the apogee in the 1940s-1950s, with the presidency of Perón in Argentina (1946-1955) and Getulio Vargas’ democratic government in Brazil (1951-1954), which were the most significant cases in this respect.

However, in those times, the political scene in Latin America was still interpreted both outside and inside the region as part of the struggle between liberal democracies and fascism. Populist theories were thus assimilated with fascist theories by their political opponents: in particular by the communist parties (CP), at a time when anti-fascism was the official policy of the Communist International, and by the United States during the Second World War, insofar as the anti-imperialism of these movements could easily be seen as partial towards the Axis powers. When the international context led to the Cold War, these movements were accused of being sympathetic towards communism. Those who actually enjoyed the support and participation of the CP, such as Jacobo Árbenz’s government in Guatemala, stumbled against the hostility of the U.S., which actively intervened against them.

The others (the great majority, because of the hostility that had prevailed between the populist movements and the left) could still count on the Americans’ support; so did the governments that followed in the wake of the 1952 Bolivian National Revolution, until - that is - the Cuban Revolution and, then, Cuba’s adherence to the Communist bloc broadened

⁹ Octavio Ianni et al., *O colapso do populismo no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização brasileira, 1968).

the divide. The Cuban Revolution (1959) led to a realignment and radicalisation of the political cleavages in the region. Almost all the countries were confronted with the emergence of the guerrillas backed by Castro and witnessed the fascination this aroused especially among the students. These movements were the sign of the radicalisation of a small minority of the population, but also the proof of the fact that the populist governments had been unable to maintain the balance, in this new context, between the popular sectors and a part of the elite.

On the one hand, the national left was pressing for a stricter policy against foreign capital. It also demanded a land reform, which the populist movements had carefully avoided until then so as not to exacerbate the hostility of the landowners (their taxes had financed the industrial development). The populist governments generally adopted generous social reforms in favour of the working class, but did little for the farmers (aside from the governments that came to power after the Bolivian National Revolution). On the other hand, the entrepreneurs, the middle classes, and especially the military began to be concerned about the increasingly unstable social climate. The North American military cooperation, designed to prevent the dissemination of the Cuban model, allowed the armed forces not only to modernise, but also to feel invested with the political role of the guarantor of order against the “subversion” that the civil populist governments were both unable and unwilling to fight against.

Thus, the “populist phase” ended with a series of *coups d'état* that paved the way to the military regimes of the 1970s, which resorted, most of the times, to unprecedented repressive actions in the region, especially when related to the degree of social mobilisation that accompanied the populist movements. The failure to maintain the populist compromise after the 1960s actually registered an “exception that proved the rule” with Peronism. Having been removed from power in 1955, Perón went into exile in Madrid, and for nearly twenty years, he continued to maintain his importance on Argentina's political scene. Given that his status as an exile did not allow him to issue official political statements, he managed to maintain his supporters through his private correspondence and the visits he received in Spain. He was able to keep his most diverse followers in the Argentinian society and also to rally new ones in all the sectors that had been disappointed with the civilian and military governments which succeeded to power after 1955. Since he was absent from the Argentinian

political scene, everyone talked about him because he gave everyone the feeling that he pursued their own goals.¹⁰

Thus, Perón was able to artificially maintain the populist compromise. When the old *caudillo* returned to Argentina, with the consent of a military government that used all its civil support, his strategy was very complex. It included far-left guerrillas, which regarded him as the leader of a national liberation movement comparable to those in the decolonisation process from Africa and Asia (the *Montoneros* movements), and far right-wing circles that would later form the sinister “squadron of death” AAA (the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance), presented as the only defence against communism. Having been elected president in 1973, he proved unable to maintain a balance between these different currents.¹¹ After his death the following year, the country was gripped by acts of violence until the military *coup* of 1976, which opened the way to one of the most repressive regimes in the region.

On a theoretical level, an article published in 1978 answered - 13 years later - Di Tella’s article, serving as an epitaph to the hopes of the “National Left”.¹² Its authors highlighted the “national-popular” character of the classical theory, the “truly existing populist theories”, concluding that populism had been nothing but an experience of authoritarianism, in which the popular sectors had had no freedom of expression, since this had been replaced with the *caudillo*’s speech. By and large, the “classical” Latin American populist movements were political phenomena typical for 1940-1960. On a political level, they were marked by an aggressive nationalist and anti-imperialist discourse, which, once in power, veered into an authoritarian practice (based, though, on the legitimacy of the universal vote); on an economic level, they relied on interventionist and industrial programs or policies; while on a social level, they were capable of great mobilisation, focusing primarily on the sectors that were supervised by the workers’ unions.

Theoretical and Practical Transitions

The military stage that followed the populist stage gradually ushered in the transition to democracy in the late 1970s. Thus, during the 1980s, the

¹⁰ James Daniel, *Resistencia e integración* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1990 [1988]).

¹¹ Danilo Martuccelli and Maristella Svampa, *La plaza vacía* (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1997).

¹² Emilio De Ipola and Juan-Carlos Portantiero, “Lo nacional-popular y los populismos realmente existentes”, *Nueva Sociedad* 34 (1978).

theme of populism was slowly but surely abandoned by academics, who focused instead on the issue of democratisation. In addition, on a political level, the populist movements or their heirs seemed to be a thing of the past. In the first free elections during the transition period, they most often registered dramatic electoral defeats, whereas before they had been considered invincible. Thus, in 1983 in Argentina, the Peronist candidate lost to the young lawyer Ricardo Alfonsín, representing the Radical Civic Union; the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) in Peru and the Revolutionary National Movement (MNR) in Bolivia were weakened politically in 1980; and the Brazilian Leonel Brizola, Vargas' political heir, and Goulart, who in 1989 occupied the third place in the first of Brazil's direct presidential elections of the democratic period, lost their momentum.

Indeed, in the context of the democratic transitions, both the analysts and the political opponents of the populist movement imposed the idea of drawing a boundary between the democratic present and the past, which had been characterised by violence and authoritarianism and had alternated the military regimes and the populist movements of the previous periods.¹³ In order to enforce this boundary, they could invoke the fact that the hostility towards pluralism and the violation of the fundamental freedoms had continued from one period to the other, even though, unlike the military, the populist governments had proclaimed great respect for universal suffrage.

In a more subtle manner, during the democratic transition period, the dominant political discourse also tended to attack the social and economic premises of populism. It should be noted that the transition to democracy coincided chronologically with the debt crisis. The idea that an excess of popular demands might be fatal, in this context, to the unstable institutions was quickly confirmed by the fate of the first Bolivian democratic government, led by Hernán Siles Zuazo (1982-1985), which had to shorten its mandate and acknowledge its failure to block the upward spiral of the mutually fuelled hyperinflation and social mobilisation. The governments of Raúl Alfonsín in Argentina (1983-1989) and of Alan García (1985-1990) in Peru were faced with the same problem during their final stages. This was also the moment when the recommendations of the international organisations sought to ensure the "governability" of the companies by advocating the withdrawal of the state from the economic sphere. By

¹³ See, for instance, the case of the Argentinian Geraldo Aboy Carlés, *Las dos fronteras de la democracia en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Homo Sapiens, 2001).

leaving the market to dictate the allocation of resources, the state was relieved from the burden of many social concerns.

In this context, the concept of populism was abandoned in the academic studies and became a mere controversial artifice, synonymous with archaism, statism, authoritarianism, clientelism, corporatism, and demagoguery.¹⁴ The idea permeated the parties that were the heirs of the populist movements, and while they had never claimed this label, they now strove to disavow it. The case of the Justicialist (Peronist) Party in Argentina is very enlightening. In the mid-1980s, after its defeat in the presidential elections against Alfonsín, there emerged a movement for “Peronist Restoration” led by Antonio Cafiero. Officially, this was not a question of its changing direction away from Perón, but rather of its realignment with him against leaders who were backed by strong trade union corporatism and were responsible for “bureaucratising” the party.¹⁵ However, it steered away from some of the elements in the party’s history that had become inconvenient. According to its new orientation, the Peronist Party sincerely embraced pluralism by ceasing to identify Peronism solely with commitment to the nation and to stigmatise its opponents, as well as by adhering to constitutionalism, promoting transparency and the internal democratisation of the movement, and separating more clearly the political from the trade union spheres. In this sense, the movement was able to take advantage of being at the head of the party in 1987, when it deployed a type of discourse that complied with the model of political practice recommended by the analysts of the “democratic transition”, marking the emergence of a non-populist strand of Peronism.

However, this controversial use of the term populism would soon become problematic. By presenting it as the banner of democratic virtues, the political actors of the time gradually voided it of its original meaning, which made it possible for anyone to label as “populist” any political practice considered to be non-compliant with the expectations surrounding the virtuous model of the “transition”. Since 1989, a number of unexpected personalities made their appearance on the political scene. In varying degrees, they all fell short of the analysts’ expectations. Among the most emblematic was Carlos Menem, who became President of

¹⁴ Cecilia Lesgart, *Usos de la transición a la democracia* (Rosario: Homo sapiens, 2003), 200.

¹⁵ Marcos Novaro, “Los populismos latinoamericanos transfigurados”, *Nueva Sociedad* 144 (1996): 90-140.

Argentina in 1989.¹⁶ The distrust towards him stemmed from the fact that as a defender of the “transition”, he had won the internal elections of the Justicialist Party, defeating the reformist Cafiero. To succeed in this, he had made a tacit alliance with the “old guard” of the party. In addition, Menem had promised a “productive revolution” and a salary raise (*salariazó*) to compensate for the soaring prices at the height of the hyperinflation crisis. Eventually, the candidate had adopted a Messianic campaign style, touring the country in his car (the *Menemobile*), and allowing the crowds to acclaim him. This was reminiscent, of course, of Perón’s classic style, except that the mobile scenario of the event did not allow for an assessment of the real extent of popular mobilisation. Having come to power, Menem quickly forgot his vague promises to adopt a tight monetary policy, despite the recommendations of the international financial organisations (especially as regards the adoption of the peso-dollar convertibility law). He then convened a Constituent Assembly to approve a constitutional reform that would allow him to run again in the presidential elections (he therefore served a second term in office, from 1995 until 1999, based on the claim that he had vanquished inflation). Towards the end, the President governed in large part by decrees, bypassing the attempts of the Congress or the media to launch debates on his policies through the intelligent use of scandals about his private life, the corruption of his entourage, or various dramatic statements that had monopolised the public attention.

In the same year, 1989, the election of Fernando Collor de Melo as President of Brazil took place; this was another unexpected personality that had distinguished himself through a campaign against the alleged corruption of the outgoing President José Sarney, the architect of the democratic transition. Despite his conservative past, Collor did not hesitate to pose as the candidate of the class of *descamisados* (those without a shirt, unlike the white collars), to adopt the old Peronist expression. After two and a half years in office, during which he had also tried to develop an orthodox plan to fight back inflation, the so-called Collor plan, he was accused by his own brother of embezzling electoral campaign funds. Eventually he was deposed by the Congress in 1992, but not before having presented himself as a victim of the conspiracy plotted by the “political elite”, which had also led Getúlio Vargas to commit suicide in 1954.

¹⁶ On the Menem case, see especially José Nun, “Populismo, representación y menemismo”, in *El Fantasma del populismo*, ed. Felipe Burbano de Lara (Caracas: Nueva Sociedad, 1998), 49-79.

In 1990, Peru witnessed the arrival to power of an engineer without any political experience, Alberto Fujimori.¹⁷ In the difficult context marked by the evolution of the guerrilla movements, the hyperinflation crisis and the corruption scandals of Alan García's government, which went out of office, the elections were polarised between two outsiders: the writer Mario Vargas Llosa and Fujimori. While the former proposed a drastic austerity plan to tackle the crisis and obtained the support of the conservative parties, the latter avoided any program proposal in order "not to have it copied" by someone else. He limited himself to emphasising his honesty and his idea of submitting productive solutions to the crisis through technological means. The rift that divided the left-wing political forces and the unpopularity of the outgoing APRA government allowed Fujimori to reach the second round. Then he gathered the support of all those who were frightened by Vargas Llosa's program, without hesitating to fuel the racial tensions in the country by presenting his opponent as the representative of the White elite in Lima. Once in power, Fujimori implemented the program supported by his opponent. The tensions with the unfavourable Congress led him to appeal directly to the public opinion and the military. In April 1992, Fujimori's *auto-golpe* (*self-coup*) brought about the downfall of the Congress and the convening of a Constituent Assembly. The latter drew up a Presidential Constitution, which allowed him to win the second, and then the third term, in 1995 and 2000. However, Fujimori could not exercise the third term except for a few months; he then fled the country, to avoid having to answer the allegations of corruption that had been brought against him and his right-hand man, Vladimiro Montesinos, who, as head of the intelligence services, had handled a vast network of corruption and persecution, levelling it against journalists and adversaries alike.

These three cases were the first signs of the coming to power of a new generation of politicians who were immediately classified as populist. Abdalá Bucaram's arrival to the presidency of Ecuador (1996) and Hugo Chávez's to that of Venezuela (1999) confirmed this trend. In 2000, these cases were on the rise, so it would be difficult to mention them all, especially since the accusations of "populism" were common in politics.

The first common point between them was the discourse that most commentators qualified as outrageously demagogic. This discourse went against the hopes of strengthening the "deliberative" democracy conceived in the 1980s and was reminiscent of the discursive style used by the great

¹⁷ See Fernando Tuesta, *El juego político. Fujimori, la oposición y las reglas* (Lima: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1999).

classical populist leaders. The second common feature was that these people came to power on the basis of their personal popularity. They could be considered outsiders compared to the politicians who were in office (Fujimori, Chávez), they did not belong to the most visible political organisations (Collor), or they had acceded to the highest party ranks by stirring up the partisan factions (Menem, Bucaram). Eventually, once they got elected, they opted for a more or less authoritarian practice of power that put an end to (Fujimori) or sought to undermine (Menem, Chávez) the constitutional mechanisms, especially when they lacked the necessary knowledge to do so (Collor, Bucaram). From this point of view in particular, it is symptomatic that they all tried to reform the Constitution in order to run for another term in office (except for Collor, who did not have time to do so), as Evo Morales in Bolivia, Alvaro Uribe in Colombia and Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua would later also do.¹⁸

Theoretical Disagreements

However, these few similarities might seem quite superficial. Their association with populism is even more problematic. The classics consider that the use of the term “populist” to describe certain contemporary Latin American personalities is improper. The Argentine Carlos Vilas is probably the author who has defended this view with the greatest consistency.¹⁹ For him, extending the notion of populism to encompass these phenomena is a typical case of conceptual expansion, insofar as it ignores the many dimensions that characterised classical populism, maintaining only the vague resemblance between their political styles. On an economic level, the policies adopted by the so-called populists in the 1990s had their origins in “neoliberalism” (that is, in the respect for budgetary and monetary equilibrium and the state’s disengagement from the economy), and not in the interventionist policies of classical populism. At most, what could be compared with a high degree of probability are the economic policies of most of the populists from the 2000s and the classical populists’ policies; however, notwithstanding their anti-imperialist discourse, Chávez, Correa, Ortega and Morales have not promoted industrialisation on the basis of state intervention. They have had to retrieve or consolidate public ownership of the hydrocarbons extraction

¹⁸ On Chávez and Uribe, see Stephen Launay, *Chávez-Urube: deux voies pour l’Amérique latine?* (Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 2010).

¹⁹ Carlos Vilas, *La democratización fundamental. El populismo en América Latina* (México: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1995).

enterprises, but while they have often officially manifested their hostility towards free trade (with the U.S.), they have not developed their internal markets through active policies.

On a social level, the so-called contemporary populists are not accompanied by a large form of popular mobilisation that might tally with the political life of a “populist phase”. They rely more on the opinion movements that are presented by the surveys and the media. Chávez and Morales aimed well when they considered building a popular movement with their followers, but aside from a hard core of relentless activists, they have only managed to gather large crowds on exceptional occasions, especially during the electoral periods. This may be explained by the fact that for its most part, the public that provides the fundamental political support was not the same in the two periods. In the 1940s-60s, it included the workers from the emerging industrial sector. In the 1990s-2000s, the social supporters of the populist movements largely derived from the popular sectors outside the world of wage labour, belonging to a vast informal sector of the economy, and being therefore less likely to organise themselves politically.

We shall happily endorse Vilas’ idea that the difference between classical populism and contemporary populism is such that the two phenomena can hardly be considered to be tantamount to one another. However, his defence of the classical theory is questionable.

On a theoretical level, it should be acknowledged that the major underlying paradigms (the sociology of modernity, the dependency school, historical materialism) have been criticised since the 1970s on account of their deterministic assumptions. This does not necessarily mean that the classical theory of populism should be abandoned; instead, it should be revised, particularly on the basis of in-depth monographs. The question of the relations between the trade unions and the populist governments, for example, is already the subject of numerous debates. An idea that has been significantly re-assessed for a long time now is the premise upheld by the populist theory according to which in the 1930s-1940s, the new generation of trade union leaders who came from the more “traditional” political culture rather than from the socialist and anarchist “old guard” had been “manipulated” by the populist governments.²⁰ It would then be high time for a more precise verification of every case to see whether the empirical data confirm the theoretical hypotheses. Analysts have all too often absolutised the classical theory, using it as a sort of Procrustes’ bed. It is

²⁰ Miguel Murmis and Juan Carlos Portantiero, *Estudios sobre los orígenes del peronismo* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1971). Hiroshi Matsushita, *Movimiento obrero argentino. 1930-1945* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XX, 1983).

assumed that each country in the region *must* experience, sooner or later, a populist phase, and this leads to a forced correspondence between theoretical prescriptions and empirical facts. Thus, in Ecuador, José María Velasco Ibarra's governments have been considered populist simply because the leader's style resembled that of Perón or Vargas. In an empirical study, for instance, Rafael Quintero shows that starting from Ibarra's first election (1933), his electorate was that of a typical conservative *caudillo* in the rural settlements, and that he had nothing to do with the famous class alliance between the proletariat and the "national bourgeoisie".²¹ In an even more surprising manner, some Colombian authors are inclined to explain the political violence that erupted between 1948 and 1953 through the absence of a populist phase in Colombia²², this hypothetical reasoning being less than convincing.

Among other things, the defence of the "original concept" might remind us of Hennessy's approach from the late 1960s. Although theoretically justified, it dug a trench between the "scientific" discourse on populism that adamantly rejected any use of the term except for the period between the 1940s-60s, and political language, which, since the late 1990s, has seen populism rearing its head behind each and every vociferous political adversary. This current use is similar to what is found in numerous other regions of the world today. This is not the case of the classical theory, which assumes that Latin American populism has certain specific features (the urban character, the role of trade unions, etc.); moreover, that the phenomenon can be considered constitutive of political identity in the region. Thus, the development of this classical theory has led to the institutionalisation of the social science faculties in Latin America. This means that there is, at times, in defence of the classical theory, a kind of academic anti-imperialism, underpinned by ideological rather than analytical reasons.

And still, could the moderns abandon "populism" as the sole solution for denouncing demagoguery, knowing that this very "anti-populist" position has been vigorously criticised as demagogical²³, hardly elitist and potentially anti-democratic?²⁴ The conflicting dialectics of interpretations was carried on in the 1990s, in the sense that a viewpoint based on economic policies was developed then.²⁵ Given that the studies on the

²¹ Rafael Quintero, *El mito del populismo* (Quito: Abya-Yala, 1997).

²² Marco Palacios, *El populismo en Colombia* (Bogotá: Siuasinza, 1971).

²³ Pierre-André Taguieff, *L'illusion populiste* (Paris: Berg International, 2002).

²⁴ Jacques Rancière, *La haine de la démocratie* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2005).

²⁵ Rudiger Dornbusch and Sebastian Edwards, *Macroeconomía del populismo en la América Latina* (México: FCE, 1992 [1991]).

democratic transition had insisted on the complementarity between democracy and the state's withdrawal from the economy (1980), Dornbusch and Edwards, who studied macroeconomic policies, saw populism as an "economic approach that emphasises growth and income redistribution and deemphasises the risks of inflation and deficit finance, external constraints, and the reaction of economic agents to aggressive nonmarket policies".²⁶ Populism appeared to them as a harmful cultural trait, explaining the periodic bouts of hyperinflation in the region. It had become exactly the opposite of the "Washington consensus" that had been prescribed by the international financial organisations.

And yet, the defenders of the classical theory insisted that confining populism to the area of macroeconomic management was too dark a vision of populism. Among others, Dornbusch and Edwards were much more tentative in their second book, where they stated that this was just one aspect of populism. However, it is far from clear that the populism of the classics can be addressed in this way as regards the economic matters. It is true that the concern was probably higher for growth and redistribution than for short-term macroeconomic balance, but there had existed, in the past, a strategy for the long-term development of the internal market and for not neglecting external pressures. Among others, the examples studied by the authors - the Allende government in Chile (1970-73) and that of García in Peru (1985-1990) - were not the most relevant examples for the classical populism of the 1940s-1960s.

Eventually, this outlook on populism became inadequate for understanding contemporary populisms. Dornbusch and Edwards cannot be classified among the moderns (in the 1990s, the economic policies of populisms evinced a strict macroeconomic orthodoxy). The economic perspective of the two authors was, at first sight, better adapted to the populisms of the 2000s, even though the discourses of some of them against "neoliberalism" were not always translated into a heterodox macroeconomic policy. Only Chávez can afford such ideological deviations thanks to Venezuela's oil annuity. By contrast, Correa and Ortega have maintained large macroeconomic balances, to the point that one of the latter's counsellors spoke recently of "responsible populism". The fact that Dornbusch and Edwards' analysis has kept a certain degree of notoriety is due to its polemical usefulness in the political arena: it serves to potentially stigmatise all the voluntaristic discourses entailing an increase in the public expenditures, especially those dedicated to social projects involving

²⁶ Rudiger Dornbusch and Sebastian Edwards, *The Macroeconomics of Populism in Latin America* (Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Development, 1989), 1.

a dose of income redistribution. However, Latin America is a region where public spending is relatively low and where income inequality is very high.

In a politically-inflected gesture, the American Kenneth Roberts undertook a second attempt to redefine - this time - “neo-populism”. Roberts thus goes to the heart of the conflict between the classics and the moderns, proposing a general definition of populism, tailored to the two epochs and complete with sub-types.²⁷ According to him, populism can be defined by the existence of five characteristics:

1. a personalistic and paternalistic, though not necessarily charismatic, pattern of political leadership
2. a heterogeneous, multiclass political coalition concentrated in subaltern sectors of society
3. a top-down process of political mobilisation that either bypasses institutionalised forms of mediation or subordinates them to more direct linkages between the leader and the masses
4. an amorphous or eclectic ideology, characterised by a discourse that exalts subaltern sectors or is anti-elitist and/or anti-establishment
5. an economic project that utilises widespread redistributive or clientelistic methods to create a material foundation for popular sector support.²⁸

The fifth point holds Roberts’ entire attention, as he resumes Dornbusch and Edwards’ contributions in a broader framework. Thus, while their policies may differ considerably, there is a common point between all the populist phenomena: the use of large-scale redistribution programs to gain the support of the popular sector. The idea may seem surprising for the 1990s. Still, Roberts’ study on Fujimori’s case shows that after the adoption of the new Constitution, the government launched into a frenzy of “targeted” social programs for the poorest layers of the populations. This suggests that even though the 1990s witnessed the relinquishment of the great universalistic social protection systems destined for the salaried employees and even though the era of classical populism is confined to the past, contemporary populists will replace these systems with less expensive programs, focused on the vulnerable population. Since these programs are generally centralised and directly annexed to the presidential

²⁷ Kenneth Roberts, “Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Populism in Latin America. The Peruvian Case”, *World Politics* 1 (1995): 82-116.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 88.

institution, they give scope to effective proselytising, as they present monetary benefits as localised public works or, as it were, personal “gifts” from the president. Roberts also shows that Fujimori spent much of his time in 1994 and 1995, before his re-election, personally inaugurating district schools, roads, bridges, etc., in the crowded districts of Lima. This practice of focused and centralised micro-clientelism is what distinguishes contemporary neo-populism from classical populism, even though the two ultimately resort to clientelistic and redistributive methods in favour of the poor, so that the latter may provide them with political support.

This interpretation has caused further reactions from the classics, who have stressed the enormous difference between the social solidarity policies of classical populism and the interested social work of the modern populists. Even if it were possible for redistribution policies to be deployed towards clientelistic uses, the two phenomena would still not be reducible to one another. This debate is often imbued with normative considerations (Roberts also introduces them, suggesting that this redistribution is practised in order for political support to be gained). But this micro-clientelism of the contemporary populists was not known to the classical populists. For instance, in the 1940s-1950s, the Eva Perón Foundation in Argentina played a role in the massive distribution of “gifts” and was funded by generous public or private donations, obtained through government pressures. Among other things, this type of targeted social programs was generalised at the regional level and evolved into a system of conditional subsidy transfer to the poorest families, to support the food, health and education aids.²⁹ While these programs are always criticised for being exploited for electoral purposes, their persistence and the establishment of criteria for the target categories of the beneficiary population may increasingly prevent their deviated use. In any case, criticism does not concern, in this new context, only the governments that are considered to be populist. Clientelism is a generalised problem in Latin America, so turning it into a specific feature of populism does not sound convincing at all.

By contrast, other features mentioned by Roberts - like the first two (the direct link between the leader and his supporters, or the multiclass alliance) - do not seem to be differentiated in the least. They rather point to a general trend in the evolution of political life under the influence of the

²⁹ The list of these programs and their main characteristics may be consulted on the official site of CEPAL, the Department for Social Development.
www.cepal.org/ddds/

mass media and the post-industrial social context.³⁰ It is especially the third feature (de-institutionalised, top-down mobilisation) that is adopted by the neo-populists, but it ignores the important role of the trade unions in classical populism. Finally, the fourth characteristic (an “amorphous” anti-elitist ideology) seems too general, as long as the differences between the two sub-types are huge. First of all, the ideology of classical populism is not “amorphous” unless it is compared with the great systems of thought, such as communism - a recurrent comparison in the studies on classical populism.³¹

Still, communism is certainly an exception to the rule. Its ideological coherence stems from the fact that it is based on a precise body of texts and on the authoritarian centralised organisation of the international communist movement. In second place, the anti-elitist element of discourse is present in both eras, but the stigmatisation of the elite is not the same thing. This is a social sector that classical populism accuses of being “oligarchic”, claiming that the interests it upholds are “imperialist”. For the neo-populists, the problem lies with the inefficient and/ or corrupt political elite. Novaro even considers that this anti-elite element is less important in neo-populism than in classical populism. In the latter category, the authoritarian leader (the *caudillo*) establishes a relation of representation by “otherness” thanks to the myth of the struggle between the people and the oligarchy, in which he is the main actor as the leader of the popular camp. In neo-populism, the relation of representation is rather a representation of “expectations”. The authoritarian leader seeks to act in such a way that the people will identify with him, by multiplying the signs of his proximity through his media appearances.³²

Overcoming the Conflict?

In short, Roberts’ attempt at a definition has the merit of directly attacking the problem of the permanence and continuity of the populist phenomenon in the region, but the result is eclectic. This is what his compatriot, Kurt

³⁰ In this sense, we may evoke the analyses undertaken by Bernard Manin on the evolution of representative governments towards an “audience-based democracy”. See Bernard Manin, *Principes du gouvernement représentatif* (Paris: Flammarion, 1995).

³¹ See especially Peter Worsley, “El concepto de populismo”, in *Populismo, sus significados y características nacionales*, ed. Ernest Gellner and Ghița Ionescu (Buenos Aires: Amorrortu, 1969), 212-248.

³² Marcos Novaro, *Pilotos de tormenta* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Letra Buena, 1994).

Weyland, reproaches him for: based on Giovanni Sartori's theory of concept formation, Weyland notes that the main flaw in Roberts's analysis pertains to the multidimensional nature of his definition.³³ The definitions that make use of several criteria have the advantage of engaging in interesting theoretical elaborations, but they are less useful empirically, insofar as the phenomena they designate rarely meet all the necessary criteria. We should, therefore, resort to "radial definitions", which insist on one criterion over the others. The same criticism may be formulated in the case of the classical theory of populism. Multidimensional definitions are not really useful unless they are part of a vast enough system of thought. This was the case of the classical theory, but we have seen that its foundations seem rather fragile today. Weyland's conclusion is radical and it places the classics and the moderns back to back. It is possible neither to sustain the classical theory, nor to find a definition of "neo-populism" that will straddle the boundary between rupture and continuity. The best solution is to redefine populism on the basis of a single criterion, and only afterwards to propose a typology consisting of sub-types, based on other criteria. This undertaking might offer an occasion for drawing Latin America closer to the rest of the world insofar as its conception of populism is concerned.

It remains to be seen which criterion will be chosen. Weyland considers that this criterion should be political. The economic and social context has changed too dramatically between the 1940s-50s and the present time to find solid elements of continuity. The author consequently opts for Roberts's first criterion, that of establishing a direct link between the leader and his supporters, which bypasses the political institutions, especially the party.

Weyland's approach seems to be coherent, but the criterion finally chosen by him may seem insufficiently differentiated. This model risks introducing a certain confusion between what is owed to the heavy burden of the *caudillist* inheritance in Latin America, what is owed to the presidential system and what is owed to the evolution of the structures of the representative system towards a model of the "audience-based democracy". In other words, the final criterion Weyland opts for leads to a precise definition, but it is of limited use, on both the empirical and the theoretical levels.

The third attempt to redefine populism was made in the late 1970s, but only recently has it been formulated as a final theory, in the work of

³³ Kurt Weyland, "The Politics of Corruption in Latin America", *Journal of Democracy* 2 (1998): 108-121.

Ernesto Laclau.³⁴ Today this theory is somewhat successful, exceeding in prestige the classical theory, probably because it carries out Weyland's attempt to formulate a more satisfactory definition by allowing it to open the analysis.

The definition adopted by Laclau focuses on political discourse. For him, the main reason for the impasse reached by the conflict between the classics and the moderns is the fact that populism has always been approached as an ideology. The analyses have invariably led to disappointing conclusions which highlight the vague, imprecise, heterogeneous and amorphous character of populism. However, Laclau considers that this imprecise content should be analysed positively. Its discursive imprecision is the guarantee of its proper functioning. To understand the logic of populist discourse, one should analyse it as a political type of discourse; in other words, as a performative rather than as merely an enunciative discourse. As such, its objective is none other than the creation of the discursive identity of the people. The word people, mentioned in the discourse, is like a "floating signifier", to which content is added by persuading the social actors to recognise themselves in it. This operation is achieved by articulating "demands" of various social sectors, by showing the equivalences between them; the articulation of these demands will be facilitated if it is carried out in a negative manner, that is, if the discourse emphasises the struggle between the people and the enemy, whose mere presence prevents the demands from being met. The famous class alliance from classical populism is a particular case that may serve as an example. In the Latin American societies of the 1940s-1950s, there were certain unsatisfied demands, such as those of the workers, who asked for better wages, those of the industrial entrepreneurs, who complained about local market restrictions, or those of the middle class, which did not find enough jobs on the skilled labour market, etc. By attacking the local oligarchy and imperialism, the classical populist discourse enabled the formulation of these various demands, which led to the emergence of a popular movement that recognised its collective identity in the "people" who were oppressed by the oligarchy.

This explanation shows how reductive are the theses that see populism as a kind of "manipulation" of the people. The people cannot be manipulated unless they are driven to defend interests that are not their own. Still, the idea that the people have "authentic" interests does not make sense, because in reality, the people only exist to the extent that they

³⁴ Ernesto Laclau, *La razón populista* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005).

are recognised as such by the political actors. This recognition will always occur through political discourse.

Populism is situated on a distinct level from other “isms”. A political movement or a government cannot be dubbed populist as easily as they may be qualified as socialist, liberal, conservative, nationalist, etc. Populism does not reflect the nature of a political actor or of the projects he promotes, but a particular logic of political life, which may be adopted by any actor whatsoever at a particular time. For Laclau, populism is the very logic of politics. Not only does such a definition allow for the conflict between the classics and the moderns to be overcome in Latin America (since it may be applied equally to the phenomena of the 1940s-1950s and to those of the 1990s-2000s), but it also does away with Latin American particularism (Laclau does not limit his analysis to this geographical-cultural framework, nor has he any reason to do so).³⁵ It does not necessarily invalidate the classical theory, but since the latter refers to a particular phenomenon, which is confined in time and space, we would only stand to gain if we gave it a different name (perhaps by resuming the notion of a national-popular movement, used by Germani) and if we studied it very seriously as an ideology or at least as a particular political project. Populism is an important dimension of these phenomena, but it is far from taking their nature into account. By contrast, contemporary populism relies on an entire array of political projects, which cannot be regarded as a homogeneous phenomenon.

This last remark points to the limits in Laclau’s analysis. By regarding populism as the logic of all political discourse, he dilutes its subject in a somewhat excessive and, in any case, counter-intuitive manner. It therefore becomes difficult to understand why some political actors are seen as populist and others are not. Laclau would probably answer that in reality, not all the actors involved in the political sphere are politicians. Some are content to be administrators or technocrats, and they are certainly the ones who stigmatise their colleagues as populist.

However, this radical opposition between politics and the administration may seem excessive, populism being the instrument of the former. It might be possible to tone it down by returning to the theme of the difference between popular demands and democratic demands, as Laclau notes in an appendix to his book. The politicians are dissatisfied with the political system, so they may be correlated with others through

³⁵ His theory is, among others, compatible with some re-examinations of the notions undertaken outside Latin America. See, for instance, Guy Hermet, *Les populismes dans le monde. Une histoire sociologique. XIXe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2001).

populist discourse. The administrators, on the other hand, are treated by the political system, so they are partially satisfied. Thus, the democratic demands seem relegated, according to Laclau, outside the camp of politics and into the domain of the administration. This assimilation of politics by populism seems to show that for Laclau, the former only retains the dimension that the English call *politics*, while the terms *policy* and *polity* are neglected. Thus it appears that for Laclau, politics is more than the art of coming to power and keeping it, but in no case does it amount to the art of governing.

If this is the case, without returning to the idea that populism is an anomaly, we could see it as an imbalance in the functioning of the representative regime. So while the people serve as a “floating signifier” in populist discourse, this is not, however, the perspective of political theory. Before any content is granted to populist discourse, the people must be seen as *sovereign*. They are the source of legitimacy in representative democracy. Still, as it is well known, the latter is based not only on the principle of popular sovereignty, but also on the rule of law, a principle that encapsulates the typical liberal inheritance of modern democracy. Populism, as seen by Laclau, may be perceived as an exacerbation of the principle of popular sovereignty to the detriment of other considerations, especially those concerning the stability of the institutions on which the rule of law depends. In short, it is a tendency that encourages the potential “non-liberal democracy”.³⁶

Conclusions

Populism retains thus its ambiguous dual nature. It may be understood against the background of the “structuring tensions” which, according to Pierre Rosanvallon, are characteristic of modern democracy.³⁷ It is related to the logic of the modern democratic regimes through its insistence to ground its proposals on the principle of popular sovereignty, but there is a limit to it. This is best understood if it is considered in terms of Claude Lefort’s analysis of democracy.³⁸ If democracy is a regime that tends to maintain the place of power as a void place, it is because the power of the people is not the power of a person. Populism seeks to found the legitimate authority of its representatives on increasing the collective identities,

³⁶ Zakaria Fareed, *L’avenir de la liberté. La démocratie illibérale aux Etats-Unis et dans le monde* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2003).

³⁷ Pierre Rosanvallon, *Pour une histoire conceptuelle du politique* (Paris: Seuil, 2003).

³⁸ Claude Lefort, *Essais sur le politique* (Paris: Seuil, 1986).

which allows the people to form. However, in a democracy, this logic can remain but fragile and provisional, or else the nature of the regime will change.

From this point of view, the multiplication of populist discourses in Latin America during the early 1990s is not necessarily perceived as a flaw of democracy, which was restored in the previous decades; it rather marks their rootedness in the national political cultures, as an urgent claim to legitimate authority, as a political imperative that is all the more paradoxical since it is accompanied by an explicit political refusal.

In addition, there is no definition of populism that might grant this term, for the time being, the status of a notion in transition. The ideal typology varies according to the periods and the actors in question. Notwithstanding all this, it is not impossible for the recent experiences to lead to a redefinition of the relations of proximity and distance that are formed along with democracy. This will allow us in the future to resume our analysis of the complexity inherent in this type of regime and of the tensions that characterise it. Perhaps this is the main incentive towards reflecting on what the notion of populism in Latin America actually means.

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POPULISM AND DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA

ALEXANDER B. MAKULILO

Introduction

As Africa is entering the third decade of democratisation after the Third Wave, the use of populist strategies during elections is becoming more evident. This, in turn, suggests that populism as a political project is not necessarily inimical to liberal democracy.¹ Notwithstanding all this, populism as a field of study on the continent, has received little scholarly attention. Thus, the term “populism” is hardly encountered in African literature. There are two main reasons for this academic lacuna. One is anchored in the politics of demobilisation. Nearly thirty years after independence was achieved in the 1960s, the political strategies adopted by most African governments intended to deter the masses from participating in politics.² As a result, African “citizens”³ progressively disassociated themselves from the states and were popularly referred to as “uncaptured peasants” in the political economy discourse.⁴ The situation was not different in those states where the political order relied on the single-party system. In such polities, competition was absent and this

¹ Ralph Mathekga, “The ANC ‘Leadership Crisis’ and the Age of Populism in Post-apartheid South Africa”, in *African Politics: Beyond the Third Wave of Democratisation*, Joelen Pretorius (South Africa: Juta and Company Limited, 2008), 131-49.

² Giovanni Carbone, “‘Populism’ Visits Africa: The Case of Yoweri Museveni and No-party Democracy in Uganda” (Università degli studi di Milano, 2005), Working paper No. 73.

³ During this period, most Africans exhibited parochial or subject political culture. According to Almond and Verba, such culture reflects an incompetent participation in political processes. See Gabriel Almond A. and Sydney Verba, *The Civil Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963).

⁴ Goran Hyden, *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania: Underdevelopment and an Uncaptured Peasantry* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980).

rendered populism less important as a strategy of mobilising support. In addition to this, post-independent political discourse focused extensively on conceptual constructs such as “authoritarianism”, “neo-patrimonialism” or “personal rule”.⁵

The goal of this chapter is to revisit populist strategies in Africa and the manner in which they are implemented. Three political leaders are compared for the purpose of this study. They include Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania and the chairman of the ruling party *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* (CCM); Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma, the President of South Africa and the president of the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC); and Frederick Jacob Titus Chiluba, the former President of Zambia (1991-2001) and the leader of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD). The selection of these cases is by no means random for the purposes of this study.⁶ Zambia is the first Anglophone country in Africa to have completed its democratic transition peacefully. President Kenneth Kaunda and the United National Independence Party (UNIP) transferred power to Frederick Chiluba and the MMD in 1991. For that reason, Zambia is important because it provides a model of political reform that may resonate among the ruling elites and the popular movements across Africa. Indeed, the Zambian case raises general questions about the intriguing dynamics of a transition away from authoritarian rule to a more openly competitive political system.⁷ Tanzania, on the other hand, introduced a multiparty system in 1992, but it has just ended up as a *de facto* one-party state.⁸ Hence, Tanzania is a country in Africa that may not have reached the utmost level of democratisation, but it is clearly one of the better performers in Africa with respect to democratic governance. Its transition to democracy has been neither rapid nor dramatic, and the ruling party CCM has not lost power to the opposition.⁹ Importantly, unlike elsewhere in Africa, Tanzania’s transition has not been marred by upheavals. South

⁵ Giovanni Carbone, *Populism visits Africa...*, 1.

⁶ According to the Freedom House’s Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties of 2011, Tanzania and Zambia are partly free countries, while South Africa is regarded as free <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=594> (accessed 15 August 2011).

⁷ William Tordoff and Ralph Young, “Electoral Politics in Africa”, *Government and Opposition*, 40(3) (2005): 403-23.

⁸ A. B. Makulilo, “State-Party and Democracy: Tanzania and Zambia in Comparative Perspective” (PhD Diss., University of Leipzig, 2010).

⁹ Goran Hyden, “Top-Down Democratisation in Tanzania”, *Journal of Democracy*, 10(4) (1999): 142-55.

Africa is also unique. Rising out of the apartheid setting in 1994, the ANC has remained a dominant party. Still, the internal politics of the ANC are factionist, culminating with a populist leader right before the general elections held in 2008. Understandably, the CCM¹⁰ and the ANC have remained the ruling parties since their countries obtained independence. By contrast, the MMD ousted the UNIP in the elections for founding multipartism in 1991 and it is still in power. Besides, institutionally, the founding fathers of the three countries were friends: Julius Kambarage Nyerere of Tanzania, Nelson Mandela of South Africa and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia. Their friendship was cemented through the Front-Line States (FLS) organisation. Nyerere and Kaunda were among the most active founders of the FLS in 1975; this aimed at establishing the majority rule in Southern Africa.¹¹ As part of this broader liberation struggle, the two countries, with the help of China, established the Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority (TAZARA). Moreover, Tanzania and Zambia provided training bases for the freedom fighters from South Africa.

In undertaking this study, both primary and secondary methods of data collection were used. This study also relied a lot on internal and public documents. Through content and contextual analysis, such documents were reviewed with a view to highlighting the populist strategies in these countries. With regard to the interviews, this study benefited from the author's personal archive, especially on Tanzania and Zambia, and from his comprehensive and systematic study on the political transition in the two countries. The study was undertaken between 2009 and 2010 under the title "State-Party and Democracy: Tanzania and Zambia in a Comparative Perspective".¹² In compliance with the aim of this volume,

¹⁰ The CCM was born out of the merger between the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) and the Afro-Shiraz Party (ASP) on 5 February 1977. The merger did not alter the fundamental philosophy of *Ujamaa*, a form of socialism, as well as the structure of the previous parties. Hence, the CCM is often regarded as an independence party.

¹¹ Jackie Cilliers, "Building Security in Southern Africa: An Update on the Evolving Architecture" (Pretoria Institute of Security Studies, 1999), Monograph No. 43.

¹² For South Africa, I wish to acknowledge the role played by Mr. Alex B. Makulilo, a PhD candidate (University of Bremen) who at the time when I was working on this chapter, was in South Africa for his fieldwork research. He was helpful in updating me on the political dynamics of Zuma's regime. Likewise, I wish to thank Mr. Tiyaonse Kabwe, a Lecturer at the University of Zambia. I met him for the first time during my fieldwork in Zambia in 2009. Once again, when I was writing this chapter, Mr. Kabwe was ready to pick my calls and share updates on Zambia's politics.

the chapter is divided into five main parts: the introduction, the theoretical framework, the historical evolution of populism, populist leaders, and the conclusion.

The Conceptual Framework

Populism is an elusive concept. However, its core message across many definitions comes simply in defence of the “common people”, who are often regarded as marginalised. Thus, as a movement, it clamours “inclusion”. In this regard, the underpinning assumption of populism is that the elites should be done away with and that a more direct (and doubtfully more homogeneous) democracy should be established, thereby reducing inequality and exclusion.¹³ As such, populism is “anti-party, anti-elites, anti-establishment, anti-political”. However, its egalitarianism is questionable since populism mobilises support based on a specific constituent. Given that the rifts vary from polity to polity, it is not uncommon to find that populism manifests itself in different forms. It can be civilian or military, progressive or regressive, left or right, rural or urban, ethnic-religious or secular, indigenous or foreign, specific to the young or the old, based on the bourgeoisie, the proletariat or the peasantry, electoral or insurrectional.¹⁴

The definition given by Giovanni Carbone is exhaustive for the purpose of this study. He lists five main indicators that are typical of a populist leader:

a strongly personalistic leadership style; outsiderism, or the claim that the new leader does not originate from among the existing political class; an anti-system, anti-institutions and anti-organisations rhetoric, often targeting political parties and political corruption; a call for restoring “the power of the people” by refounding democracy (where a notion of “the people” as an organic whole does not allow for the representation of particularistic interests); a two-fold mass mobilisation strategy, aimed at both legitimising and implementing the above political project, based on: (a) a leader that *appeals directly to the masses* for legitimacy. This, in turn, implies: (i) a kind of leadership that relies on, or is easily adapted to, an electoral environment; (ii) a possible key role for the media; and (iii) the likely emergence of demagogic policies, notably xenophobic calls or

¹³ Paul Lucardie, “Populism: Some Conceptual Problems” *Political Studies Review* (2009): 319–21”.

¹⁴ Philippe C. Schmitter, “A Balance Sheet of the Vices and Virtues of ‘Populisms’” (European University Institute and Central European University, 2006).

irresponsible economic policies; (b) *mechanisms for direct democracy*, such as local participatory structures or referenda, meant to whip up and mobilise the population.¹⁵

The paragraph above indicates that an individual leader may become the centre of policies in a polity, undermining political institutions thereby. This, in turn, suggests the “decisionism” and the lack of predictability of the political system. As such, populist leaders may tend to free themselves from any kind of institutional control, thus promoting institutional decay. Yet the notion of “the power of the people” in Africa and beyond is problematic. It implies homogeneity and unanimity. The fact is that societies are heterogeneous. In Africa, where the colonial strategy of *divide and rule* has remained a hegemonic institution since the 1880s and has possibly been inherited by post-independence leaders, societies are highly fragile. The problems of ethnicity, abject poverty, corruption, regionalism - to mention just a few - are common on the continent. That is why the “people” can be “certain people”. As it can be noted, populism is not always a natural phenomenon, like “charisma” is. It is a deliberate project created to symbolise a single person who leads the population. Normally, this goal is achieved through the use of media as a tool of propaganda. Indeed, in times of misfortune, such as economic crises, poverty and conflicts, the media tend to portray the populists as the saviours of a country. The legitimacy they may enjoy is not founded on organic values shared by the ruler and the ruled. Consequently, such legitimacy is only short-term. In some cases and especially in poor societies, populism is attained by the use of corruption and patronage. As I will show in due course, the populism of President Kikwete was made possible by the *mtandao* phenomenon, which, apart from relying heavily on the media to create populism, also used corruption and intimidation. The goal of “creating” populism is central to elitist politics and power struggles. In this way, the minority elites mobilise the rest of the society against other elites that are in power.

In the context of Africa, the populists will specify a timeframe for solving what may be considered chronic problems. Normally, they might say, for example, “within 100 days of being elected, I will make sure that poverty is history”. Since the elites are not reflective of the masses and they serve the interests of their fellow elites, it is less likely that they can succeed in addressing such problems. As a result, when it comes to elections for a second term, it is difficult for them to sail through the ballot box. This is due to the crisis of underperformance triggered by the

¹⁵ Giovanni Carbone, *Populism visits Africa...*, 1.

overambitious projects they used to solicit votes. It goes without saying that in some instances, populists tend to attack foreigners to camouflage their own underperformance. For example, in 1972, the dictator Idi Amin of Uganda expelled the Asians on the ground that they were exploiting the Ugandans. Similarly, in Zimbabwe, President Robert Mugabe has constantly used the land issue to label Britain and the United States of America as enemies of the Zimbabweans. Yet foreigners are sometimes used to legitimise the populists in Africa. This is not because the foreign nations like populism but because some populists are used to protecting imperialist interests. In Zimbabwe, for instance, the British interests over land have welcomed and supported the efforts undertaken by Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai to oust Mugabe. Similarly, in South Africa, President Jacob Zuma had to assure the Western countries that no radical changes would be effected once he got into power. This kind of assurance was also given in the case of President Jakaya Kikwete. However, there is a high risk for a populist to solely identify himself with and appeal to the West. This is because Africa has historically been subjected to all forms of exploitation and de-humanisation during the slavery and colonial eras. In the current globalisation period, which some analysts view as a global jungle,¹⁶ even the perception of the general public is negative, as it continues to see Africa as locked in the same historical status; consequently, it is becoming even more risky for populists to resort to the West. In the scenarios presented above, the West has been both a facilitator and a governance engine for populism. Usually, the populists on the continent tend to disapprove of the West during electoral campaigns, but they immediately bow down to it for assistance in running their respective countries once they get into power. Irrespective of its strategies worldwide, populism has its own virtues and vices. The schema of virtues and vices provided by Philippe Schmitter¹⁷ is relevant for understanding the consequences of populism in Africa. Figure 1 below is self-explanatory:-

¹⁶ Samuel Wangwe, "Globalisation and Marginalisation: Africa's Economic Challenges in the 21st Century" in *Reflections on Leadership in Africa: Forty Years After Independence*, ed. Haroub Othman (VUB University Press, 2000), 179-94.

¹⁷ Philippe C. Schmitter, "A Balance Sheet...", 3.

Table 1: Populisms: Virtues and Vices

Virtues	Vices
The consolidation of sclerotic partisan loyalties and the dissolution of collusive party systems, which are thereby opened up for the entry of new political formations. The recruitment and mobilisation of persons who were previously apathetic and passive citizens to participate in the electoral process.	The undermining of existing party loyalties and stable choices between competing partisan programs, without replacing them with alternative ones. The recruitment of ill-informed persons who do not have consistent preferences and who seek “emotional” rather than programmatic satisfactions in politics.
By raising and combining disparate and/or ignored political issues, populisms encourage the articulation of suppressed rifts and expectations.	Raising expectations that cannot be fulfilled and pursuing policies that are incompatible, both of these producing negative externalities for everyone.
The challenge against “accepted” external constraints and the calling into question of existing and often exploitative dependencies upon foreign powers.	The use of foreigners and foreign powers as scapegoats for their own failings and the weakening of external connections necessary for national welfare and security.
The replacement of outmoded and formulaic party programs and ideologies with the personality of leaders.	The shift of attention from issues and policies to persons and personalities, thereby introducing an erratic and opportunistic element into politics.
The exercise of “decisionism” and its replacement with policy immobilism and the expansionism of “politically possible” solutions to collective problems.	Populists may be more self-determined, but their decisions tend to be ill-conceived and disrespectful of the long-term effects that will afflict the following generations.
Populisms need continuous popular ratification and are eventually defeated at the polls, leaving a reinvigorated party system in their place.	Populisms may be capable of altering the rules and/ or of gaining the support of military and security forces, which means that they cannot be peacefully removed from power.

It should be noted that every political system is potentially subject to populism. However, in most developed democracies, where institutions are stable, populists are relatively few. By contrast, in the underdeveloped societies, where institutions are usually weak, populists have the necessary power to enforce their policies. In Africa, institutions are still weak. Still, the performativity of populism can be put to the test.

Historical Evolution

Africa is a continent arising from a colonial setting. In around the 1880s, it was subjected to colonisation mostly by the imperialism of the Western European countries.¹⁸ Since then, the continent has been annexed to metropolitan capitalism. It is not surprising to find that all the policies adopted in Africa have, by and large, been imposed by the West. This has been made possible by the fact that throughout history, the states in Africa were created through the slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism.¹⁹ Admittedly, the colonial state entrusted with managing the colonies was imposed. It had no roots in the colonised territories.²⁰ In other words, it used force to impose its power because it lacked the consent of the ruled. This problem was compounded by the primary purpose of colonialism, which was to exploit the resources of the colonised people. Simply put, this means that colonialism was not designed to deliver goods and services to the colonised subjects.²¹ Hence, there was no compensation for the labour and taxes exacted by the colonial state from the subjects. This kept the colonial powers even further away from the subjects. For sure, the colonial states survived in a permanent legitimacy crisis throughout their entire lifespan.

It should be noted that Africans have at all times been resistant to any form of domination. The colonial state was therefore confronted with resistance from the moment of its introduction on the African soil. It was especially after World War II, in 1945, that the scale and scope of such resistance went so far as to demand independence. In a way, the struggle was waged against the foreign domination that had for centuries played a significant role in the politics of demobilisation. For the first time, within these circumstances, Africa witnessed the rise of populist leaders, who tried to mobilise the masses against the colonial state. At that time, it was easier for the political parties to identify the colonial rule as the source of all the troubles in Africa and to develop an anti-colonial regime. Notwithstanding this evolution, there were some politicians who

¹⁸ Alex Callinicos, *Imperialism and Global Political Economy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).

¹⁹ Christopher Clapham, *The Third World Politics: An Introduction* (London: Croom Helm Limited, 1985).

²⁰ William Tordoff, *Government and Politics in Africa*, 3rd Edition (Indiana University Press, 1997).

²¹ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, 1972).

advocated policies that favoured the colonial rule. These were parties which were deliberately founded by the colonialists to manipulate the struggle for independence.

During the struggle for independence, therefore, some leaders were perceived as “anti-colonial, anti-political and anti-elite”. In Tanzania, Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere was very popular and charismatic. His political party, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), for example, won all the seats during the pre-independence elections. Although in 1961 Tanganyika attained its independence based on a multiparty system, Nyerere switched to the single-party system in 1965. In fact, Nyerere was more popular than his party. It was due to his populism that Nyerere remained head of the state/government from 1961 until 1985, when he decided to withdraw from politics. One of the reasons that could explain this phenomenon was the economic crisis of the 1970s, which determined him to resort to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank for assistance. Nyerere believed in *Ujamaa*, a form of socialism oriented towards a pro-people ideology. Under *Ujamaa* and particularly through the Arusha Declaration of 1967, Tanzania nationalised all the major means of life, which indicates that the state owned the economy. As such, Nyerere was totally against the privatisation of the economy as this would have had horrific consequences for the poor, the majority of whom were in the country. Mwalimu Nyerere is still regarded today as the father of the nation and is respected on the continent as a “man of the people”. It is interesting to note that the Roman-Catholic Church has initiated a process for his beatification as a saint. Other populist leaders were Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, and Kenneth Kaunda, popularly known as (KK), in Zambia. These leaders mobilised the masses against colonialism and finally hoisted the “flag of independence”.

Contrary to the populism demonstrated by the aforementioned leaders, one analyst contends that they had things in common with the outgoing colonial masters. Most of them had been trained in Europe and this is how they had acquired their values and obedience. He raises one interesting question: What exactly happened at independence? He answers this question by saying that there were only celebrations.²² As can be noted, it is here where independence came under scrutiny. Since then, the Western countries have continued to dominate all spheres of life, including politics, economy and the social-cultural aspects.²³

²² Christopher Clapham, *The Third World Politics...*, 6.

²³ Samir Amin, “Underdevelopment and Dependence in Black Africa: Origins and Competing Forms”, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 10(4) (1972): 503-24.

Given this background, whoever wants to contest the state/government leadership should get the approval of the Western powers. This would normally ensure that a prospective leader would work to protect their interests. Much as they do not want populist leaders in Europe, the Western powers are also inimical to populists in the rest of the world. This is because such leaders are unpredictable and might disturb their exploitative projects. As already stated, President Robert Mugabe, for example, is regarded as populist simply because he is against Western policies.

Still, after independence, most African leaders opted for strong centralised states.²⁴ It was believed that such states would hasten development. Hence, under the justification of unity and developmentalism, most states introduced single party systems. Moreover, they opted for state-owned economies. The dual impact of these gestures was simply the concentration and centralisation of power into a single hand. This was the essence of the politics of demobilisation against populism. However, the outcome of centralisation was a failure in 1980s. The national governments tried to restructure their economies but this did not work out. This led them to appeal to the Western powers for some help. The package of this assistance is commonly known as Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs). SAPs were given by the IMF and the World Bank. Associated with SAPs were the mandatory requirements that the recipient countries should introduce economic as well as political liberalisation.²⁵ The African countries had no choice. However, instead of providing relief, SAPs deepened the crises.²⁶ Arguably, SAPs created fertile ground for the emergence of populism. In Zambia, for instance, the situation was so critical that riots for basic needs like food became widespread phenomena. Thus, with the Third Wave of democratisation, avenues for mobilisation were created.

²⁴ James Wunsch S, "Centralisation and Development in Post-Independent Africa" in *The Failure of the Centralised State: Institutions and Self-Governance in Africa*, eds. James Wunsch S. and Dele Olowu (Boulder, San Francisco, & Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), 43-73.

²⁵ Peter J. Schraeder, *African Politics and Society: A Mosaic in Transformation* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000).

²⁶ Issa Shivji G, *Accumulation in an African Periphery: A Theoretical Framework* (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki and Nyota Publishers Limited, 2009).

Populist Leaders in Africa

Populist leaders usually distinguish themselves as typical of the masses in a political system. This is, in most cases, achieved through a combination of strategies such as demagogic policies and eye-catching slogans that seem to reflect the wishes and needs of the people. In some other instances, populists may become even more well-known through the use of media and opinion polls. This is more critical especially in countries where ignorance and poverty hamper most people to the extent that they take the media and the polls as givens. However, neopatrimonialism and corruption have been used to back up populism. This section examines the populist strategies of three leaders, namely Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania; Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma, the President of South Africa; and Frederick Jacob Titus Chiluba, the former President of Zambia. It starts by presenting a short outline of their biography. This is followed by an overview of their populist strategies.

Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete

Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, alias JK, was born in Bagamoyo, Tanzania, on 7 October 1950. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from the University of Dar es Salaam. He also got trained in the military and has vast experience in it. His involvement in politics since the first phase government (1961-1985) is quite evident. Kikwete acted as a party functionary of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) and later the Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM), after the merger between the TANU and the Afro-Shiraz Party (ASP), then the only parties in Tanganyika and, respectively, Zanzibar, on 5 July 1977. As an active officer of the party, Kikwete managed to climb the ladder of party hierarchy and was elected as a member of the National Executive Committee (NEC), the topmost decision-making party authority in 1982. He also got elected as a member of the Central Committee of the party in 1997, and he still is one today. Kikwete's active participation in politics did not end in the party. He held several positions in the government as well. During the second phase government (1985-1995), the then President Ali Hassan Mwinyi appointed him a Member of Parliament and Deputy Minister for Energy and Minerals in 1988. He was then promoted to full Minister of Water, Energy and Minerals in 1990. In 1994, Kikwete became the youngest Minister of Finance. Likewise, in the third phase government (1995-2005), the then President Benjamin William Mkapa appointed him Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, a position he held until he became

the fourth President of the United Republic of Tanzania in 2005. This profile shows that JK is an insider to both party and government politics. Indeed, he is part of the elite.

It should be pointed out from the beginning that unlike Zambia and South Africa, Tanzania's political system is typically described as a party-state regime.²⁷ This simply means that the state and the ruling party are fused to the extent that the political playing field is significantly tilted in favour of the ruling party. The party uses state resources and coercive apparatuses to outcompete the opposition parties. This fusion is so acute that the state appears to be in the pocket of the CCM.²⁸ Thus, the CCM's victory appears to be guaranteed ahead of election day. Hence, stiff competition during the election season takes place within the ruling party rather than outside it. It is only in the recent past that the opposition parties have slightly gained momentum. In the 2010 elections, for example, the total share of the opposition parties' popular votes went up to about 40%. Thus, there is no way one can get into power outside party structures. This fact is also a requirement of the law whereby any candidate should be a member of a political party and be sponsored by it.²⁹ Hence, Kikwete's populism should be understood within this context and what is more important is the fact that it was boosted by party-state structures, especially during the inter-party competition.

The populism of Kikwete does not have a long history. In 1995, Kikwete unsuccessfully aspired for the presidential position within his party. It is said that Mwalimu Julius Nyerere³⁰ had Benjamin Mkapa as his favourite candidate. It was towards the end of Mkapa's second term in 2005 that Kikwete started to rebuild himself as a "man of the people". To achieve that, he and his colleagues in the party initiated a working support

²⁷ Alexander B. Makulilo, *Tanzania: A De Facto One Party State?* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Muller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. Kg, 2008).

²⁸ Goran Hyden and Max Mmuya, *Power and Policy Slippage in Tanzania-Discussing National Ownership of Development* (Sweden: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2008), Studies, No. 21.

²⁹ See the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania 1977; See also the Political Parties Act No. 5 of 1992. This requirement of party membership has been a subject of controversy since the inception of multipartism in 1992. For further details, see Alexander B. Makulilo, "Join a Party or I Cannot Elect You": The Independent Candidate Question in Tanzania", *Central European University Journal of Political Science* 6(1) (2011): 111-37.

³⁰ He was the first President of the United Republic of Tanzania and the father of the nation. He held the CCM Membership card No. 1. He was respected and the party was bound in most cases to follow his advice.

network popularly known as “*mtandao*”.³¹ Acting like a tsunami, the “*mtandao*” used every means to portray JK as the people’s choice. It used a lot of money to mobilise support from all walks of life, particularly the young. In the first place, JK was symbolised as a “youth candidate”. This campaign went hand in hand with the excessive use of the media and with overambitious promises. Yet, unlike other populisms, JK’s was backed by the party-state structures. This was the time in the history of the country when, under the multiparty system, the president was able to get elected by 80.28% of the popular votes.³² However, since this was a party-state system, the use of intimidation and corruption was part and parcel of the game.³³

Towards 2005, Kikwete’s populism gained momentum. The media and the polls described him as the most trusted leader in the government. During the 2005 campaigns, Kikwete distinguished himself as a man of the people and identified himself with the youth, which had an impact on his subsequent elections. It should be noted that the CCM has, for a long time, enjoyed mostly the support of the elderly and of women.³⁴ His slogans *Maisha Bora kwa kila Mtanzania* (literally meaning: Better Life for Every Tanzanian) and *Ari Mpya, Nguvu Mpya na Kasi Mpya* (literally meaning: New Zeal, New Vigour and New Speed)³⁵ were among other aspects that made his populism real. With a lion’s share of media coverage,³⁶ the CCM managed to popularise this slogan from towns to

³¹ The actors of the *mtanda*” were Rostam Aziz, Edward Lowassa and Jakaya Mrisho. These mobilised party members to vote for Kikwete as the CCM presidential candidate. Indeed, in 2005 Kikwete was nominated by his party after winning a landslide victory.

³² See the National Electoral Commission Report 2006.

³³ See the Tanzania Election Monitoring Committee (TEMCO) Report 2006.

³⁴ See TEMCO reports 1997; 2001; 2006; 2011.

³⁵ Nyang’oro Julius E, *A Political Biography of Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete*. (Eritrea: Africa World Press, Inc, 2011).

³⁶ See the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) report (2005) which shows that the state radios, the Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam (RTD) and Sauti ya Tanzania Zanzibar (STZ) allotted 105,971 seconds to the CCM and the next largest share went to the Civic United Front (CUF), which got 31,557seconds. Similarly, the state televisions, the Television of Tanzania (TVT) and Television of Zanzibar (TVZ) allotted the CCM 114,475 seconds, followed by Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA) with 22,287 seconds. The private media also accorded the CCM much time. Television stations allotted the CCM 278,815 seconds, the second largest share of 70,628 seconds went to the CUF. The private radios similarly allotted 20,059 seconds to the CCM, 19,147 seconds to CHADEMA and 658 seconds to the CUF.

villages, from adults to children and countrywide. Given the glaring fact that since the adoption of the SAPs in 1980s, the gap between the rich and the poor had widened, this slogan seemed to be romantic and it was easily bought by the electorate. While this does not mean that the landslide victory³⁷ of the CCM was solely attributable to this factor, it simply acknowledges the impact of the said slogan for the CCM's victory. Judging by its face value, no wonder the slogan advocated new hope and a new beginning where the gap between the rich and the poor would be narrowed. This slogan attracted support from all corners of the country, urban and rural; from all classes of people, of different faiths and ethnic extractions. Kikwete became the choice for those who had lost hope. Indeed, he was seen as a true man for change.

To be sure, one of his overambitious plans concerned agriculture and the employment of the youth. With regard to promises and policies, Kikwete used agriculture, which is regarded as the backbone of Tanzania's economy. This is because about 80% of the population lives in the rural villages and about 90% of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihood. However, agriculture contributes about 30% of the total GDP of Tanzania's economy.³⁸ Hence, in the 2005 elections, Kikwete and his party pledged that for the economy to grow by 10%, the agricultural sector had to grow by least 20% by the year 2010.³⁹ Thus, a careful reading of the CCM's manifesto suggests that agriculture is its main preoccupation. It should be noted that since independence, the agricultural sector has never grown beyond 7%. Hence, Kikwete came up with his innovation of the "Green Revolution". Associated with this, he also promised to create 1 million new jobs especially for the youth. The USAID report on Democracy and Governance Assessment of Tanzania provides an insightful observation about Kikwete's populism:

Kikwete's victory was due first and foremost to his personal charisma, youthful looks, and charm. A second important factor was his superior campaign organisation (network, or *mtandao*) as it has come to be known. He started organising soon after he lost the CCM presidential nomination to Benjamin Mkapa in 1995. Over a 10-year period, he amassed many

³⁷ The CCM won 80.28% of all presidential votes and 206 Parliamentary seats of the total 232 parliamentary seats. See the *National Election Commission...*, 10.

³⁸ See the National Budget 2011/12.

³⁹ In 2010, the targets were not met since the sector declined to about 6%. Interestingly, near the elections, fearing to be held accountable for failing to achieve the promised targets, Kikwete and his government initiated another slogan "*Kilimo Kwanza*" i.e. "Agriculture First" to mask that underperformance. Indeed, they successfully did away with questions about this sector.

friends and allies, money, and political capital, all of which came to his aid in 2005. Third, he also developed very clear messages captured by his lead slogan “New Zeal, New Vigour, New Speed” (which sounds much better in Swahili) and (ii) “Better Life for All is Possible”. He promised everything to everybody - a fact which has come to haunt him in recent years.⁴⁰

Contrary to the above-mentioned hopes, the 2008 Afrobarometer survey⁴¹ showed increasing discontent among the citizens with the management of the economy and particularly with how the problem of poverty had been addressed. In that survey, 78% of the respondents were dissatisfied with the government’s efforts to narrow the income gap between the rich and the poor. This dissatisfaction was at 54% in 2005. Similarly, the survey revealed that 82% of the respondents were dissatisfied with the government’s efforts to keep prices down, thus doubling the proportion of 42% in 2005. Moreover 64% of the respondents were disgruntled with the government’s efforts to create jobs. The dissatisfaction level was at 53% in 2005. The survey further revealed that 61% of the respondents were displeased with the government’s efforts to provide a reliable supply of electricity. The above survey indicates the public outcry generated by the fact that the government had failed to implement its promises as translated by its slogan. Today this slogan is unpopular and utopian.

Still, another strategy used to create this populism is money politics. Most Tanzanians, especially in the rural areas, are poor. This makes it easier for them to accept money in exchange for their votes. In the aftermath of the 2005 general elections, President Kikwete was quoted saying to the CCM members in Dar es Salaam that “We must start to think of effective strategies to support the party in terms of resources, strategies that will not bring shame to the party”.⁴² Thus, Mwesiga Baregu would argue that poverty is used as political capital.⁴³ Towards the 2010 elections, the use of corruption by the CCM was visible and, indeed, magnified.⁴⁴ It was on that basis that the government introduced the

⁴⁰ USAID/Tanzania. 2010. Democracy and Governance Assessment of Tanzania (Final Report). Dar es Salaam: USAID.

⁴¹ Round 4 Afrobarometer Survey in Tanzania, Research in Poverty Alleviation (REPOA) and Michigan State University 2008.

⁴² A. B. Makulilo, “Tanzania: A *De Facto* One Party State? (MA Diss.,: University of Dar es Salaam, 2007).

⁴³ Consolata Raphael, *Party Institutionalisation in Tanzania: A State Project?* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Muller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. Kg, 2011).

⁴⁴ University of Dar es Salaam, Institute of Development Studies. 2010. *Grappling with Corruption in Local Government Elections: A Focus of Arusha, Dar es*

Election Expenses Act No. 6 of 2010 to regulate money during elections. However, it has had unintended consequences by exacerbating corruption.⁴⁵ It should be noted that Kikwete's government has experienced a series of corruption scandals that have hampered its effectiveness and populism. The scandals of the External Payment Arrears (EPA) and the Richmond Development Company are good cases in point. The latter led to the resignation of Prime Minister Edward Lowassa in 2007. The phenomenon was popularly referred to as "*ufisadi*" (i.e. grand corruption involving government officials). Between 2008 and 2010, Kikwete's popularity fell drastically and a chain of demonstrations and riots emerged, accusing the government of being irresponsible and unaccountable. The most observable indicator of its low popularity came with the 2010 general elections. The results indicated a drastic fall in the votes from 80.28% in 2005 to 61% in 2010.⁴⁶ This happened despite the use of opinion polls in favour of the ruling party.⁴⁷

As regards Kikwete's party, there is a clear indication of its decline. The *mtandao* phenomenon has further divided the party. Baregu⁴⁸ provides an interesting analysis of these divisions. He notes three main groups: The first group is the (original) CCM-*mtandao*, with architects like Rostam Aziz, Edward Lowassa and Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete. This is the group that is in power and enjoys the resources and privileges associated with being in power. With immense resources and power (within the party and the state), it uses its voice to cajole the rest of the groups. The second group is called the CCM-*mpasuko* (originally it was part of the *mtandao*, but after the *mtandao* came to power, this group was forgotten; it also includes those who were not part of the *mtandao*, but would like now to be included in it). This is a group of hungry politicians. In struggling to get into the *mtandao*, they identify themselves as fighters for the national

Salaam, Morogoro, Dodoma, Kilimanjaro, Tanga, and Manyara Regions. A Research Report Submitted to the Prevention and Combating Corruption Bureau (PCCB) Headquarters, Dar es Salaam, March 2010.

⁴⁵ TEMCO Report 2011.

⁴⁶ See the National Electoral Commission (NEC) Report 2011.

⁴⁷ Alexander B. Makulilo, "Where Have all Researchers Gone: The Use and Abuse of Polls for the 2010 Elections in Tanzania (Forthcoming 2011); Research and Education for Democracy in Tanzania (REDET) Report No. 17 of 2010 "People's opinion and preferences for the 2010 general elections in Tanzania", University of Dar es Salaam; See also Alexander B. Makulilo, "Watching the Watcher": An Evaluation of Local Election Observers in Tanzania", *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 49(2) (2011): 241-62.

⁴⁸ Interview with Prof. Mwesiga Baregu, Department of Political Science, University of Dar es Salaam, 24 March 2009.

resources. The group is represented by “vocal” CCM Members of Parliament (like Anne Kilango, Dr. Harrison Mwakymbe, Lucas Selelii, James Lembeli, Fred Mpendazoe, Christopher Ole Sendeka, and Aloyce Kimaro) including the former Speaker of the parliament, Samuel Sitta. The third group is called the CCM-*Asilia* and is represented by people like Joseph Butiku and Joseph Warioba. This is a group that claims to uphold the original ethics of the party, as outlined by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere. Institutionally, they lead the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation. While Baregu’s categorisation of actors and interests within the CCM is impressive, I find the three groups actually boil down to two, that is, the CCM-*Mtandao* and the CCM-*Mpasuko*. This is because the CCM-*Asilia* developed as a result of the defeat incurred during the presidential nomination process within the party in 2005. This group supported Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim (the former Secretary-General of the Organisation of African Unity, OAU, which became the African Union or AU later). Moreover, most of the time, this group joins hands with the CCM-*Mpasuko* to challenge the CCM-*Mtandao*.⁴⁹ Overall, the general and dominant view on Kikwete’s performance is, by and large, that it has been a failure.

⁴⁹ For example, on 30 November 2009 the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation held a conference to mark 10 years in Memory of Nyerere. Although the conference was attended by people from different sections of the Tanzanians, the strong statements that challenged the CCM-*Mtandao* were made by members from the CCM-*Asilia* and the CCM-*Mpasuko*. They claimed that President Jakaya Kikwete had failed to lead the party and the nation. They went further, demanding him not to run for the second term, 2010-2015, during the next elections in 2010. See Raia Mwema, “Mwalimu Nyerere wamlipua Kikwete” *Disemba* 2, 2009. The CCM-*Asilia* was alleged to have founded a new party, the Chama Cha Jamii (CCJ). The party created fear among the members of the CCM that a break-away of the *Asilia* group was in store. On 29 March 2010, Fred Mpendazoe, Kishapu MP in Shinyanga via the CCM ticket defected to the CCJ and proceeded to invite all the members of the CCM-*Mpasuko* to join the CCJ. See Habari Leo 30 Machi 2010 “Mpendazoe Januari: CCM ‘Damdam’ Machi: ‘Damdam CCJ’”. It is interesting to note that in its constitution, the CCJ identifies itself closely with Mwalimu Nyerere and its vocabulary resembles much the one used by the CCM-*Asilia*, i.e. the Ufisadi agenda. The CCM reacted vehemently, stating that none of its members had plans to join the CCJ. The fact is that the CCM-*Asilia* is afraid to identify openly with the CCJ. See Katiba ya Chama Cha Jamii (CCJ) <http://www.mzalendo.net/> (accessed 8 March 2011). See also *Chama Cha Mapinduzi, Kauli ya CCM Kuhusu Kuanzishwa kwa Chama Kipya cha Upinzani - CCJ* <http://www.cms.ccmz.org/> (accessed 8 March 2011).

Frederick Jacob Titus Chiluba

Frederick Chiluba was born in Kitwe, Zambia on 30 April 1943 and died in Lusaka on 18 June 2011. He held a Master's Degree from Warwick University. Chiluba was the second President of Zambia, from 1991 to 2002. Unlike Kikwete and Zuma, who were really political insiders within the ruling parties and their respective governments, Chiluba was essentially a trade unionist. His highest rank in unionism was obtained in 1974 as the Chairman-General of the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). This was a national body which coordinated nineteen major unions. It should be noted that the ZCTU was established in 1964 by the ruling party, the United National Independence Party (UNIP), as a means of communicating with the labour force. For that reason, it is not surprising that historically the ZCTU supported the UNIP. It should be emphasised however that the ZCTU managed to maintain its autonomy from the party which had always tried to co-opt it. In 1990, Chiluba officially entered the political scene at the national level. With the return of multiparty democracy in 1991, he and his colleagues founded the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), which terribly defeated the long-time President Kenneth Kaunda (1964-1991). The results show that the MMD secured a landslide victory of 972,212 votes, equivalent to 75.76% of the votes cast for the presidential elections and 125 of 150 parliamentary seats. By contrast, the UNIP managed to mobilise up to 311,022 votes, equivalent to 24.24% votes in the presidential elections and 25 parliamentary seats.⁵⁰ Ideologically, Chiluba pretended to stand for socialism and that he was against the IMF and SAPs sponsored by the World Bank. When he got into power, he implemented the very same reforms with devastating outcomes for Zambia's economy.

Zambia's context has always been favourable for the emergence of populists. This is due to the fact that the country is highly urbanised and poor. This is further complicated by its background of ethnic regionalism. It should be understood that before the 1991 elections, Zambia's population amounted to about 7.8 million people and kept on growing by over 3.5% a year. With about one half of its population living in urban areas, Zambia is the most urbanised country in sub-Saharan Africa.⁵¹ This population reflects the 73 ethnic groups with seven official language groups: Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, Lozi (Barotse), Kaonde, Lunda and

⁵⁰ Electoral Commission of Zambia 1991.

⁵¹ See the Republic of Zambia, New Economic Recovery Programme: Economic and Financial Policy Framework 1991-1993, Ministry of Finance and National Commission for Development Planning, Lusaka, April 1991.

Luvale. In religious terms, the majority Zambians are Christians. The elites in Zambia reflect the population's characteristics. Between 1950s and 1964, elite conflicts informed the struggles for independence and signified clear divisions among the population. After independence, the conflicts persisted and, indeed, the ruling party UNIP failed to bind together and safeguard the interests of the elites. Therefore, throughout its existence, the UNIP has experienced severe elite fragmentation.

Intra-party and inter-party opposition to the UNIP are common. For example, the UNIP was initially formed in 1959 as a splinter group from the African National Congress (ANC, 1951-1972). As noted elsewhere in this chapter, the UNIP formed the first government in 1964, having won a landslide victory. With barely ten seats, the ANC became the official opposition during the First Republic. Later, in 1966, the UNIP split and gave the United Party (UP, 1966-1968), and a further split occurred in 1971, culminating with the birth of another opposition party, the United Progressive Party (UPP, 1971-1972). One distinctive feature of all these political parties was their foundation on ethnic regionalism. Erdmann⁵² provides an interesting observation on the ethnic-regional rifts that informed party politics during the First Republic. According to him, the UNIP was reconstituted by a loose elite coalition of various ethnic groups. The most dominant ones included the Bemba-speakers of Northern Luapula and the Copperbelt Province, and the Nyanja-speakers of the Eastern Province, which included Tonga and Lozi speakers as well. However, the UNIP was better identified with Bemba speakers, implying that it had acquired a Bemba ethnic label. On the other hand, opposition parties such as the ANC had their stronghold among the Tonga speakers in the Southern Province, while the UP was predominant among the Lozi of the Western Province and the UPP was dominant among the Bemba speakers of the Northern Province.

It is interesting to note that all the splits were caused by the most senior party and government officials. For example, the UPP was formed by Simon Kapwewe, who resigned from his post as Vice-President to defend his ethnic interests. Following the tension within and outside the UNIP, President Kaunda once remarked:

We have canvassed so strongly and indeed, viciously, along tribal, racial and provincial lines, that one wonders if we really have national or tribal and provincial leadership. I must admit publicly that I have never

⁵² Gero Erdmann, "The Cleavage Model, Ethnicity and Voter Alignment in Africa: Conceptual and Methodological Problems Revisited" (German Institute of Global and Area Studies, 2007), Working Paper No. 63.

experienced, in the life of this young nation, such a spate of hate, based entirely on tribe, province, race, colour, and religion, which is the negation of all that we stand for in this Party and Government. I do not think that we can blame the common man for this. The fault is ours, fellow leaders - we, the people here assembled.⁵³

The above-quoted paragraph is instructive for understanding the nature of intra-and inter-party tensions among the elites. It implies that it is the elites who construct ethnic cleavages in order to renegotiate their interests. But, most importantly, it indicates clearly that the UNIP was too weak to address such conflicts. Although Kaunda and the UNIP did not want to establish the one-party state under the legislation issued in 1972, they were certain that it was impossible. The only solution, Kaunda thought, was to eliminate the opposition by using legislation.⁵⁴ On 25 February 1972, Kaunda announced:

You know that since Independence there has been a constant demand for the establishment of a One-Party State in Zambia. The demands have become more and more widespread in all corners of Zambia. In recent months I have received hundreds of messages and letters from organisations and individuals appealing to me to take concrete steps to bring about a One-Party system of Government.⁵⁵

Kaunda's statement would suggest that the people rather than he and the UNIP wanted the one-party system. As I noted earlier, Kaunda thought the one-party state would come through the ballot box, which turned out to be a nightmare. The one-party state thus came to serve as a tool for dealing with intra- and inter-party problems. On 13 December 1972, Zambia was proclaimed a one-party state. As noted elsewhere in this chapter, the underground intra-party opposition continued in the party and government,

⁵³ See the Republic of Zambia, "Mulungushi Conference 1967-Proceedings of the Annual General Conference of the United National Independence Party" held at Mulungushi 14-20 August, Lusaka (Zambia Information Services and the Government Printer, 1967), 52.

⁵⁴ Patrick Olawa, *Participatory Democracy in Zambia: The Political Economy of National Development* (Devon: Arthur H. Stockwell Limited, 1979).

⁵⁵ See the Republic of Zambia, Report of the Working Party Appointed to Review the System of Decentralised Administration, Lusaka, Cabinet Office, May, 1972, Appendix I, p. 67. See also the United National Independence Party (UNIP), National Policies for the Next Decade 1974-1984, Freedom House (Zambia Information Services and the Government Printer, 1967).

especially in parliament, leading to the signing of the Choma Declaration⁵⁶ between the UNIP and the ANC in 1973. On the eve of the multiparty system, the old, strong social cleavages, reappeared and defections were normal. For instance, twenty MMD candidates for seats in the National Assembly previously sat there as UNIP MPs, including twelve who had served either in the cabinet or on the party's Central Committee. Yet other members of the UNIP joined parties such as the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the Democratic Party (DP). Similarly, the Garden House Conference⁵⁷ was significantly sponsored and attended by former UNIP senior members like Vernon J. Mwaanga (Foreign Minister 1973-1975, and a member of the UNIP Central Committee until 1976); Arthur Wina (Finance and then Education Minister in the UNIP government 1964-1968); and Humphrey Mulemba (Secretary-General of the UNIP in 1981-1985).⁵⁸

It has to be emphasised that Chiluba's populism was essentially built as an opposition to the economic crises that Zambia had experienced and to the leadership crisis of the single party system. Being the leader of the ZCTU, Chiluba had a social base to start his populist strategy. After founding the MMD, Chiluba resigned and became the presidential candidate. However, his links with unionism were stable. Chiluba argued that the MMD could mobilise workers especially to add muscle to its campaign countrywide. Being adversely affected by the economic crisis, this mobilisation could be relatively easy.⁵⁹ That is to say, the servants wanted their conditions changed and improved. The Economic Report⁶⁰ of 1991 in Zambia describes the workers' conditions accurately. It states that the slowdown in the Zambian economy led to massive retrenchments in most sectors. Through cost-saving measures, most firms forced their employees into redundancies and early retirements without compensation. The situation was exacerbated by a brain-drain, whereby doctors,

⁵⁶ The Declaration was signed at Choma in the Southern Province between President Kaunda for UNIP and Harry Nkumbula for the ANC in June 1973. It was a declaration to dissolve officially the ANC and ask all its members to join UNIP. See Kaunda, Kenneth, "The Choma Declaration: A Government of National Unity", *Sunday Post Newspaper*, 10 September 2006.

⁵⁷ The conference initiated the Movement for Multiparty Democracy in 1991.

⁵⁸ See Frederick J. Chiluba, *Democracy : The Challenge of Change* (Zambia: Multimedia Publications, 1995), 74-5.

⁵⁹ Interview with the former President of the Republic of Zambia, Frederick Chiluba April 7, 2009, Lusaka, Zambia.

⁶⁰ See the Republic of Zambia, Economic Report, Office of the President, National Commission for Development Planning, January, 1992 (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1991), 27.

engineers, academic staff and other professionals left the country to seek employment abroad. As a result, the total formal sector employment declined from 23.03% in 1980 to 9.0% in 1991. Against that backdrop, the Mvunga commission⁶¹ made specific observations about the Zambians and issued a pressing call for change. The commission noted a state of anxiety, impatience and depression among some petitioners; some submissions reflected a resentment against the one-party rule of the past 17 years, which was directly extended to the leadership of the UNIP; above all, there appeared to be some mistrust between the rulers and the ruled, particularly in the rural areas. Arguably, the civil servants seemed reluctant to support the UNIP.

The role of trade unionism needs to be emphasised since it was mainly the support of this group that endorsed Chiluba's populism. This group had been fully involved in the struggle for independence in Zambia. Although the trade unions supported the UNIP during the struggle for independence and thereafter, the unions resisted being controlled by the UNIP. During the pre-independence period, the unionists under the umbrella of the United Trade Union Congress (UTUC), later changed to become the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU),⁶² made a resolution which stated that the labour movement would remain neutral in politics but reserved the right to support any party with progressive policies.⁶³ It was not uncommon, at this time, to find individual members of trade unions who were also members of the UNIP. During the First Republic, the trade unions maintained their autonomous status from the party. The multiparty framework associated with its Bill of Rights provided an enabling environment for the unions to operate effectively. This is not to say that the UNIP did not attempt to co-opt the unions under its control. Certainly, of all the strategies it used, the UNIP unsuccessfully attempted to control the trade unions.

In 1971, the UNIP government decided to enact a labour law that could sanction its control over the unions. Thus came the Industrial Relations Act. No. 36 of 1971, which put in place the Zambia Congress of Trade

⁶¹ See also the Republic of Zambia, "Mvunga Commission: Constitution Report 1990" (Lusaka: Co-op Printing, 1992), 3.

⁶² The Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) was established by and registered in accordance with section twenty-six of the Industrial Relations Act. No. 36 of 1971. The ZCTU continued to exist after the repeal and replacement of that law by the Industrial Relations Act. No. 36 of 1990, See Part III of the Act.

⁶³ This resolution was made in 1961. For more details, see the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions: Minutes from Extraordinary Executive Committee Meeting, 9 June 1990, Kitwe: ZCTU Secretariat Archives 1990.

Unions (ZCTU). This law was enforced in 1974, indeed after the introduction of the one-party state in 1972. The Act introduced, among other things, the UNIP-party committees in workplaces as fora for the workers' participation under the one-party system. The popular UNIP motto: "One Zambia One Nation" was made to reflect the industrial settings and this led to "One Union One Industry". Section 15 of the Act obliged all the trade unions to be affiliates of the ZCTU. Although the UNIP managed to reduce the strength and autonomy of the unions, the party could not completely weaken and gain total control over them. With the coming of Chiluba into power as the new Chairman-General of the ZCTU in 1974, the trade unions regained much of their autonomy. As it can be seen, the ZCTU opposed the Industrial Act of 1971 and the one-party state. These political developments had far-reaching negative consequences for the unions, particularly in relation to their autonomy.

When the tension between the ZCTU and the UNIP reached a climax, the ZCTU declared that they were not and would never become a political party. They recognised that under the one-party system, only the UNIP was the sole political party by law, and that all the unionists' leaders still believed in it.⁶⁴ However, Chiluba, the Chairman-General of the ZCTU described how the unions resisted the UNIP's co-optation, and it is worth quoting him *in extenso*:

From 1974 onwards, when I became ZCTU Chairman-General (being also Chairman of the National Union of Building, Engineering and General Workers), the leadership consistently sought to defend the organisation's autonomy, spoke out against the infringement of the workers' bargaining rights and against the corruption associated with the one-party state. By the end of the 1970s, and particularly in view of the stance it took against the 1980 Local Administration Bill, organised labour in the shape of the ZCTU came to be seen as the unofficial opposition to the UNIP, with the leadership frequently making statements on a range of public policy matters that affected the economy as well as the autonomy of the trade union movement.⁶⁵

The above paragraph shows that the ZCTU managed to oppose the UNIP's move to curtail its autonomy and the one-party state in general. The Zambia Congress of Trade Unions constantly issued radical statements which were against the UNIP and its government. For example, in relation

⁶⁴ Lise Rakner, *Trade Unions in Processes of Democratisation : A Study of Party Labour Relations in Zambia* (CHR. Michelsen Institute, Department of political science and Development, Bergen, 1992).

⁶⁵ See Frederick J. Chiluba, *Democracy...*, 16.

to the 1980 Local Administration Bill, the Congress sent a petition⁶⁶ to the Secretary-General of the UNIP and stated that the Bill intended to undermine the citizens' rights. Besides that, it intended to merge the party and government structures at the local levels, and finally the Bill would have increased the cost of managing the local government and hence ruining the economy further. The UNIP attempted as much as it could to co-opt the workers but that could not work effectively. Arguably, the ZCTU became an unofficial opposition, where dissenters from the UNIP sought refuge and accommodation.

The relationship between the ZCTU and the UNIP deteriorated further with the economic crisis of the 1980s. Zambia, which depends entirely on copper for its economy, was badly hit by the copper crisis in 1988. During that time, inflation was high, the country experienced a shortage of foreign exchanges, and the debt crisis deepened. President Kaunda admitted the crisis. He attributed it to four major factors which were beyond the capacity of the party and the government. These were the high production costs, low prices in the world market, the protectionist policies of the developed countries, the high import costs for goods and services from the developed countries and unprecedented droughts.⁶⁷ Addressing the problem through the IMF-World Bank sponsored structural adjustment programmes worsened the situation, especially for workers. The Minister of Finance and National Commission for Development Planning, Chigaga accurately presented the negative consequences of the crisis for workers. He said "Unfortunately, the effectiveness of the civil service has suffered as a result of a decline in real earnings over the years. The Party and its Government are determined to restore the morale and efficiency of the public service". He further stated that "Employment in areas of lower priority will be reduced and the savings realised from the exercise will be used to restore the morale and enhance the efficiency of the civil service".⁶⁸

⁶⁶ See Zambia Congress of Trade Unions, "Petition to the Secretary General of the Party on the Proposed Decentralised Local Administration" (Lusaka: ZCTU Secretariat Archives, Kitwe, 1980).

⁶⁷ See the Republic of Zambia, Address by President Kenneth Kaunda to Parliament on the Opening of the Fifth Session of the Fifth National Assembly, January 15, 1988 (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1988).

⁶⁸ See the Republic of Zambia, Budget Address by the Minister of Finance and National Commission for Development Planning, Hon. G.G. Chigaga, SC, MCC, MP, to the National Assembly, 16 November 1990 (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1990).

By contrast, the ZCTU argued that the problem of the economy in Zambia was caused by the one-party state and the failure of the UNIP to handle the situation. From that point on, the ZCTU started to publicly campaign for changing the political system, particularly clamouring for the restoration of the multiparty system. Indeed, with the coming of multipartism in 1991, the ZCTU broke its long alliance with the UNIP and declared its support of the MMD. In fact, Frederick Chiluba, the Chairman-General of the ZCTU became the presidential candidate for the MMD, which made it easier for the party to mobilise the support of workers countrywide.

Three more elite groups played an important role in the defeat of the UNIP. These included the churches, the business elites and the intellectuals. As already pointed out, most Zambians are Christians. Throughout the First and Second Republics, religious groups and individual leaders were highly respected. In some instances, individual leaders were involved in the UNIP and national affairs. For example, Rev. Jalabafwa Chipeso of the United Church of Zambia became Lusaka Rural District Governor; Rev. Merfyn Temple from the same church worked in the Land Resettlement Office, while his colleague, Rev. Mwape, sat on the National Commission on the One-Party State in 1972; Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo (a member of the Cultural and Social Sub-Committee of the UNIP's Central Committee and of the Mufulira Disaster Fund Committee of 1973); Archbishop Mutale (a member of the Rural Development Sub-Committee of the UNIP's Central Committee and of the National Sub-Commission on the One-Party State in 1972); Fr. C.I. Riordan (a member of the Electoral Commission in the first one-party elections in 1973); Fr. S. Mwansa (District Governor of the Kaputa District); Fr. Protea Mwela (MP, Kawambwa). Many more clergymen were involved in the party and government in several posts at local levels.⁶⁹ Although individual leaders activated in the party and the government, the church remained an autonomous part of the community that the state and the party could not control. For example, the church opposed the UNIP government when it attempted to introduce the teaching of scientific socialism into the school curriculum in the 1970s.⁷⁰ In any case, the Christian churches played a significant role on the eve of multipartism. Apart from playing the mediating role when the MMD and

⁶⁹ Hinfelaar Marja, "Legitimising Powers: The Political Role of the Roman Catholic Church, 1972-1991" in *One Zambia, Many Histories: Towards a History of Post-Colonial Zambia*, et al eds. Gewald Jan-Bart (Leiden. Boston: Brill, 2008), 129-143.

⁷⁰ See Frederick J. Chiluba, *Democracy...*, 16.

the UNIP met to negotiate for reforms prior to the 1991 elections, as already pointed out in the previous sections, the church openly opposed the one-party state and, on some occasions, the UNIP itself.

On the other hand, the business elites were the victims of the one-party state and Humanism. With almost total state control over the economy, the business community was weakened and could not benefit from their business. This elite group stood for the multiparty system and the liberalisation of the economy so that they could participate fully in the ownership of the economy. This group also supported the MMD, which seemed to bring about the change they wanted. Last but not least, there was the group of the intellectuals. These included students and lecturers, especially from the University of Zambia. Throughout its existence in power, the UNIP attempted to control this group but it could not. When the multiparty system came, they supported the MMD. As it can be noted, the UNIP failed to safeguard the interests of these groups and they consequently struggled to find a new organisation that could replace it, and this was the MMD.

Bratton and van de Walle⁷¹ note that from 1985 onward, administrative and parastatal employees, later joined by doctors and nurses, embarked on a wave of wildcat strikes in the public sector. They further state that, apart from being a coalition of interest groups (trade union, business, professional, student, and church groups), the MMD skilfully used the far-flung teachers' and civil servants' unions to mobilise support in the countryside, relying also on its own multi-ethnic leadership (diverse tribal, linguistic, and regional identities). It is estimated that in 1980, the UNIP's paid-up members amounted to barely 5% of the population, equivalent to less than half of the membership of the trade union movement.⁷² Arguably, Kaunda had lost control over civil servants. Indeed, they turned against him on the quest for change. The underlying force of the 1991 elections was "change". This was due not only to the devastated economy but also to the fact that President Kaunda had already overstayed and the party was reluctant to undertake reforms.⁷³ Chiluba therefore used this slogan: "The

⁷¹ Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁷² See Frederick J. Chiluba, *Democracy...*, 16.

⁷³ Interview with Mr. Donald Chanda, Economic Advisor to President Fredrick Chiluba during the Third Republic; and Lecturer University of Zambia. Mr. Chanda was an active participant during the transition to multiparty democracy in 1990/1. He was the one who coined the popular slogan of the MMD "The Hour Has Come and That Hour is Now". This slogan was translated into five languages,

Hour of Change has come, and that Hour is Now". It is interesting to note that the slogan was translated into five of the Zambians' local languages: Nyanja, Bemba, Tonga, Lozi and Kaonde. It became a popular slogan that the MMD used to campaign against the UNIP in the 1991 elections. However, in the 1996 elections, Chiluba's popular support dropped to 68.96% of all cast votes, which was equivalent to 40.30% of all registered voters.⁷⁴ This was due to the crisis of his performance. It is interesting to note that towards the end of his second term, Chiluba started an underground move to change Zambia's constitution so as to allow him to stand for the third term. He did not manage to do that because all the forces, starting with his own party and including outsiders, were totally against him. His populism ended then. His successor, Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, who had served one term as Chiluba's Vice-President, involved Chiluba in corruption scandals until his acquittal in 2009.

Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma

Jacob Zuma was born in the Zululand of South Africa on 12 April 1942. Unlike Kikwete and Chiluba, Zuma did not acquire formal education. However, he got involved in politics when he was still very young. In 1959 he joined the ANC. Following its ban in 1961, Zuma became a member of the South African Communist Party in 1963. In the same year, he was arrested and convicted for conspiring to overthrow the Apartheid government. He served a 10-year imprisonment sentence. After his release, he continued to do the political work for the ANC, albeit underground. He occupied several positions within the ANC. Following the waiver of the ban on the ANC in 1990, Zuma served in the party as Deputy Secretary-General and later as the Deputy President of the ANC. It should be noted that his highest rank in the government was that of the Deputy President of South Africa from 1999 to 2005. He held this dignity under Thabo Mbeki, who was the President of South Africa and, at the same time, the President of the ANC. In 2007, Zuma became the President of the ANC after defeating Thabo Mbeki. He finally became the President of South Africa in 2009.

namely, Nyanja, Bemba, Tonga, Lozi and Kaonde. Interview on 2 April 2009, Lusaka, Zambia. See also the interview with Dr. Neo Simutanyi, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Lusaka, Zambia, 30 March 2009. See also the interview with the President of Zambia, Third Republic, Fredrick Chiluba, Lusaka, 7 April 2009.

⁷⁴ Electoral Commission of Zambia 1996.

Zuma's populism should be understood against a broad setting. That is to say, South Africa is a complex multi-racial society made up of Blacks, Whites, Asians and Coloureds. More importantly, the country is established on the legacy of the Apartheid regime. This regime exploited and de-humanised Africans. To this day, the country is dominated by the minority Whites, who own the major share of wealth. Throughout its existence, the ANC managed to identify itself as the party of struggle and, hence, as pro-people. Its historical past is real. Indeed, the party enjoys popular support partly due to the fact that it managed to bring the majority rule in 1994, under Nelson Mandela.

Admittedly, Zuma has not been a populist leader in the politics of South Africa at all times. His populism should therefore be understood in line with the politics of presidential succession in the ANC as well as in South Africa. It was Zuma's long ambition to one day become the President of South Africa and the ANC. He has always tried to play his cards right to achieve this goal. Still, Mbeki was quite aware of Zuma's plans of succeeding him. Unlike in the most developed democracies, where an incumbent president does not have much control in determining his or her successor, in Africa, most incumbent presidents would work to impose their successors so as to protect their interests, particularly as regards wealth accumulation. It is not uncommon to find that prospective presidents are courted by those in power. This has been the major source of political tension on the continent. In some cases, where the chances of getting someone to undertake the presidency in a fashion similar to those in power are slimmer, a third-term agenda has been an alternative.

After working together with Mbeki for some time, it seems that Zuma was not considered for Mbeki's successor. In that regard, President Mbeki worked hard to make sure that Zuma's power goals would not be achieved. As Mbeki's second serving term approached its end, he dismissed Zuma from his positions both in the party and the government in June 2005, on allegations of his involvement in corruption. This was further complicated by another case with regard to his raping a woman. Without going to the merits of the allegations and cases against him, it appears that such allegations would have painted him unfit for presidential office. Nonetheless, they did not, as I will briefly illustrate. At this stage, it seems that Zuma set out to play this power game and possibly took revenge against President Mbeki for the sake of his presidential goals. As a result, Zuma mobilised popular support among different ANC structures and within the trade unions. This highlights the reactive nature of populism. It can thus be argued that the timing of Zuma's populism in the

politics of South Africa came out clearly following his dismissal as the ANC Deputy President and as the Deputy President of South Africa.

As is well known, Mbeki was a true follower of the neo-liberal policies. These policies have had a negative impact not only in South Africa, but also in Africa as a whole. Although South Africa had already practised some elements of neo-liberalism, it was Mbeki who accelerated its pace and scope. One distinctive element of neo-liberalism has been the widening gap between the rich and the poor. It is for these reasons that Mbeki was perceived as perpetuating the interests of the Whites and the capitalists. This would mean that about 80% of the population experienced the problem of poverty.⁷⁵ The interpretation here might be that the ruling party, the ANC, has not done enough to liberate the Africans. The whole essence of independence is therefore called into question.

Similarly, the leadership crisis proved the faultiness of populism. Mbeki's style of leadership was mostly focused on centralisation. His two terms invested the Office of the President with immense powers. While this approach made Mbeki relatively stronger, it weakened the party. This caused a cleavage between the ANC and Mbeki's administration.⁷⁶ Leaving the party was a miscalculation on Mbeki's part. It is interesting to note that Zuma used this weakness to consolidate himself within the party. Since he grew in the party, he knew very well that it would eventually be the party that determined the government of the day.

As can be seen, the centre of struggle included the party and the state. While Zuma became a dominant figure within the party, Mbeki remained one in the state. It was against that backdrop that Zuma capitalised on two critical issues, namely the economic and leadership crises against Mbeki. It was too late for Mbeki to control the party in order to deal with Zuma. As such, he ran for the presidency of the party in 2007 and suffered a terrible defeat against Zuma. His immediate use of the party against Mbeki came in response to the charges of corruption brought against Zuma in court. It is said that Mbeki interfered with the court proceedings and may have influenced the sentence against Zuma. It was due to this fact that the ANC led by Zuma recalled Mbeki in 2008. In addition to that, all of Mbeki's followers were removed from the National Executive Committee, which is the party's main decision-making organ. In response to this, Mbeki's followers left the ANC to form the Congress of the People

⁷⁵ Murray Leibbrandt, Ingrid Woolard, Arden Finn, and Jonathan Argent, "Trends in South African Income Distribution and Poverty since the Fall of Apartheid", OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 101, OECD Publishing (University of Cape Town, 2010).

⁷⁶ Ralph Mathekga, *The ANC 'Leadership Crisis'...*, 1.

(COPE). The strategies Zuma used to build his populism can be summarised as follows:

1. He identified with the commonest people. He always referred to himself as uneducated. This was a strategy to deal with Mbeki and his colleagues who portrayed Zuma as ignorant. Thus, the widespread perception of the majority poor population and particularly of those who, like Zuma, did not have access to schooling, was simply that he was like them. As such, his “ignorance” was turned into political capital.
2. He identified himself as and, indeed, he is a traditionalist. As it is widely known, Zuma is polygamous. Besides, he capitalised on the use of traditional songs and dances to attract the masses.
3. He used the politics of memory. In this, he identified himself as a man of struggle.⁷⁷ Indeed, he capitalised on his historical past in relation to the wars of liberation against the Apartheid regime. He also focused on the essence of such struggles, which is the true liberation of the African people from the enclaves of imperialism. One of his celebrated songs associated with the wars of liberation struggles is “Bring Me My Machine Gun”. During his campaigns, Zuma sang this song and attracted the poor and marginalised people. The song implied the “second liberation” because his predecessor Mbeki had failed to accomplish that.
4. He portrayed himself as an adherent of anti-neoliberalism, which Mbeki seemed to be fascinated with. Thus he constantly identified himself as a leftist and a nationalist. In fact, the Whites in South Africa were afraid of him. Nonetheless, they were sure that no fundamental changes would be effected. As Daryl Glaser notes, the Zuma coalition is multiclass. It comprises not only the unionised proletariat but also a range of subalterns - shack dwellers, hostel dwellers, semi-educated urban youth, peasants, farm workers - as well as local and provincial party cadres, Zulus, traditionalists and pro-Zuma businessmen. The coalition was mobilised not against capitalists, but against a range of “insider” elites, first and foremost the leadership cadres and businessmen around Thabo Mbeki but encompassing, if often only subliminally, liberal judges and journalists, intellectuals, gender activists and urban sophisticates.

⁷⁷ Benedict Carton, “Why Is the ‘100% Zulu Boy’ so Popular?” in *The Politics of Jacob Zuma* ed. Sean Jacobs (Concerned African Scholars, 2010), Bulletin No. 84.

Against these forces, the “Zunami” represented an anti-establishment revolt.⁷⁸

5. He used the Zulu heritage. Hence, he identified himself as a “100% Zulu Boy” to symbolise respect, firmness, and capability of moving forward.⁷⁹ In fact, his notion seemed to provide a clear distinction between the strength of the Blacks as opposed to the Whites. Indeed, during his campaigns, he used T-shirts with the words “100% Zulu Boy” to show his closeness to the common people rather than to the elites. He often threw some Zulu phrases into his speech to attract support. Unlike in the previous elections, this made the ANC win Kwa-Zulu Natal by 64%.⁸⁰
6. He also visited several places, especially the marginalised population, to listen to their critical problems. He made overambitious promises on how to address these issues, thereby gaining the respect of the common people.⁸¹

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that much as populists may claim to be anti-political, anti-institutions, and anti-elite, they ultimately use these very same institutions to solicit support for power. In Tanzania and South Africa, Kikwete and, respectively, Zuma had to use institutions as factions within parties to propagate their agendas. In Zambia, Chiluba relied much on trade unionism to apply his populism. As such, populism is socially constructed to react against certain social phenomena. However, it has been observed that Africa has the potential for populism. This is due to the fact that the region is always involved in economic and leadership crises. To implement their plans, populists employ a number of strategies, such as symbols, culture, slogans, propaganda, overambitious promises, corruption and patrimonial politics to solicit support across the society. In some instances, they make use of intimidation. Generally, the effect of populism is diverse. What is more evident, particularly in Tanzania and Zambia, is a

⁷⁸ Daryl Glaser, “South Africa: Toward Authoritarian Populism?”, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, http://www.jwta.org.za/resources/docs/Salon-1-pdfs/Glaser_SouthAfrica.pdf (accessed 10 June 2011).

⁷⁹ Benedict Carton, “*Why is the ‘100% Zulu Boy’ so Popular?*” ..., 22.

⁸⁰ See the election results from the Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa 2009.

⁸¹ Danielle Resnick, “Populist Strategies in African Democracies” (United Nations University, 2010), Working Paper No. 2010/114.

shallow democracy with poorly accountable institutions and high levels of corruption.

This study notes two broad implications for populism in Africa. One is that it has led to the legitimacy crisis of populist leaders and their regimes. This is due to the fact that such leaders fail to deliver to the expectations of the masses. In some extreme cases, such failures have amounted to mass demonstrations demanding a regime change. Tanzania, South Africa, and Zambia have recently become potential sites for demonstrations by the frustrated masses. The other is that populism may turn into authoritarianism, especially when populist leaders resort to the use of force to resist change. In either case, the situation may be exacerbated by the problem of ethnicity. Populists tend to use their respective ethnic identities to protect their interests, culminating in civil wars.

However, an analysis of populism in Africa requires further research. As acknowledged in the beginning, the scope of this study is limited to three presidents from Tanzania, Zambia and South Africa. For this reason, the findings of this study cannot be generalised beyond the three countries. It should be noted that Africa is heterogeneous. In order to develop a theory on populism, future research should use a large-N comparison, including as many cases as possible and thereby eliciting patterns and overarching conclusions on this subject matter. Still, another important area to be considered by future research is that of comparative studies between Africa and other developing countries, on the one hand, and Europe/USA, on the other.

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THE FACETS AND OFFSHOOTS OF POPULISM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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Introduction

This chapter deals with populism in sub-Saharan Africa and depicts three facets of this socio-political phenomenon, as well as some of its derived forms. These three facets correspond to identity, poverty, and protest populism. The political regimes of Ahmed Sékou Touré, Idi Amin Dada, Désiré Mobutu and Laurent Gbagbo may serve as good illustrations of identity populism and poverty populism. These two forms of populism capitalise upon the issue of the people's identity and the idea of national belonging, denouncing the abject poverty in which the vast majority of the population lives and disparaging thereby any foreign elements, the great powers (more precisely, the former colonial powers) and a part of the national elite. The last mentioned is indicted as the fifth pillar that might participate in a transnational plot for overthrowing the political regime and establishing a new order, with the aim of subjugating and exploiting the country. Identity populism is found among many political actors who are involved in the management of the State at the lower levels. We shall refer to them as "tribal political actors". They present themselves as the heralds and defenders of their (ethnic, tribal or provincial) communities, which were marginalised and pauperised by the central power; these political tribal actors attack members of the social body whom they consider to be connecting links with the central state institutions and the foreigners who exploit the local resources to the detriment of the natives, to whom these assets rightfully belong. This form of populism, which mimes the "us vs. them" dichotomy, is often encountered in Africa. Several political actors in Nigeria, the Congo, Sudan, or Zimbabwe are illustrative cases in this respect.

Identity populism and protest populism are visible among opposition political actors. In this case, the identity rhetoric - of the "true nationals", of the "authentic nationals", of the "natives" - and the interests of the

Nation serve as alibis to the opposition parties, which accuse the power holders of representing infiltrated foreigners or undercover agents in the service of other countries or multinational corporations. Consequently, the aim is to overthrow or replace the politicians in power: the people are promised that there will be a restoration of the government led by nationals and that direct democracy will be established, allowing the people to be involved in the management of the *Res publica* and to become the masters of their own destiny. Some Congolese and Ivorian political actors may be considered as the best examples. What protest and poverty populism have in common are xenophobia, violations of human rights (ethnic purges, the nationalisation of assets belonging to foreigners, etc.) and the legitimisation of tropical totalitarianisms. The populists are adept at taking advantage of social rifts and economic disasters. Insofar as protest populism is concerned, it has given rise to political crises, escalating at times into civil wars.

In this study I use documentary data (the verbal or written discourses of African politicians) and data from field research. This is an interpretative and comparative approach, which also uses the techniques of direct observation. Besides the introduction and the conclusion, this text includes three main sections. The first builds a theoretical framework with a key central argument - populism is increasingly becoming a worldwide phenomenon. The second section focuses on three major forms of populism in sub-Saharan Africa, while the third refers to the offshoots of populism in Africa, granting particular attention to tropical totalitarianisms and some forms of xenophobia.

Populism as a Worldwide Phenomenon

While populism has been attested in all state entities, there is no unanimously accepted definition of this phenomenon. In Africa, its meaning varies from one case to another. The term is not as straightforward as it might appear to be. First of all, it is ambiguous. There is no precise and unique definition that might pinpoint its exact meaning. The African specialised literature on populism as a social and political phenomenon is poor, not only because of the term's intrinsic ambiguity, but because analysts hesitate to approach it for fear they might incur the risk of censorship or reprisals if they attempted to denounce the political actors. Of course, when discussing the issue of populism in Africa, one must start from the premise of certain similitudes between western and African socio-political organisations. Populism is, above all, a political

trend born in the West and its existence is attested in European countries with a democratic tradition.

The *a priori* assumption is that populism is unthinkable in societies that have barely liberated themselves from a totalitarian regime, where the societal organisation relies on the existence of a single omnipotent and omnipresent party, whose leaders consider themselves above the laws of nature and masters of social or human destinies. In its paroxystic and intolerable form, totalitarianism arises where there is an overlap between the unique party and the state. This was the case of Zaire, currently the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and other African countries where, in the Party-State dyad, the party took precedence over the state. “The MPR above all else”, as officially declared in Zaire.

We do not aim to comprehensively review the scientific literature related to populism. Such a task would entail reviewing works produced by well-known theoreticians coming from diverse epistemological fields, ranging from history to sociology and including literature, philosophy and politics. Still, it is necessary to mention the names of those who have dedicated their studies to populism and who, directly or indirectly, will accompany us in the present discussion: Guy Hermet (2001), Jean-Alix René (2003), Annie Collovald and Guillaume Courty (2007), and Sergiu Mişcoiu (2010). Although the term “populism” appeared in a French dictionary in as early as 1929, it was not until the 1980s that its usage was generalised, as a synonym of demagoguery or political opportunism, especially in relation to opposition movements. During the second half of the 19th century in the USA, it designated a political movement organised by farmers facing the prohibitive tariffs that the railway companies had managed to impose, thanks to their privileged access to the public domain. Other movements, particularly those of the workers, were organised as a form of protest against interest rates which they deemed to be excessive. During the same period, Russia witnessed a radical political movement aiming to establish a socialist agrarian economic system, called the *Narodnik* movement, or the People’s Movement. Prohibited by the police, the movement turned into a secret society that frequently resorted to violence and to assassinations in order to make its ideas known. Later on, in the aftermath of nationalism, the theme of the people’s emancipation inspired numerous so-called populist political parties. Boulangism, Peronism, and even Poujadism may be cited as examples of populist movements.

Certain political scientists consider that the Centre Democratic Union (CDU) in Switzerland is a populist party because it often makes reference to the people and its representatives always criticise representative

democracy despite being elected representatives. Relying on direct democracy, a fundamental constituent part of the Swiss political system, the leaders of the Centre Democratic Union regularly launch popular initiatives or referenda on sensible topics, playing thus the populist card. An eloquent example in this sense was the 2009 “anti-minarets” initiative, which gained the majority vote. In France, the National Front is a populist party whose targets are the elite in power and, generally, the Maghrebin and Sub-Saharan immigrants. The migration phenomenon and security are constant topics for political debates. In fact, the increasing number of immigrants in France is regarded as a source of insecurity in the neighbourhoods of the major cities. They are averse to the idea of becoming integrated into society and are deemed to be responsible for the socio-political crises, even though their presence in the political and economic sectors is somewhat insignificant. Some right- and left-wing political parties have covertly adopted, in their electoral campaigns, the traditional themes of the National Front, including insecurity, immigration and solidarity, in order to attract a part of the frontist electorate to their side. The reason for their “drifting” into the field of the National Front is accurately outlined, in our opinion, by Sergiu Mișcoiu: this party vacillates between the left and the right. Thus, we may speak of left-wing and right-wing frontism.

The National Front had (...) the capacity to serve as a venting ground for the leftist voters. Since communism no longer met the expectations of its former voters, they recast their allegiance in favour of either socialism or frontism (...) Given its power of attraction, the NF managed to gather around itself several electoral categories of the moderate right.¹

During the first half of the 20th century, the heads of state Benito Mussolini, in Italy, and Juan Domingo Peron, in Argentina, were sometimes mentioned as clear-cut examples of populist leaders. The President of the Italian Council, Silvio Berlusconi, and the Venezuelan President, Hugo Chavez, are regarded as populists, even though political scientists recognise the existence of a certain difference between Italian and Latin-American populism.

In Latin America, populism sometimes designates (as also shown in the chapter signed by Basset and Launay in this book) the political ideology of certain political movements or parties that aim to liberate the

¹ Sergiu Mișcoiu, *Le Front national et ses répercussions sur l'échiquier politique français, 1972-2002* (*The National Front and Its Impact on the French Political Scene, 1972-2002*) (Cluj-Napoca: Efes, 2005), 101-102.

people without resorting to class struggle. This is a form of populism that defines itself as anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist and that seeks an alliance between the urban middle classes and the workers, the peasants and even with those who do not have a clear social status. This has been notably the case of populism in Argentina, Venezuela and Haiti. Suffice it to mention the Haitian regime of Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Beyond the hope it gave rise to among the Haitian people, it soon became apparent that Aristide's regime was dominated by "poverty populism".² Thanks to the massive support of the poor population, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a Catholic priest, at that time, in the Saint Jean Bosco parish from Port-au Prince, was elected President of Haiti in 1990. His speeches, often delivered in Creole in order to more easily manipulate popular sensibility and emotions, were directed against state institutions and those in charge of them, President Jean-Claude Duvalier being on top of the list. His speeches also hinted at the military officers' potential merit in installing the dictatorship and throwing the country into an economic crisis, which actually turned Haiti into one of the poorest countries in the world.

Being a pastor, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was the ventriloquist of the poor population, i.e. the category of people whose means are unlikely to fulfil their needs. He placed the people at the centre of his speeches and homilies. In fact, he promised that the country would pass from a "state of abject poverty to one of dignified destitution", that he would return the power to its legitimate sovereigns and that he would enforce the law, in other words, that he would promote social equality and fight against impunity. However, once in power, the mission of the "Lavalas" Party was not easy. It did not have a majority either in Parliament or in the Senate. These two institutions multiplied the legislative procedures for blocking the reforms undertaken by the President. In order to get round the manoeuvres of the elected representatives, Aristide applied several strategies that denoted a populist orientation: for instance, the creation of popular organisations which often took the place of the courts and tribunals, making room for abuses. There followed a military coup which brought General Cédras to power and sent Aristide into exile, whence the latter organised a populist opposition whereby he financed popular Haitian organisations. This time his attack envisaged not only the elites, but also

² Laurent Jalabert, "Un populisme de la misère: Haïti sous la présidence Aristide" ("Poverty Populism: Haiti under the Presidency of Aristide"), *Amnis. Revue de Civilisation contemporaine de l'université de Bretagne Occidentale Europes/Amériques* 5 (2005). Text available on the site <http://www.univ-brest.fr/amnis/> (accessed 10 May 2011).

the presence of the United Nations forces in the country. Having returned to power in 2000, Aristide reinforced the power of his popular organisations led by the youth recruited in the slums from the outskirts (*bidonvilles*) of Port-au-Prince. They acted like state structures, parasitically exploiting the traditional (executive, legislative, and judiciary) powers and installing a reign of terror and corruption. Helped by the mass media it controlled, the regime harassed its opponents, who were accused of planning to kill Aristide, and denounced the support they received from the Western capitalist countries, which were allegedly aiming to take over control of the country and subject it to a new form of dictatorship and exploitation.

To his partisans, Aristide was a nationalist and a democrat who was entirely devoted to defending the people's interest, and who truly understood the country's social and political problems. To his opponents, he was a populist who took advantage of the people whose poverty increased exponentially, while the "baron" of the regime amassed the wealth derived from drug trafficking and corruption. Even his opponents, in their turn, exploited the poverty of the Haitian population, demanding that Aristide's regime should be deposed. By opposing Aristide's speech and exploiting the deviations of his populist politics, they succeeded in turning the people against the former priest from Port-au-Prince who, once again, lost power in a coup d'état and was forced to embark on exile.

According to Annie Collovald, the concept of "populism" in political science targets not as much those it designates but those who use it.³ In order to highlight this principle, she draws a parallel between the success of the concept and the progressive disappearance of the popular classes represented in the state apparatuses and the discourse of the political parties. In addition, she interprets the increasing use of the terms "populism" or "populist" as the expression of a growing distrust in the perpetual rise of the popular classes and the new propensity towards censitary and qualified democracy. In fact, ever since that period, populism has often been detected on the extreme right of the political spectrum. Nevertheless, it does not represent the exclusive prerogative of the extreme right. It also designates confidence in the people mentioned in the speeches of political leaders or actors who claim to belong either to the left or the centre. For instance, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, Hugo Chavez, Jean-Marie Le Pen and Jorg Haider are sometimes accused of being populist political actors. Still, while the first two are left-wing politicians, the last

³ Annie Collovald and Guillaume Courty, *Grands problèmes politiques contemporains (Major Contemporary Political Problems)* (Nantes: Maison de l'étudiant, 2007).

two belong to the extreme right. Whether rightist, leftist or centrist, every populist pretends to be the advocate of the people, of the oppressed, the exploited, or the native citizens. It goes without saying that any social body is subdivided into two groups, which the more they confront one another, the more divergent their interests become: the masses, the people *vs.* the assembly, the elite. This binarism entails several inflexions. Thus, there are, on the one hand, the autochthonous, native citizens, and, on the other hand, the immigrants, who are suspected of not being loyal, since they remain connected, in one way or another, to their culture of origin. There may also be the rich *vs.* the poor, the exploiters *vs.* the exploited.

In the archetypal image that opposes the people and the elite, the tendency is to consider that the people are slaves; thus, it is the duty of the enlightened, revolutionary minds to show them the path to be followed so that they may immediately address their difficulties and reach happiness. The people are considered as a part of the State which, in the absence of the light shed by the elite, does not know its priorities. This is the tradition inherited from Plato, Hegel, and even Nietzsche. Such a state of affairs is commonly encountered in the societies that are the heirs of the civilisation of ancient Greece and that were invented by the West in the aftermath of its worldwide expansion. Michel Maffesoli also notes that this activity is extremely lucrative, since the elite makes a living by positioning itself as the “enlightener” of the people who ignore their own interests and the path they should follow.⁴ Therefore, intellectuals may commonly feature among the populist figures.

Three Facets of Populism in Sub-Saharan Africa

Generally, the critique of populism targets the political elites or the economic interest groups located at the heart of society, being influential or directly exercising their political and economic power. If populist actors direct their attacks against the elite, this is due to the fact that the latter is perceived as a group that does not act in the interest of the majority, but in its own interest, or on behalf of other states or multinational corporations. The elites allegedly represent the intermediaries, the conspirators serving foreign interests at a local level. Pierre-André Taguieff believes that populism seduces by the fact that it proposes the rejection of the

⁴ Michel Maffesoli, *Le temps revient. Formes élémentaires de la postmodernité* (*Time Returns. Elementary Forms of Postmodernity*) (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2010).

intermediary link between the people and the leaders.⁵ He suggests the existence of two types of populism: identity populism and protest populism. The former aims to maintain national identity, which is supposedly threatened by immigration. In this case, populism consists in rallying the entire population to defend the national identity and the integrity of the country. This type of populism is always accompanied by xenophobia. The latter is characterised by the rejection of established institutions, and its demand for a direct democracy without any intermediaries: the people themselves are called or are qualified to govern directly. Those who are “at the bottom” rebel against those who are “at the top”. In the case of Africa, there are several types of populism. We may consider here not only identity and protest populism, but also the one we qualify as poverty populism. It may be the case that a political actor or a movement mobilises all these forms of populism or two of them, passing from one form to another.

Identity Populism and Poverty Populism

In the light of modern African history, identity populism and poverty populism are the most widely spread. Africa experienced the Western penetration and conquest; its population, which is largely Black, was for a long time excluded from the sphere of human rights, enslaved, colonised, subjected to totalitarianism, etc. A particular trend of thought went so far as to claim that there are no values, no humanism and culture outside the Western space; that is why Africa was denied the right to culture, self-organisation, and self-government. Moreover, while Africa is described as a continent with multiple resources, its population ranks among the poorest on the planet. In addition to this, the contemporary history of thought and social sciences, as well as the political actors tend to approach the issue of identity and the problem of poverty in Africa in distinctive ways.

The end of the 19th century witnessed the birth of movements considered to be the harbingers of a new national sentiment and of an irreversible reality: the Negro Renaissance. It strove to assert the dignity and honour of the Black man, his identity, his liberty, his right to vote, to speech, to work, to equality and justice (in the two Americas). Echoing the demands of the Black population in the USA for a Negro Renaissance,

⁵ Pierre-André Taguieff, *Les Contre-réactionnaires: le progressisme entre illusion et imposture* (*The Counter-Reactionaries: Progressivism between Illusion and Imposture*) (Denoël: Paris, 2007).

there was a proliferation of the African identity movements in Cuba, Jamaica and France, where the movement of Negritude gained shape. Leopold Sédar Senghor has explained under what circumstances he, Aimé Césaire and Léon-Gontran Damas launched the Negritude movement:

We fell, together with some of the Black students, into a kind of desperation. Nothing on the horizon. There were no prospects on the horizon, and the colonisers justified our political and economic dependence through the *tabula rasa* theory. According to their estimate, we could not invent, create, write or sing anything. Dancers! And others. To organise an efficient revolution, our revolution, we had to get rid first of our borrowed, received garments and to assert ourselves as human beings, or, rather, to assert our Negritude. However, even Negritude defined as a set of Black African cultural values could mean only the beginning of solving our problem and not the solution itself. To be truly ourselves, we had to reincarnate African culture in the reality of the 20th century.⁶

In this extract, Negritude is limned as a historical experience underlying three components: the denunciation of colonialism, the quest for identity roots, and self-assertion without the rejection of the *other* (i.e. the West). It was through the conscious realisation of their historical, social, political and economic condition in the modern world that the issues of identity and poverty were imposed amongst the Africans. At a political level, these issues fuelled populist speeches. These emphasised the idea of putting an end to the history of colonisation and to plundering in order to make room for national history and decolonisation, the latter being conceived as a program of absolute disorder enabling the dominated and the dispossessed to become masters of their lands and wealth.

The particularity of political speeches revolving around the issues of identity and poverty is that they denounce, with Marxist-Leninist rhetorical overtones, the former colonial metropolis and the local elite, which is ideologically close to the colonising countries. To use the words of a theorist of decolonisation in Africa, destroying the colonial world means suppressing a zone, burying it as deep as possible underground, or ousting it from the space of reference.⁷ Political speeches hint to a nationalist awakening, to liberation, to the revolution that would enable the African people to accomplish their Renaissance and to become the masters

⁶ Léopold Sédar Senghor, cited by Kinyongo Jeki, "Philosophie en Afrique: Conscience d'être" ("Philosophy in Africa: The Awareness of Being"), *Cahiers Philosophiques Africains*. Lubumbashi: PUZ, 3-4 (1973): 13-25.

⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la Terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*) (Paris: Maspero, 1968).

of their destiny. Their identitarian and economic condition functions as a stimulating and structuring element. It serves to mobilise the people, to cement social ties and to reinforce the sentiment that the heterogeneous population shares the same destiny, belonging to the same community of enslaved people, the “wretched of the Earth”, who are progressively making their return in the history of a world where the rules of the market and the theoretical principles surrounding the destination of the fruits of the land lead to the restructuration of spaces and of social and economic relations.

In Africa, identity populism and poverty populism emerged during the decolonisation process and, in particular, with the formation of the first political parties in the African socio-political arena, starting from the 1950s. These years inaugurated the African populations’ assumption of symbolical responsibility for the destiny of their countries. Even though political independence was proclaimed, economic and cultural independence was almost entirely absent. However, if political independence lacks economic and cultural foundations, it risks turning into a mystification. The speeches of the African political actors from the 1960s denounced such a state of affairs, referring to neo-colonialism and the economic exploitation of Africa in a discourse evincing many populist accents, which betrayed a Marxist vocabulary. The language of this populism abounded in terms such as: comprador bourgeoisie, proletariat, social classes, class conflict, revolution, exploitation, imperialism, neo-colonialism, “We, the people”, foreigners, exploiters, colonists, infiltrated agents, vassals of imperialism, plot, traitors, etc.

Ahmed Sékou Touré, Désiré Mobutu and Idi Amin Dada are, to various degrees, some of the emblematic figures of identity and poverty populism. Initiated into Marxism-Leninism by a group of Conakry active militants consisting of French communists, Sékou Touré was at first a remarkable syndicalist. He was elected, in 1945, Secretary General of the PTT trade union and became one of the key leaders of the 1947 railroad strike. Trade unionism became for him an excellent means of ensuring his control over the masses and playing a political role in his country, by then a French colony. During the 1940s, Sékou Touré led a political movement known as the Patriotic Union. At that time, he was the leader of the communist organisation. He was elected Secretary General of the Democratic Party of Guinea (DPG) and in 1955, he became a member of the Coordinating Committee of the party known as the African Democratic Gathering (ADG). In 1957, he became vice-president of the same party. In 1958, he acquired notoriety through the famous “No” through which

Guinea answered General De Gaulle's initiative. On 25 August 1958, he addressed himself to De Gaulle in the following terms:

How could the African people not be sensitive to these wishes, a people who lives daily with the hope that it will regain its dignity and increasingly strengthens its willingness to be equal to the best? The value of this people, Mr. President, is surely known to you better than to anyone else, since you were a witness and a judge of both the good things and the bad things that France has been through. This exceptional period at the end of which freedom must reappear with a fresh spark, with tenfold force, is marked by the Black man in a special way, since, during the last world war, he adhered, without justification, to the cause of the people's freedom and of Human Dignity. (...) The flourishing of African values is obstructed, not so much because of those who have shaped them, but because of the economic and political structures inherited from the colonial regime, which was not in tune with the aspirations for the future (...) The privilege of a poor people is that the risk that threatens its undertakings is small, and the dangers it is exposed to are minimal. A poor man wants only to become rich and there is nothing more natural than wanting to remove all inequalities and injustices. We carry this need for equality and justice within ourselves all the more so since we were painfully subjected to injustice and inequality.⁸

These extracts from Sékou Touré's historical speech are highly instructive. They include expressions such as: "people", "the value of this people", "liberty", "the man of Africa", "the values of Africa", "poor people", "poor" etc. These expressions confirm the fact that the people, its poverty, its identity, and its material condition nourish the speech of the "Guide". For him this meant freeing the Guinean people from oppression. He was the father of his country's independence, which occurred on 2 October 1958. Liberation from foreign rule was a step towards the conquest of lost freedom, of identity and dignity. Independence was one step towards the building of an egalitarian and just society, where poverty and racism were to be fought against.

In this speech, Sékou Touré positioned himself as the herald and defender of the oppressed, the exploited, and the poor. Notwithstanding all this, he disappointed the expectations of his people and of Africa, which had only just come out of the colonisation process. After the French refusal to sign an agreement with Guinea, which would have authorised its

⁸ Ahmed Sékou Touré, *Discours prononcé Conakry le 25 août 1958 devant le Président de la République française, le Général Charles De Gaulle* (Speech held in Conakry on August 24, 1958, addressed to the President of the French Republic, General Charles De Gaulle), 1958.

entry into the “Community”, Sékou Touré started imposing his laws and rules. The Party ended by becoming the leading authority and progressively imposed a “popular and brutal revolution”, as Sékou Touré acknowledged in the speech he delivered in August 1976, specifically in the section regarding the “prevailing situation of Fouta”:

So we say then that all the regions of Southern Guinea must from now on live in the atmosphere of the Popular Revolution and for democracy. In addition to the force of our arguments, which separate honest intellectuals, the militants of Southern Guinea, we will use force against those who have eyes but do not see and have ears but do not hear. They will know that we have never been afraid of them, that we have respected them, but since they do not like respect, we shall give them what they like, that is, brute force! Since racism is used to make our country available to the neo-colonialist imperialists, we must do everything in our power to uproot it.⁹

As soon as it acquired independence, the new regime expelled the French and nationalised most foreign enterprises. It was a matter of showing that it took on the fight against imperialism and poverty. In 1967, Western missionaries were also expelled from Guinea; the church-owned communal buildings (schools, clinics, houses) were confiscated by the regime, and the youth movements were prohibited and replaced with the movement known as the Youth of the African Democratic Revolution. The missionaries were accused of being in the service of an imperialist policy targeted at “alienating” the Guinean people. Progressively, a regime of surveillance, denunciation and terror was installed and generalised. The outcome: the restriction of human rights and the instrumenting of true and imaginary plots, which the ruler of Conakry used for suppressing his political adversaries, dissidents, and opponents in the dreary Camp Boiro. Compared to the former rulers, the colonists and the elites suspected of plotting against him and Guinea, he instigated the people he manipulated and claimed to defend against neo-colonialism.

One of Sékou Touré’s features consists in having turned the Guinean people into a sort of homogeneous, stable aggregate through several national feasts and other political manifestations. Thus Jacques Vignes has noticed that under the rule of Sékou Touré, Guinea became a vast theatre where the actors unconsciously interpreted a play of which they understood nothing. It was a world of spectacle, of orgies, organised in the

⁹ Ahmed Sékou Touré, *Discours du 6, 21 et 27 août 1976* (Speech delivered on August 6, 21 and 27, 1976), 1976. Available on the site: http://www.webguinee.net/bibliotheque/sekou_toure/discours/ (accessed 5 August 2011).

manner of ballet performances and carnivals. The people applauded the performance of the Guide, without realising that the reality was different, that they constantly acted out one and the same script, being bound to applaud at the end of each act. The two Party organs, namely the National Council of the Revolution and the Congress, wrote the scripts, directed the orchestra, managed the production, choreographed the dancing and conducted the choirs.

Populist politics reached the height of political paranoia, whose over 1,000 victims included Telli Diallo, the first Secretary General of the Organisation of African Unity. Sékou Touré's populism was also directed against the Guinean elite, which had been trained in the West. Telli Diallo was an outstanding figure. On numerous occasions, his speeches went against the *former* metropolis, France, and the western capitalist countries. These were allegedly trying to do away with Sékou Touré in order to plunder Guinea, by overthrowing the "revolutionary and democratic" government, the "government of the people". They were purportedly attempting to install "their marionettes" in power. These "marionettes" might have been recruited from among the Guinean intellectuals and from the ranks of particular ethnicities. For instance, the Peulhs from the Fouta region were flogged on countless occasions at the President's order.

These traitors, he said in 1976, are the ones who always mislead other peoples, the African peoples, the European peoples and the American peoples when it comes to ascertaining the situation in Guinea as accurately as possible. They do more harm to Guinea than imperialism and neo-colonialism, because by laying claim on Guinea, they give a semblance of authenticity to their big blatant lies. They are traitors of the motherland and nothing more. But let us speak the truth. Treason must be cut off and ousted permanently from the behaviour of the Peulh ethnics.¹⁰

Alpha Barry has shown that Sékou Touré's speeches were organised around a denunciative dynamism, which acted as an incentive to the abandoned people, turning it into a class that was opposed to the elite and the foreign countries. The three stages of this denunciative dynamism have been highlighted.

During the first stage, the politician inserted in his speech a conflicting situation between the three protagonists of the discourse: the speaking subject, the people, and the enemies of the revolution. By introducing the

¹⁰ Sékou Touré, Ahmed. *Discours du 6, 21 et 27 août 1976 (Speech delivered on August 6, 21 and 27, 1976)*, 1976. Available on the site: http://www.webguinee.net/bibliotheque/sekou_toure/discours/ (accessed 5 August 2011).

plot theory, he posed as a hero under threat, hinting at the existence of an invisible opponent who must be identified and neutralised. The threat menacing the Guide presupposed the existence of a real danger looming over the entire Guinean society. In pointing out this danger against stability and social equilibrium, he actually castigated a sole culprit: one part of the elite. The elite was part of a vast network that plotted against the Guide and the revolutionary regime of free Guinea. The internal enemy was presented as an executing agent who received orders from the neighbouring countries or from the western neo-colonial powers, France being at the top of the list. The neighbouring states, oftentimes covertly denounced, without being directly named, were exposed as maintaining the connections between the imperialism that conceived and controlled the plots from afar and Guinea's elite, dubbed as the fifth pillar, with a role in the execution of these plots. Sékou Touré managed thus to instil in the people the psychosis of a permanent threat, menacing each and every member of the society. Through this discursive staging, he took advantage of the people, who were moved by the patriotic sentiment generated by the "Father of the Nation".

During the second stage of denunciative dynamism, he created a discursive circle at the centre of which he placed the expression "We, the People", leading to the elimination of the syntagm "They, the Adversaries". This stage consisted in rallying together the people - the individual and the masses - the orator and his audience, who were to join their forces for the fight. The community of "We" transformed into a collective actor fighting against the adversaries, the enemies of the president and, implicitly, of the Nation, of the people's interests.

The third stage corresponded to the intended finality: that of uniting the society into the unique conscience of the revolution. Sékou Touré identified himself with the people, becoming the major leader of the Guinean revolution. This individual seemed to lead an ideal life. He became a god whose word spread with immense force. The proof lies in the oratorical intensity of Sékou Touré's speeches. It had nothing in common with the common speech of an ordinary man, but resembled the eloquence of a divine messenger pronouncing grandiose words. We may generalise this three-tiered denunciative dynamism evinced by Sékou Touré's speeches to the extent of a paradigm. We may then give an account of this form of populism using the people's identity and poverty as pretexts for denouncing foreigners, the great powers (whether former metropolitan centres or not) and the internal elites, considered as their intermediaries. This kind of populism was also encountered in Désiré Mobutu's and Idi Amin Dada's speeches.

Mobutu, who came to the attention of the Belgian secret services and the CIA at a rather early stage, came into power on 24 November 1965, following a military coup d'état against President Joseph Kasavubu. He initially presented himself as a man of order, by contrast with an amateur political class, which had proved incapable of managing the independence it had obtained from Belgium in 1960 and the political chaos engendered by the inexperienced civilians involved in politics. Immediately after obtaining international recognition of the country's sovereignty, the elites created, in fact, an institutional crisis, which reached its climax with the secession from Katanga and Kasai, the mutual dismissal (revocation) of the Head of State, Joseph Kasavubu, and the Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, the latter's arrest and assassination, the outbreak of the rebellion being due to the exacerbation of ethnicity. Each ethnic group tried to maintain its position on the socio-political ladder and to prevent the alleged emergence of hegemony, as well as the wielding of power by opposing factions. In this context, the rebellions were more than interethnic massacres: they were also forms of struggle against the political elites that succeeded the colonialists in power. The rebellions were, in equal measure, forms of weakening the national unity, seen as a legacy of the colonial period. This situation of crisis prepared Mobutu's political and military ascent.

After his coming to power, he revealed himself as a man capable of handling crisis situations. He was committed to putting down rebellions, to restoring order and unifying the country by dint of authoritarian practices. An example in this sense was the practice of hanging people, as it happened in Kinshasa during the Pentecost, in June 1966, on the site of the present-day Martyrs' stadium. It appeared to be an initiation crime, common to any despotic regime. The regime aimed not only to silence any dissenting voice or objection, but also to teach a lesson to its potential opponents. Through such practices, it set up a propitious environment for the development of totalitarianism, which enabled the holder of the supreme power to become the sole man in possession of truth and justice. It was not by chance that he was dubbed the "Enlightened Guide", the Father of nation, the Founding Father, etc. The president was elevated to the dignity of Field Marshall, rather than proclaiming himself President or Emperor. He thus gained the right to decide upon the life and death of all this compatriots, on behalf of whom he exercised power, and he was said to be the bulwark of defence in the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism. Poverty and the re-appropriation of Congolese (Zairian) identity by the Congolese people (the Zairians) represented the price for his remaining power, for accumulating riches and allowing a few

privileged individuals to live above the law. These were the so-called “Organs” of the Republic, the members of the Central Committee or the Political Bureau of the Popular Movement of the Revolution (PMR), which later became the Party-State, high-ranking military officers and state dignitaries.

In 1970, the Popular Movement of the Revolution (PMR), founded several years before by the President of the Republic, was institutionalised as a unique party. From 1971 to 1975, the political speeches were dominated by the ideology and philosophy of authenticity. Mobutu, the promoter of this ideology, believed he had a calling, namely to fill in the void that had characterised national politics since 1965: the lack of an ideology that might enable the Congolese to regain their lost identity.

We have done better than create a movement because although the MPR is a pioneering, structured organisation, which mobilises and integrates the masses, it needs something more, it needs a soul: the reason of national unity, the reason of economic, political, cultural independence, the reason of dignity, the pride of coming from Zaire; this soul is called “authenticity”. For us, there is no authenticity without the MPR. If I were to use a metaphor, the MPR could be considered the bodywork of a car whose engine is authenticity.¹¹

Before 1973, during the National Congress of the Senegalese Progressive Party, Mobutu stated that the entire historical purpose of the Congo (Zaire at that time) on the African soil boiled down to the quest for Congolese authenticity, the “true African visage” of the Congolese, as it had been envisioned by the ancestors who had left the Congo to the Congolese. The ideology of authenticity calls forth both the idea of nationalism and that of African identity or (Africanity), entailing the return to the origins of the Congolese and the Africans. The intention is to place the Congolese at the heart of political and economic action. In fact, this is already self-evident in the definition of authenticity. On 4 October 1973, at the 28th General Assembly of the UN, Mobutu defined the Congolese experience as follows:

¹¹ Joseph-Désiré Mobutu Sese Seko, “Discours prononcé à Dakar devant le Congrès national de l’Union progressiste sénégalaise, le 14 février 1971” (“Speech Delivered in Dakar before the National Congress of the Senegalese Progressive Union, February 14, 1971”), in *Discours et allocutions du Président-fondateur du MPR (Speeches and Statements Made by the President and Founder of MPR)* (Kinshasa: Institut Makanda Kabobi, 1973), 348.

The experience of Zaire sprang from a political philosophy that we call authenticity. This entails raising the Zairians' awareness about using their own resources and recuperating the values left by their ancestors in order to appreciate those that contribute to the harmonious and natural development of the people. It represents the Zairians' refusal to embrace imported ideologies. It is the affirmation of the Zairian man's rights or the rights of man in general, as he is, with his own social and mental structures. Authenticity means not only acquiring a thorough knowledge of one's own culture, but also showing respect for the cultural heritage of others.¹²

Following these lines, authenticity may be seen to liberate man from all kinds of oppressions at the price of his involvement in economic growth. Out of this nationalist élan and perpetual pursuit of identity, the names of places and of people began to be changed. Therefore Zaire replaced the Congo, Léopoldville became Kinshasa, Stanleyville became Kisangani, Élisabethville became Lubumbashi, Costermansville became Bukavu, etc. This quest for the Congolese self and for the Africanity of the "true Congolese" was expressed in other domains of everyday life. The European suit was replaced by the *l'abacost* (an acronym meaning "Take off the European suit"), which was paradoxically inspired by the Chinese costume. The loincloth was preferred over the skirt. European symbols, such as monuments, were systematically destroyed. In the euphoria of power and megalomania, Mobutu even proposed the substitution, in the Christian schools, of crosses and the statues of Christ with the effigy of the "Guide", or the "Father of the Nation". This policy aimed to erase a history - the history praising the triumphs of Western civilisation and of imperialism - so as to write another: the history of a people that was proud to authentically live in Africa and in the world, of a people that had broken the chains of oppression and exploitation. Moreover, Mobutu repeated many times that authenticity was a weapon against "the oppression of the people", "the exploitation of one race by another".

The policy of authenticity may be then considered as a stronghold for defending the Congolese people on the identitarian, cultural and economic levels. That is why, since the class of "the advanced" grew with the arrival of high school and university graduates on the working market, the regime planned to fight against poverty by creating a middle class of small and medium business owners and industries: the purchasers of the nationalised western companies. Associated with the policy of authenticity were the problems of identity and poverty. In the context of the oil crisis caused by

¹² Joseph-Désiré Mobutu Sese Seko, *Discours présidentiel de la politique générale prononcé le 30 novembre 1973 (Presidential Address on General Policy Delivered on November 30, 1973)* (Kinshasa: Institut Makanda Kabobi, 1973).

the OPEC, this policy identified the West as the main source of poverty for the local population.

Identity populism and poverty-induced populism were also attested during the period of Idi Amin Dada's regime. It was with the help of the former colonial power Great Britain that Idi Amin Dada came to power. However, his populism criticised, among others, the British nationals, by stating that they had strongly contributed to the impoverishment of the Ugandan people. When he expelled, in 1972, the Indo-Pakistani holders of British nationality who represented the backbone of the Ugandan economy, he declared he was following a dream in which God had ordered him to push them out of the country in order to defend the interest of Uganda and its people. When the USA and the UK closed down their embassies in Kampala in order to protest against the totalitarian excesses of his regime, he became more and more paranoid. He ruled the country by oral decrees, announced directly on the radio or during political meetings. He created double governmental structures by setting up parallel organisations whose functioning he controlled in case they were not led by members of his tribe: the *Public Safety Unit* doubled the *State Research Bureau*, the Presidential Guard doubled the army, and even the police, if need be. He imagined a series of plots in order to persecute the rival tribes and the intellectuals suspected of being the local agents of neo-colonialism, and even attempted to accredit, in the Ugandan public opinion, the thesis whereby a part of the Kenyan and Sudanese territories historically belonged to Uganda.

Even though Mobutu's populism was dissimulated behind the ideology of authenticity, there still existed unquestionable similarities between the populisms of Ahmed Sékou Touré, Désiré Mobutu and Idi Amin Dada. These heads of state used national identity and the material situation of the people who had been formerly colonised as a means of increasing their power and terror potential. The enemy of the people and their interests was "the foreign imperialism" of the Western countries, embodied by the colonialists and the missionaries, who aimed to alienate the peoples of Africa by disseminating essentially Western beliefs, ideas and ideologies. To the list of external enemies, internal enemies were added: educated people or intellectuals and alienated citizens, who were forced by the foreign powers to destabilise and betray their countries and their cultures.

The issues of the identity and security of the people were used to justify the confiscation of freedom, dignity and democracy, and to impose the so-called tropical totalitarianisms. These totalitarian forms of societal organisation started from the existence of unique parties, whose leaders

considered themselves to be the almighty masters of the destinies of these societies and people.

Protest Populism Doubled by Identity Populism

The forms of protest populism doubled by identity populism may be identified, in Africa, among the opposition members. Initially, this populism targeted those in power, who were often accused of being “against the people”, “infiltrated” spies in the service of the neighbouring countries, the lobby groups and the Western or Asian multinationals. However, besides these power holders, this form of populism was also levelled against foreigners and immigrants. Examples are provided by many opposition political parties from Africa, including the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC) and the *Alliance of Patriots for the Refoundation of the Congo* (APARECO). The MLC and APARECO were created by Jean Pierre Bemba and, respectively, by Honoré Ngbanda, and appeared on the Congolese political scene after 1997, the year when the ADFL (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation) drove Mobutu out of power and installed Laurent-Désiré Kabila, a Lumumbist of Marxist orientation. Before the year 2006, the speeches of the MLC had been a little bit different from those pronounced now by the leader of APARECO: Honoré Ngbanda. He had studied philosophy at university. While he was a student, he worked as an information agent for Mobutu. When he completed his studies, he became involved in politics. He had been trained by the secret services of Israel, where he was later on appointed as Ambassador of the Congo (Zaire). He returned to the Congo and occupied several political positions, including those of Minister and special adviser in charge of the President’s security. Dubbed as the “Terminator” in Kinshasa because of his reprisals during the opposition manifestations against Mobutu’s regime, he earned the reputation of being one of the President’s repressive forces.

His writings, speeches and interviews are quite illustrative of the protest populism which mimes the “us” vs. “them” dichotomy. In the socio-political field, this distinguishes between the native citizens, or authentic nationals, and the “pseudo-citizens” or “false citizens”. The declaration dated 9 June 2011 clearly shows that the first target of Ngbanda’s political party was the Congolese leading elite. Several political and military actors, including the President of Republic, were involved in the war that led to the ADFL coming to power in 1997, much to the disappointment of Mobutu and his followers, among whom was the President of APARECO. The ADFL received technical, logistical and

human support from the Rwandese, Ugandan and Burundian armies. It was even said that the movement had been created by the power holders in Kigali, so much so that Laurent Kabila had been allegedly appointed as a spokesman for covering a Tutsi plot against the Bantus, or, respectively, the Hutu and the Congolese. Laurent Kabila was tragically assassinated and was succeeded by Joseph Kabila, at that time Chief of Staff of the Land Forces, who was then elected democratically in 2006. He automatically became the main target of the opposition parties, the MLC and APARECO in particular.

The two movements have certain features in common. They protested against the political elite in power in Kinshasa after the fall of Mobutu, and especially against President Joseph Kabila and a series of Congolese leaders who had supported or accompanied the ADFL in its war against Mobutu. These two movements were created by the former servants of Marshall Mobutu; after all, they all came from the province of Equator, in the northwest of the country. They took the road of exile prior to Laurent Kabila's coming to power. Although the MLC now joined the institutions, a part of its leaders never completely gave up the plan of retaking power, even at the cost of armed battle. The proofs appeared right after the results of the second round of the presidential elections were announced and the MLC champion, nicknamed "Mwana mboka" (native, son of the country), lost to Joseph Kabila, who had been presented by the MLC activists as a "foreigner".

After the populist rhetoric of the MLC, that of APARECO denounced the current President as a "foreigner", an "invader", an "occupant", an "infiltrated spy", a "double agent". The ADFL veterans were blamed for having been put in power by the Tutsi authorities in order to defend the interests of Rwanda, the Congo and those of the West European, American and Asian multinationals. The Congolese people and the DRC represented the space for the businesses run by the MLC and APARECO. As regards the ruling elites, they could only represent the fifth pillar in the materialisation of an ignoble external plot whose "final objectives" were allegedly "the death of the Democratic Republic as a State and the destruction of the Congolese people as a nation". In fact, yesterday's MLC and today's APARECO identify themselves with the people whom they invite to liberate itself from foreign domination, to resist dictatorship, to fight in order to tear out power from the "foreigners". The leaders of these two movements appear to be nationalists, democrats opposed to dictators. They present themselves as the defenders of an oppressed people. Consequently, they fight in order to enable the people to regain the

authentic course of their destiny. Historically and ideologically, this means the course of the destiny interrupted by the war of the years 1996-1997.

The Alliance of Democratic Forces for Liberating the Congo (ADFL) is also understood as a Rwandese movement of invasion, aggression and occupation, working on the behalf of the invaders coming from the “small Rwanda”. We forget that the strength, the power of a State does not depend upon its size, but upon its organisation, upon its scientific, technological, economic and military power. But APARECO contends that the Rwandan-Burundian-Ugandan invaders could be the relay, the decisive power in the DRC and in the region of the “Great Lakes” from Africa, of the multinationals and mainly of the Western powers which after using Mobutu to serve their interests during the period of the Cold War, abandoned him in the context of the post-bipolar world. These multinationals and western powers are described, at best, as somewhat disloyal partners and, at worst, as the “perpetrators of organised crime in central Africa”. Besides disclosing information about the recent tragedies in the Great Lakes region, the books entitled *The Bells Are Tolling* and *Organised Crime in Central Africa* are also instructive as to the nature of populism, seen through the lens of their author.

In the speeches and writings of APARECO, the political question in the Congo is “Tutsilised”. The term Tutsi is generally used in a pejorative context, like Hima, Tutsi-Hima, Rwandese, Banyamulenge, Murundi (or Mulundji), Ethiopia, Ethiopian, etc. The Tutsi people are considered a community of “invaders”, of “African conquistadores” who export their aggressive and genocidal behaviours to the Congo. At the level of the Congo, in the Great Lakes region and in Africa, what is denounced is the hegemonic dream of the Tutsi power holders, the project of the “Kilimanjaro Empire”, the neo-imperialistic policy and the Western affinities of the Tutsi, who allegedly benefit from American and, to some extent, European complicity. Among other negative stereotypes and prejudices, the Tutsi are rendered as ungrateful, cruel and wicked people, who have waged wars against a peaceful people that nonetheless welcomed them during their long exile between 1959 and 1990. This is a binary logic, specific to the paradigm of simplicity. There is the opposition between the good and the wicked, between victims and their executioners.

What emerges in the APARECO discourse is the manipulation of the identitarian issue, “Congolity”, with its corollary, the division of the Congolese social body into two antagonistic blocks. There are on the one hand, those who consider themselves the true Congolese, the authentic nationals or “*ba Congolais ya solo*” because they were born on the Congolese soil and were obviously involved in the former power

mechanisms. On the other hand, there are those who are called “pseudo-Congolese” because they have been living abroad, even though they were born from Congolese parents, or those who are immigrants or have become naturalised, having Congolese citizenship. The Congolese from Kivu are cited in the APARECO speeches and declarations only for the sake of offering a guarantee to the party. They are summoned to dissociate themselves from the ruling elite and from Joseph Kabila, who is supposedly the source of their misfortune. What is forgotten is that when the Tutsi refugees received the Congolese nationality collectively, by a decision of the PRM Central Committee, it had barely come into being. When the Tutsi refugees received land in the province of Kivu, he was living in exile in Tanzania and could not be held responsible for all the ill-advised decisions taken by those who repudiate him today. They forget that one of the directors of Mobutu’s Cabinet was a Congolese citizen, of Tutsi extraction nonetheless: Bisengimana.

In fact, populism is a disaster not only for the development of the Congo, but it is equally dangerous for the countries with various interests in the Congo. For beyond the hatred against those who fell under Mobutu’s regime, the targets are now the countries neighbouring the Congo, particularly those from the East: Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Tanzania. Apart from these there are the Western states (Europe and America) to which China may be added.

We know that by manipulating Ivority, the populism specific to the Ivory Coast eventually built an ivory tower which meant disaster for the developing countries in Africa. Integrative under Felix Houphouët-Boigny, the Ivorian identity became discriminatory and xenophobic in his successors’ speeches, and especially in those of Henri Konan Bédié; the latter resumed, in 1993, in an economic context, this concept that had appeared in Dakar in 1945. The instrumentalisation of Ivority led to the fragilisation of the national unity and the removal of one part of the Ivorian elite from power. Against the background of the civil war (justified not only by the discourse of Ivority), a tree was planted. The fact that Laurent Gbagbo, who had a doctoral degree in national history, did not resume the right path enables us to confirm two situations. *Niccolò Machiavelli* noted that men often come to power by denouncing the abuses of their predecessors. They rarely behave differently from those they replace and display the same flaws as those they denounce. Edgar Morin remarks that few men learn to rule wisely when they are in power, being convinced that they are enlightened or that they represent the providential men that the Nation has been awaiting. The fact that Laurent Gbagbo instigated people to commit absurd crimes in the name of Ivority

contributed to nothing but the regrettable regress of his country. And it is such a scheme that some leaders have been entertaining for decades in the Congo: Congolity as merchandise has been spoilt, becoming dangerous for the future of the Nation. What is essential is the re-conquest of power.

The Identity Populism of Tribal Political Actors

The other facet of populism in Africa is that offered by the tribal political actors. Without attacking other neighbouring countries, their populism consists in instrumentalising the communities, ethnic groups or tribal groups within a country in order to conquer, exert, and maintain power. They form tribal, ethnic or provincial parties essentially defending the interests of their leader's tribe, ethnicity or province. By presenting their community as being in danger, marginalised or discriminated in relation to others in society, they place it in the position of a victim compared with other communities. Thus, ethnic, tribal and religious communities are set against one another. Consequently, they oppose the "people from the North" to "those from the South", Muslims against Christians, Christians against animists and *vice versa*, one tribe against another in Nigeria, Kenya, Sudan, Mauritania, Burundi, Rwanda, Congo-Brazzaville, the DRC, Chad, Ivory Coast, etc. They oppose the Blacks to the Whites, as it has recently happened in Zimbabwe, forgetting or choosing to forget that Africa is no longer defined by exclusive reference to the Black race. Since the 19th century, Africa has been a melting pot of cultures, a crossroads of antagonisms, of complementarities, of comingling, of dispersals. What is often proclaimed, in keeping with the political interests, is that citizens of a particular ethnic extraction or those belonging to a particular tribe are not authentic citizens. Autochthonous binarism is the subject of political and scientific discourse.

In these countries, at different levels, the local political actors mime identity populism, justifying it by the necessity to create a geopolitical and economic space that is vital for the locals, for the members of their communities or ethnicity. What is upheld is the necessity of freeing oneself from everything that pertains to the old, deeply-ingrained hegemony, of preparing the movement towards regional autonomy or federalism, which might enable the people to participate in the power mechanisms and the production of wealth on "their ancestors' lands". It is true that people must have the right of ownership over the fruit of the land, of possessing land, since it is known that land is, of all the kinds of possessions, the most long-lasting. Freedom is defined by reference to property. No one can truly claim that they are free until they possess

something of their own. But freedom is also always defined by reference to the law. Outside the law, there can practically be no freedom at all. Access to power, to capital and other possessions should be done under the law. In many countries, the running adrift of an ethnic or regional community is often caused by populist speeches. The African countries offer plenty of regrettable examples, especially from the 1990s. We may witness the dissemination of rhetoric of unprecedented crudeness, full of threats, insults, and demonising stereotypes. It feeds itself on the same vein as the politics of exclusion, advocating a form of salvation that entails getting rid of the other, who is considered haughty or unruly, and who proves to be ungrateful, rebellious and arrogant.

Denying the contradiction, stifling the social and professional demands, threatening or ostracising the rebels, automatically assuming the existence of a regional or ethnic plot, excluding the possibility of dialogue, excelling at lies and dubious sophisms, transforming public insults into popular and demagogical slogans... all these are, in Nyunda ya Rubango's words, the practices characterising the rhetoric of the third form of populism in Africa.

The Offshoots of Populism in Sub-Saharan Africa

There are many offshoots of populism in sub-Saharan Africa. The most visible and disastrous are tropical totalitarianisms and xenophobia. Their consequences have been the transformation of many African regions into a world of socio-political and economic crises, a universe where murder becomes a banal occurrence. Such a universe may reinforce the erroneous opinion of many foreign analysts according to whom Africa is "a myth", a "fit of madness", a pure passivity whose worst tragedies might be explained by the fact that the "African (man) has not yet made his entrance into history".¹³ For them, Africans have allegedly remained prisoners of ancestral socio-cultural traits. This supposedly makes them incapable of projecting themselves into the future and being open to the new. We have noted on countless occasions that civil wars have been often interpreted through an ethnic lens, betraying the persistence of residual ancestral practices separating "the slaves from the masters", the autochthonous population from the immigrants.

Totalitarianism and xenophobia have slowed down the pace of prosperity in many African countries, although their sovereignty was internationally acknowledged, presenting also domestic advantages for the

¹³ These words belong to one of Nicolas Sarkozy's speeches from 2007.

achievement of their maximum potential. This was the case of the Congo. Certainly, it would have been fair for the African countries to also acquire economic and cultural independence. The history of Africa and its peoples should have been written in another way, but it was again necessary to remember that the colonial experience could not be completely written off. When the West colonised Africa, ideas of emancipation were disseminated therein. It participated and still participates in the contemporary definition and accomplishment of African freedom. Consequently, the relation between the African countries and the West must be reconsidered not only in the context of century-old adversities or in the terms of a confrontation, but under the sign of mutual understanding and of belonging to a complex world where the redistribution of status and responsibility between the West, the East and the South is fully underway.

Brought to power with the support of Western countries, the African politicians have often directed the anger of the people against those who dared to denounce their dictatorships, violence and the socio-economic crises. The dissidents, the opponents of the regime were, at best, forced into clandestinity or stigmatised as traitors in the service of foreign interests. The tyrants sought to impose themselves as the only true defenders of their country's interests or, rather, of their people against those who attempted to manipulate the world of international finance and against the Western imperialist powers. In the worst case scenario, the dissidents, the opponents of the regime were annihilated, assassinated by mercenaries or hanged in public squares. That gesture was meant to dissuade potential "traitors", "renegades", "rebels", "unruly subjects", or the "nostalgics of the colonial order".

In addition, this was implicit a gesture of purification, intended to liberate the society from the source of evil, to restore order, and to consolidate the State as a complex organisation that monopolised, within the borders of a territory, legitimate physical violence, which was seen as a means of domination, and that, to this end, placed the material means of administering it into the leaders' hands. The critique of colonialism is a frequently encountered practice. Still, it should be remembered that when they came to power, the leaders of political parties who turned this into an objective did not relinquish certain practices that unfortunately awakened the people's nostalgia for the colonial times. In many African villages, one may often hear disenchanted peasants, disappointed with the unfulfilled promises of political leaders, asking, full of dismay: "when will this unfortunate independence come to an end?". The life narratives of the people who went through the colonial experience are meaningful. Confronted with the gory exploits of certain post-colonial African leaders

and the deterioration of living conditions in the post-colonial period, the people investigated are certainly critical towards colonisation and its abuses, but sometimes tend to relativise or even minimise them. We find the same tendency among the intellectuals (writers, teachers) from Africa who live in exile or who have acquired European or American citizenship. They contend with arguments that many of the colonialists' successors have not been worthier than the former leaders.

To legitimate its violence, colonisation in Africa around the end of the 19th century presented itself both as a cohesive force and as a link between African cultures with diverse, mutually opposed traditions. It wove a relation of complementarity between the ancestral "memories" of the African space, which were opposed to the accomplishment of conversion to the Western ways. According to the testimonies of the historians and researchers from the colonial period, colonisation was defined in the 20th century as the bearer of a new cohesive society and culture. In the case of the famous non-traditional centres where Valentin Yves Mudimbe (1994) and Donatien Dibwe (2003) studied the organisation and manner in which work experience was paid, the conclusion they reach is that there were three complementary levels indicating the same pathway: that of conversion to a new order, the Western order. The first level was that of the primacy of the patrilineal system, which was imposed *de facto* as a model subordinated to the Christian norms and practices. The Christian marriage and patrilineal succession symbolised integration into the colonial order.

The second level was the building of a hierarchy of international circulation languages in which the European languages conferred prestige and ensured social promotion. European languages such as French, English and Portuguese symbolised European culture projected as an index absolute culture. Sociologically and politically, in the case of the former Belgian colony - the Congo - as well as of other colonies from Africa, European languages were considered to be the instrument that allowed for transcending group differences and ethnic antagonisms. According to the colonial and missionary outlook, they facilitated the communion of the *évolués*, of the Africans undergoing a transition from their traditional customs to European culture, from the African to the European identity. A great part of the African elite was later included among the ranks of the *évolués*. European languages built a framework within which the specific African customs were voided of content and replaced with new practices.

The third level, however, consisted in the professionalisation of the inhabitants from the non-traditional centres. Salaried work ("Kazi este

muzungu”, literally meaning the work specific to the White man) became a value and a basis for social organisation, as shown by Donatien Dibwe in his historical studies on the cities of the Union Minière from Haut-Katanga. Professionalisation enabled a gradual process of social class constitution, which did not entail only a conversion economy where market standards regulated the progressive integration of those who were adaptable to the new context. In fact, the Africans had to prove that, through their language, life and work, they had succeeded in completely disavowing their African traditions and customs and they had sincerely entered a new world: the West.

The enforcement of the new components that required the rehabilitation of the African societies was carried out through a policy of re-thinking and re-arranging the geography of the places and the values they defined, as for instance, in the case of the inhabitants’ patronyms. Valentin Yves Mudimbe’s studies have made me realise that this operation involved the principles of *terra nullius* and *de jus communicationis*.¹⁴ The Western Christian prince had the right to own and manage non-Western lands. He had the right to own and convert pagan populations, to hierarchise them according to their degree of conversion to the Western civilisation. This right also meant a dilution of the African imaginary in order to instil “a new vitality” into it.

Therefore, the new names changed the African space of freedom into a form of monarchic devotion, when they did not invoke the memory and the glory of the explorers/discoverers. Colonial toponymy is a sign. It gives an indication of the colonisation activity, assisted by knowledge (including by science): the radical reorganisation of space, the transformation of an ancestral site into an administrative space, whose people must definitively relinquish their myths, their gods, their historical imaginary, in short, they must abandon their culture if not completely then significantly at least. This toponymy marks the *invention* of that space and its socio-cultural and political body. This geography and its inhabitants are progressively integrated into the market economy, for better and for worse.

Conclusions

We have embarked upon the task of revealing the different facets of populism in sub-Saharan Africa. Three forms have been identified among the politicians in power and in the opposition, such as Ahmed Sékou Touré, Désiré Mobutu, Idi Amin Dada, Honoré Ngbanda, as well as some

¹⁴ Valentin Yves Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa* (Indiana University Press, 1994).

tribal political actors. Our discussion has focused on identity populism, protest populism and poverty populism. We postulated that populism is a global phenomenon, even though it is difficult to offer a precise and unique definition thereof. We have also indicated three reasons explaining the lack of studies referring to populism in Africa: the ambiguity of the term, the sensibility of the subject itself, and the scarce bibliography on this phenomenon. In the second section, we studied the forms of populism in Africa as displayed by different African political actors. We have noticed that the issues of identity and of poverty, which are factors involved in the dissemination of the populist phenomenon, blend the primordial history of the African peoples with the history of the modern period.

This is a history punctuated by conquests, by the subjection and exploitation of the Black people. It is also a history characterised by the exclusion of a certain kind of people from among the ranks of thinking humanity, by writing the history of the world and of other people according to the codes and standards specific to a single culture, a single model: the Western one. We then examined identity populism and poverty populism in the regimes of Ahmed Sékou Touré, Désiré Mobutu and Idi Amin Dada. Protest populism, which imitates identity populism, was highlighted in the cases of Honoré Ngbanda and Laurent Gbagbo. Finally, identity populism was detected among the Congolese tribal political actors. These three forms may be seen to function as a paradigm and they are also encountered in other African regions.

In the third part, we indicated some of the excesses perpetrated by specifically African populisms. It appears that under the pretext of defending the people's interests at the national level or at the level of the tribal or ethnic community, various totalitarian regimes emerged, making room for government-sanctioned pillaging, excessive spending, and unjustified resource squandering. They also built a xenophobic universe of discrimination and exclusion. As a corollary, these countries may often fall prey to acts of violence, humanitarian crises and civil wars. Democracy is annihilated, human rights are infringed, and prosperity is thwarted. We consequently believe that the new generation of political actors in Africa should assimilate the ancestral legacy of Africa and of world history for building a new, more tolerant, non-populist and non-xenophobic Africa.

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REDNECKS AND WATERMELONS: THE RISE AND FALL OF POPULIST PARTIES IN MODERN AUSTRALIAN POLITICS

DYLAN KISSANE

Introduction

In recent years, Europeans have bristled as a wave of populist right-wing parties have swept into governing coalitions across the continent. From the east to west, a new breed of politicians have embraced perhaps the oldest style of politics, appealing to the base instincts of voters with warnings of floods of migrants, the rise of Islam and forced questions about shared cultural values to the front and centre of national debate. Populism, at least in 21st century Europe, seems to be mostly a creature of the right, yet this is not a globally true proposition. Left-wing populism is re-emergent in Latin America, for example, where Chavez in Venezuela, Morales in Bolivia and even Brazil's centre-left Lula stand as populist leaders in recent times. So, too, in Africa do we find left-wing populists, with the IDP's Patricia De Lille standing as a clear example of social-democrat populism in post-apartheid South Africa. Just as the European right warns of the externalities threatening an ideal national life and culture, so too the populist left decries the neoliberal economic policies of the West and North for the threat they, the "other", pose to "us".

In Australia, though, a very different type of populist politics has emerged in recent decades that belies diagnosis as either a simple right-wing resurgence or left-wing reactionism. Instead, the island continent has seen first the extreme right-wing populists and then the extreme left-wing populists emerge in quick succession. Interestingly, both right- and left-wing populist movements in Australia present a rather similar political trajectory. There is first a period of *emergence*, wherein a particular social, economic or political issue, most often local in nature, gives rise to a small populist movement centred on that single issue and an individual campaigner. Next follows a period of *explosion*, in which the local movement develops first a regional and then a national profile. Recruits to

the movement emerge, drawn by appeals to basal human needs and the populist rhetoric - characterised as simple, clear, and “common-bloody-sense” by commentators and reporting in the political media - attracts supporters and, more importantly, voters. This explosive growth in size and profile is followed by a period of *evaluation*, wherein a populist party and its policies are subjected to increasing attention by the media and by the citizenry at large. The populist movement is now at its peak, with the broadest access to voters, the best chance to win support and the greatest chance of developing a permanent place on the mainstream Australian political landscape. What eventually follows, though, is a period of *exposure*, in which the party is finally seen for the truly populist movement it is, a niche reactionary movement preferring to point at problems and apportion blame but without credible solutions to those problems or the ability to deliver any solutions it might propose. It therefore faces *extinction*, a party left to die, as supporters either return to the centre-left Australian Labour Party (ALP) or the centre-right Liberal Party (LP) or await the next movement to speak to their personal political dislocation.

The goal of this chapter is to explain and explore the political context of Australian populism and trajectory that populist politics enjoys in Australia. This chapter will begin by exploring the particular practical political context that the national stage in Australia affords populist political parties. A short section will then provide some background details on the leadership of two populist parties and their respective national electoral performances, before moving to tracing this electoral performance on a populist trajectory. This five-stage process of rise and decline with reference to modern Australian federal politics and a case from both the right and left wing supports this evolutionary thesis. In succession, this chapter will outline first the particular stage of the populist political trajectory - emergence, explosion, evaluation, exposure and extinction - while offering examples from the two most prominent case studies of populist politics in recent decades: the right-wing One Nation movement led by Queensland MP Pauline Hanson and the left-wing Australian Greens movement led by Tasmanian Senator Bob Brown. In each case, the key elements of the stage of the populist political trajectory will be outlined and the case studies will provide illustrations of these elements. Drawing on recent history, academic scholarship, personal narratives and mainstream media accounts, this chapter will argue that whether the temporal progression is fast or slow, in the Australian context the trajectory of populist political parties passes through the same five stages. In concluding the chapter, it will be argued that unless the federal

political context changes significantly, the populist political trajectory will likely remain the rule for the left, right and centre-leaning populist movements in Australia.

The Australian Political Context

When considering the rise and fall or success and failure of populist political parties in Australia, the need to also consider the particular political context of that state becomes immediately clear. While it would be easy to label Australia as simply another democracy or, more specifically, another democracy emerging from Britain's colonial empire, such descriptions barely touch on the most important elements of the Australian democratic context. These most important elements of the Australian democratic system are its federal nature, its different voting procedures in federal houses, its compulsory voting and its effective domination by two major parties. Considering each of these in turn allows for a more detailed understanding of the context within which the populist parties of Australia develop, thrive and die.

Australia is a federation of six states and two mainland territories that are represented in a 150-seat House of Representatives and a 76-seat Senate. The parliamentary system, though considered a British-based Westminster arrangement, is actually broadly inspired by both British and American styles of government. The division of the parliament into a "lower" House of Representatives and an "upper" Senate is distinctly British but, in line with the US Congress, the Senate is the house of the states where each state - be it New South Wales with more than 30% of the national population or the island state of Tasmania with less than 3% - is represented by an equal number of elected Senators.¹ National governments are formed by the party or parties that control a majority of seats in the House of Representatives, a party or group of parties that is often at odds with the majority party in the Senate.² Indeed, in the context of populist politics, the Senate is significant in a way that the House of Representatives is not: as the house where state issues are paramount, regional populist parties from "periphery states" like Western Australia or Tasmania can bring their complaints and rhetoric to the nation's capital

¹ "Population, Australia States and Territories, 2007", Australian Bureau of Statistics, accessed 1 July 2011, <http://bit.ly/lapygp>.

² Consultative Group on Constitutional Change, "Resolving Deadlocks: The Public Response" (Report of the Consultative Group on Constitutional Change to the Legal and Culture Branch, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2004).

and step onto a national media stage.³ Thus, while it is no doubt true that Australia is a single country and is governed by a powerful federal parliament, it is also true that the federal structure of the parliament encourages state and regional populist parties to seek national office to have their voice heard in the national Senate.

Also significant is the manner in which politicians and their parties are elected to the national parliament. In the House of Representatives, for example, voting is conducted in single member electorates using a preferential method.⁴ Voters preference a list of candidates from first (most desirable) to last (least desirable) and - should no candidate win a majority of the first preference votes - the second, third and subsequent preference of the less popular candidates are distributed until a candidate has a simple majority of votes cast, at which point he or she is declared the winner. This method strongly favours mainstream parties and, in the Australian experience, tends to favour either the centre-left Australian Labour Party, the centre-right Liberal Party or the rural centre-right National Party, the latter two of which usually vote and govern in coalition. Yet the manner of election for the Senate is significantly different.⁵ The upper house is elected by proportional representation using a single transferable vote. In simple terms, this means that, to be elected, a person must achieve a quota equivalent to either 14.3% (in a half-Senate election) or 7.2% (in a full-Senate election) of the vote in a single state, either as first-preference votes or transferred votes from candidates who do not achieve a quota on their own.⁶ This proportional system offers advantages for less-mainstream parties and populist groups, as the electoral hurdle is not a simple majority of voters but rather a quota that is less than one-third of a simple majority.⁷ Thus, while extreme and populist parties may find it almost impossible to win seats in recent elections for

³ Elaine Thompson, "The Senate and Representative Democracy", *Papers on Parliament* 34(1999): 1-14.

⁴ "Voting within Australia", Australian Electoral Commission, accessed 1 July 2011, <http://bit.ly/k8IGWr>.

⁵ Klaas Woldring, "Australia's dysfunctional party system: remedies", *Online Opinion* (March 2011): <http://bit.ly/kirNzR>.

⁶ "How the Senate votes are counted", Australian Electoral Commission, accessed 1 July 2011, <http://bit.ly/kdaEwz>.

⁷ John Uhr, "Why We Chose Proportional Representation", *Papers on Parliament* 34(1999): 22-26.

the House of Representatives, they are a significant part and have even held the balance of power in the federal Senate.⁸

A third significant contextual element of the Australian federal electoral system is the enforced compulsory voting regime.⁹ While Australia is not the only liberal democracy to enforce voting by enrolled voters - Brazil, Argentina and Singapore, among others, all have similar enforcement regimes - it is one of the oldest such regimes and has a marked impact on the electoral success or failure of populist parties in the Australian parliament.¹⁰ Consider, for example, the success that populist parties in Europe have recently experienced: in the face of motivated populist supporters who vote *en masse* and an increasingly significant minority who decline to vote at all, populist movements can experience significant political success - not because they are widely popular but because they are popular among the citizens who decide to vote.¹¹ Alternatively, the Australian enforced compulsory voting regime means that get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts by populist parties are less successful and that populist parties cannot rely on an apathetic public to gain rapid success and parliamentary representation.¹² When every voter is compelled by law to vote, and by the threat of financial and legal sanction should they fail to vote, the advantage that populist parties elsewhere enjoy, delivered by their motivated support bases, fails to impact in a similar manner in Australia. Hence, being unable to rely on an apathetic electorate whose absence delivers them a greater proportion of votes cast, populist parties are generally left reliant on the proportional representation of the Senate to gain real political traction.

The fourth and final element that is contextually relevant to the Australian case is the effective domination of the federal political system by two parties: the Australian Labour Party and the Liberal Party of Australia/National Party of Australia coalition. As previously mentioned, the Australian system is a *melange* of the British and American

⁸ Campbell Sharman, "The Representation of Small Parties and Independents", *Papers on Parliament* 34(2011): 1-10.

⁹ M Mackerras and I McAllister, "Compulsory voting, party stability and electoral advantage in Australia", *Electoral Studies* 18(1999): 218-221.

¹⁰ Elliot Frankal, "Compulsory voting around the world", *The Guardian*, 4 July, 2005, <http://bit.ly/kJfOXy>.

¹¹ See, for example, "Résultats des élections Cantonales 2011", Ministère de l'Intérieur, accessed 1 July 2011, <http://bit.ly/kwQhZK>.

¹² Jeffrey Karp, Susan Banducci and Shaun Bowler, "Getting Out the Vote: Party Mobilisation in Comparative Perspective", *British Journal of Political Science* 36(2006): 1-22.

parliamentary and congressional government models and, like those systems, the Australian federal parliament has come to be dominated by two major parties, in spite of a lack of constitutional obligation enforcing this two-party rule.¹³ While independent candidates who might, generously, be considered local populists have been elected to the House of Representatives in the modern era, these independent candidates are generally both former members of one of the major parties and vote consistently with that same major party. The domination by the two major parties becomes significant in the context of populist political movements when the two parties work in cooperation to defeat populist movements through overt electoral methods. For example, with populist parties reliant on preference flows to be elected to both the lower house and the upper house, the distribution of preferences from votes cast for the major parties becomes incredibly important for smaller populist movements. When the two major parties both place a populist movement in the last position on their official Senate preference arrangement and ask voters to preference that populist party last on their House of Representatives ballot paper, the effect on the populist party is to deny them almost any chance of gaining representation in either house of parliament. This has been the reality for the right-wing One Nation Party, which has seen no preferences flow from either of the two major parties since it rose to national prominence, a move by the major parties that effectively closed that party down as a political movement of any national import.¹⁴

These four elements combine to offer a political landscape for populist parties to negotiate that is very different to that encountered in other liberal democracies in Europe and North America. The federal nature of the Australian national parliament means that national populist movements are far less common than regional or even local movements, certainly so when assessing those that gain national media attention. In addition, populist parties will generally limit their electoral focus to the Australian national Senate as the preferential voting system employed in elections for the House of Representatives generally works against the hopes of the small, populist movements. Rousing voters via appeals to the base interests of that sub-set of the electorate is less successful when populist parties cannot rely on widespread voter apathy or an increasingly common disinclination to vote. Finally, the effective domination of Australian national politics by two major parties and their willingness to work in synchronicity to deny

¹³ Further historical explanation is offered by Ian Marsh, "Australia's two-party system has past its use by date", *Online Opinion* 14 October(2010): 1-4.

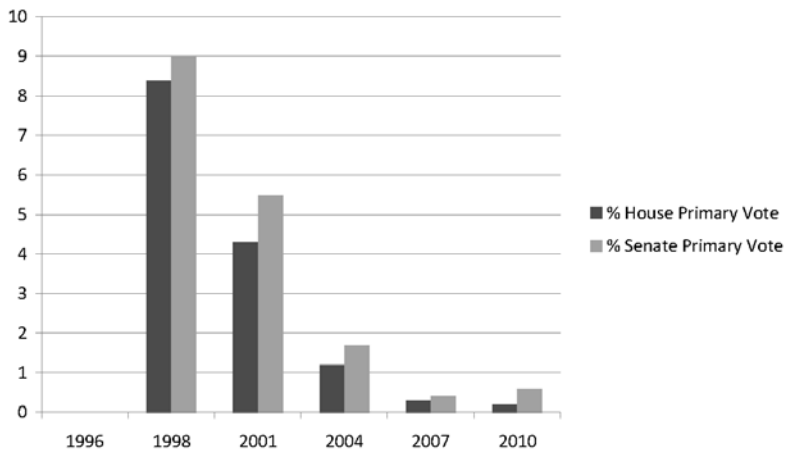
¹⁴ C Sharman, AM Sayers and N Miragliotta, "Trading party preferences: the Australian experience of preferential voting", *Electoral Studies* 21(2004): 543-560.

populist third parties a national platform makes the work demanded of serious populist political movements even more difficult. With these elements in mind, then, when a populist movement does gain traction in national politics, as both One Nation and the Australian Greens have in recent years, we have cases to study and assess that will enlighten significantly the place and role of populist parties in Australia and the ways in which populist parties rise and fall.

Two Populist Parties, Two Leaders, Two Electoral Trends

While federal political parties in every sense of the word - popular, national membership and a bureaucratic support system with state and local offices - the One Nation and Australian Greens parties have also been closely associated with charismatic leadership. Before tracing the populist trajectory of these parties, it is useful to pause for at least a moment and consider the important place and role of these leaders and their impact on the electoral success of their respective parties.

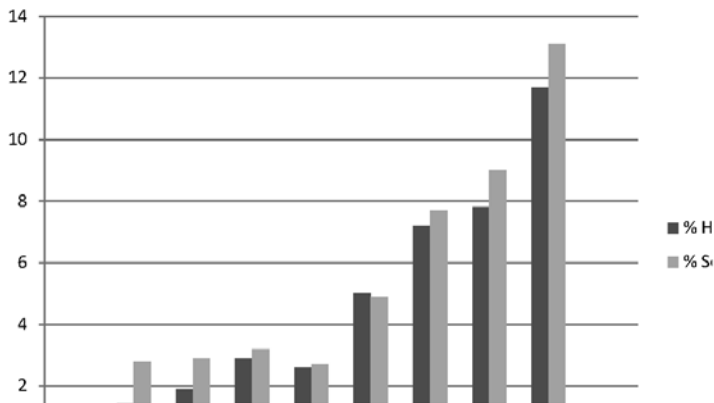
Figure 1: One Nation's Performance in Federal Elections, 1996-2010



As shown in Figure 1, the One Nation Party enjoyed significant electoral support in the late 1990s in both the House of Representatives and Federal Senate elections. Only coming into existence after the 1996 Federal Election, the party quickly grabbed almost 10% of first preference House and Senate votes, something that the slower rising Australian Greens only

managed to approach some 20 years after their first national election. United behind leader Pauline Hanson and sympathetic to her extreme right-wing views and her plain spoken manner, the party went from an idea to a powerhouse in a matter of months. Indeed, nearly 1 in 4 Queenslanders cast their vote for the party in that state's June 1998 elections. Hanson's media appeal, ability to speak confidently in Australian English, known colloquially as "Strine", and her openness to answering questions on politically sensitive subjects that other politicians would refuse to engage with directly (illegal immigration, indigenous affairs, Australian cultural heritage) all helped drive support to her party. Today, more than a decade after One Nation's best Federal election showing, Hanson remains a divisive figure in national politics and a sought-after guest on everything from current affairs television magazines to the Australian version of *Dancing with the Stars*.

Figure 2: Australian Greens' Performance in Federal Elections, 1987-2010



While the electoral performance of the Australian Greens has followed a slightly different electoral trend (see Figure 2, previous) the leader of the Greens, Dr Bob Brown, is no less charismatic or influential than Pauline Hanson, the far-right leader's *bête noir* on the far-right. Brown's path to the national political scene was far easier than Hanson's, emerging as he did from the small state of Tasmania and entering the Senate instead of the House of Representatives. Still, his credibility on the far-left and to environmental groups was secured on the back of his time as Director of

the Tasmanian Wilderness Society and as a representative in Tasmania's House of Assembly. A left-wing campaigner before becoming a politician, Brown maintained his ardent support for gay rights, environmental issues, human rights, social justice and international solidarity upon entering the Federal senate in 1996 even if, at that stage, his party was still on the fringes of the national political scene. A decade later, though, Brown was still firmly at the helm of the Australian Greens ship and had reached the point where the British BBC would ask if Bob Brown was now the most powerful man in Australia.¹⁵

The Five-E Trajectory

The political path followed by populist parties in Australia is theorised to follow a standard route described as the Five-E Trajectory. This trajectory begins with emergence, is followed by explosion, evaluation and exposure before finishing with extinction. It is proposed herein that this trajectory is common to populist movements of both the right and the left and that where the right-wing One Nation is an example of a populist party that has passed through all stages of this trajectory, the left-wing Australian Greens are in the process of moving through this trajectory and currently rest close to the "exposure" stage, particularly since the party joined in minority government with the centre-left Australian Labour Party. In this section, the five stages of the Five-E Trajectory will be explained before this stage is highlighted with separate examples from both the One Nation and Australian Greens populist movements. In concluding this section, it will be clear that the Five-E Trajectory exists, that it accurately describes the political trajectory of the populist parties examined in the national political arena and that it helps to provide insights not only into the past history of populist parties in Australia but also the likely future place of existing populist parties, such as the Australian Greens.

Emergence

The first stage on the political trajectory of populist parties in Australia is emergence. This stage is characterised by local or regional issues leading to a respectively local or regional populist response. The type of issue is not critically important and can range from immigration and nationalist issues on the right, as in the case of the Australia First Party, to rather

¹⁵ Nick Bryant, "Greens enjoy taste of power in Australia's parliament", *BBC.co.uk*, accessed 20 July 2011, <http://bbc.in/pt1f5V>.

more basal issues in the centre, such as the Australian Sex Party.¹⁶ Populist movements that emerge from local issues tend to spread easily from that level to the regional or state level but, for reasons outlined in the previous section, they have historically experienced difficulties transferring their appeal to the national stage, though One Nation does stand as a rather pointed exception to this rule. Populist movements that emerge from regional issues, particularly when either located in small states such as Tasmania, where they enjoy a relatively easier run at a Senate seat, have an easier time transferring their message to the federal arena, if only because their base of supporters is necessarily larger. In either case, though, the period of emergence involves mainly sub-national media attention, sub-national appeals to voters and sub-national party organisation, usually limited to a single state or, in some cases, two states with some commonality, for example, Western Australia and Queensland (mining states) or Victoria and New South Wales (large population centres). One Nation and the Australian Greens demonstrate this local to national and regional to national emergence pattern and, by considering each case in turn, the similarities in the emergence of both left and right-wing populist movements become clear.

The One Nation Party emerged in response to a prototypical local issue that gained traction in the mainstream state media before being given national attention after its founder was elected to the federal House of Representatives. The founder, Pauline Hanson, was a small businesswoman and independent local councillor on the City of Ipswich Council in Queensland before being endorsed by the Liberal Party as their candidate for the seat of Oxley, a traditionally safe Australian Labour Party constituency which has been in ALP hands since 1961. During the election campaign, Hanson made comments to a local newspaper, *The Queensland Times*, essentially calling for an end to special government welfare and financial assistance packages for Indigenous Australians, a controversial stance that saw her disendorsed as the Liberal Party candidate for the seat, though ballot papers had already been printed and listed Hanson as the Liberal Party candidate for the seat.¹⁷ The disendorsement of Hanson - an unpopular move interpreted as a move against controversial free speech - coupled with a nationwide swing against the governing ALP delivered the seat to Hanson, with an electoral swing of more than 19% against the Australian Labour Party, the largest anti-government swing in the country

¹⁶ "Australian Sex Party Federal Policies", *The Australian Sex Party*, accessed 1 July 2011, <http://bit.ly/lkVgV4>.

¹⁷ Paul Newman, "One Nation: Who's to Blame?" *Journal of Australian Studies* 57(1998): 1-9, 5.

in 1996.¹⁸ Hanson entered the national parliament as an independent candidate and the seeds for the One Nation Party were now sown. In less than a year following the March 1996 elections, the One Nation Party would be registered and a populist political movement on the right would captivate the media, the electorate and force a response from both the party that disendorsed her and the party from which she won the safest House of Representatives seat in Queensland.

The Australian Greens similarly arose from a local issue, this time in Australia's smallest and most southern state, Tasmania.¹⁹ In 1978 Tasmania's Hydro Electric Commission proposed a new dam on the Franklin River, which would be known as the Gordon-below-Franklin Dam or, more commonly, as the Franklin Dam. Local environmental activists opposed the dam and sought to draw on populist concerns about Tasmania's wilderness being destroyed by an uncaring government out of touch with the feelings of "ordinary" Tasmanians. By 1980, protests against the controversial dam saw demonstrators gathering in numbers greater than 10,000 and in 1982 environmentalists occupied the dam site, preventing work from continuing. This local issue galvanised popular support and provided much fodder for the mainstream media locally and regionally. The head of the Tasmanian Wilderness Society, Bob Brown, emerged as a popular leader of the anti-dam movement and entered the state parliament in 1983.²⁰ Taking advantage of a proportional representation electoral regime similar to those used in the Australian Senate, Brown and his Tasmanian environmental activists would take five of the 35 seats in the Tasmanian House of Assembly in the 1989. Brown resigned from the House of Assembly in 1993 and, in 1996, he was elected to the Australian Senate as the first successful candidate for the newly formed and federally-registered party, the Australian Greens.²¹ Thus, though slower to emerge from local and regional significance and move to the national stage than One Nation, the Australian Greens demonstrate the same pattern of emergence: a local issue blossoming into a national issue and, eventually, obtaining representation in the Federal parliament.

¹⁸ Antony Green, "Pauline Hanson and the NSW Legislative Council election", *ABC Elections*, accessed 1 July 2011, <http://bit.ly/lr7jeV>.

¹⁹ "History", *The Australian Greens*, accessed 1 July 2011, <http://bit.ly/j50XoX>.

²⁰ "History of the Franklin River Campaign 1976-83", *The Wilderness Society*, accessed 1 July 2011, <http://bit.ly/mubHjj>.

²¹ "History".

Explosion

The second stage on the political trajectory of populist parties in Australia is explosion. This stage is characterised by a rapid expansion in support for the populist movement, now competing on the national stage and with support across the length and breadth of the country. The growth is often sensational and is driven both by the party and its leaders, as well as by the mainstream and alternative media. Common elements in this stage are the sprouting of effective state and local party branches, the endorsement of party candidates in local, state and federal elections and by-elections, the legitimisation of party policies - whether by think tank and media support or by comparison with or critique by mainstream parties - and the name recognition of party leaders rising to levels consistent with other party leaders and Australian cabinet ministers. This is a stage of growth for the populist parties, with membership rates growing substantially and quickly, while funding and donations also increase. In the cases of One Nation and the Australian Greens, the shape of the trajectory is the same, while again differing in temporal terms: while One Nations exploded onto the national political scene in a very short period of time, the Australian Greens moved more slowly through the same characteristic elements. Once again, as with the emergence stage, the similarities between right- and left-wing populist parties are clear to see.

One Nation's explosion onto the Australian national political scene can be traced to a key speech given by then independent Pauline Hanson in the House of Representatives on the 10 September 1996. Hanson's speech, her first to the House and traditionally known as the Maiden Speech in Australia's Westminster context, was a call to action riddled with phrases common to populist movements worldwide, including an appeal to "common sense" and "mainstream Australia" that served as "othering" devices and "dog whistles" to sectors of the electorate.²² Hanson's speech and its condemnation of both indigenous welfare and Asian immigration - affirmative action and migration being common populist targets on the right - was widely reported and led to both congratulatory editorials affirming the commitment to free speech and condemnation from the centre-right and left of the Australian media.²³ The almost global condemnation of Hanson and her views by the other members of the parliament helped raise Hanson's profile further and a little more than six months after her speech, the One Nation Party was founded and quickly drew support across the country, particularly in rural areas, in the mining

²² Newman, "One nation: Who's to blame?"

²³ *Ibid.*

states of Queensland (where Hanson lived) and in Western Australia. The explosion was clearly evident just two months later, at the 1998 Queensland state elections, where the newly formed party took almost a quarter of the popular vote (22.7%) and finished ahead of both the other right-leaning parties, the Liberal Party and the National Party.²⁴ Pauline Hanson and her party now had representation in the federal parliament, in a state parliament, had proved they could collect a large proportion of the popular vote among disaffected citizens and had a high media profile. The One Nation Party had clearly exploded onto the national political scene.

For the Australian Greens the explosion would come after a long and slow development. Despite Bob Brown's election to the Australian Senate in 1996, the Greens remained a sidelined voice and attracted only a small percentage of the popular vote. Though they added another Senator, Kerry Nettle of New South Wales, in the 2001 election, the Greens continued to speak to a relatively small part of the electorate concerned with environmental issues.²⁵ Even the addition of two Senators in the 2004 election - Rachel Siewert from Western Australia and Christine Milne joining Brown in representing Tasmania - failed to see the Australian Greens properly explode onto the national political scene, as the dominance of the Liberal-National coalition in the Senate effectively sidelined the parties of the left.²⁶ It would not be until the 2010 federal election that the Australian Greens would properly explode onto the national stage. In winning more than 13% of the popular vote and collecting Senate seats in every state for a total of nine sitting Senators, the Australian Greens were finally appearing to be the "third party" of Australian politics.²⁷ In addition, the election of the party's Adam Bandt to the House of Representatives, coupled with the dismal electoral performance of Julia Gillard's Australian Labour Party, meant the Australian Greens would be asked to join with the Australian Labour Party in minority government.²⁸ Thus, some thirty years after emerging on the national political landscape as a locally focused populist movement in Tasmania and having proved that they can draw support from a significant

²⁴ Murray Goot and Ian Watson, "One Nation's Electoral Support: Where Does it Come From, What Makes it Different, and Where Does it Fit?" *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 47(2001): 159-191.

²⁵ "History".

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Andrew Bartlett, "Who's Afraid Of A Viable Third Party?" *New Matilda*, 30 April, 2010, <http://bit.ly/kNX8ec>.

²⁸ Nicholas Horne, "Hung parliaments and minority governments", *Parliamentary Library Background Note* December(2010).

share of the electorate running on populist left-wing issues, the Australia Greens now shared the stage as a member of the government of Australia, if more in a supporting role than a leading one.

Evaluation

The third stage on the political trajectory of populist parties in Australia is evaluation. This stage is characterised by closer assessment of the populist party's policies and their underlying values. This assessment is conducted in various ways and through various means, including by rival parties, the mainstream and alternative media and by the electorate, too, this final assessment being delivered at the ballot box come election time. Populist parties, relying as they tend to on positions that have popular appeal but that are economically and even logically unfeasible, tend to experience great problems at this point in their political trajectory, often claiming that they are being unfairly treated or held to different standards than their mainstream political rivals. Political and media elites are often involved in critiquing the policies of the populist parties and pointing to policy gaps, policy failings and general fiscal or political irresponsibility on the part of the party. The populist party, in response, seeks supporters on the back of this criticism, often employing the argument that their policies are being attacked because the major parties and political elites are scared of the change being sought. For many Australian voters, this may be the first time that the popular image of the party is finally associated with a set of policies, coherent or incoherent as they may be. The evaluation period is rarely kind to the populist party and leads, inevitably, to the next stage: exposure.

For One Nation, evaluation of their policies began almost immediately following the launch of the party in April 1998 and was accelerated following what some commentators described as the alarming performance of the party in the June 1998 Queensland state elections. Evaluation of the party's policies focused on three main pillars of the party: the commitment to drastically reducing immigration, particularly Asian immigration, and opposition to multiculturalism; its anti-globalisation and protectionist economic policies; and its opposition to welfare programs that provided benefits for Indigenous Australians which were not available to other Australians.²⁹ Almost immediately it became clear that even where

²⁹ Carol Johnson, "Pauline Hanson and One Nation", in *The New Politics of the Right: Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies*, ed. Hans-Georg Betz and Stefan Immerfall (London, Macmillan, 1998), 211.

policies were written in a manner which could not be literally interpreted as racist, the language employed by Hanson and her supporters clearly focused on what they termed the “Asianisation” of Australia and could be, thus, critiqued as racist against Asian migrants. Similarly, the economic policies that favoured the re-introduction of high tariffs to encourage local manufacturing industries at the expense of imported goods were critiqued by economists, both professional and in the media, as being incompatible with a globalised business environment, in violation of international accords reached with the World Trade Organisation and destructive for the Australian economy in the short and long term. Finally, One Nation’s policies regarding Indigenous welfare, while again couched in terms that would not be literally racist, were consistently held to be racist by commentators and academics aware of the specific economic and employment difficulties faced by Indigenous people in Australia.³⁰ While One Nation made significant efforts to counter the criticism of their policies by appealing to their “common sense” foundations, appeals to “real” equality and accusations that they were being attacked because they were speaking the truth of “ordinary Australians”, the evaluation of One Nation policies left the party marginalised and grasping for air in the national political atmosphere.

Having established themselves as a serious third party in Australian national politics and entering minority government with the Australian Labour Party at the 2010 federal election, the Australian Greens began to fall under the same sort of evaluation as One Nation had more than a decade before. By joining Gillard’s weakened Australian Labour Party as a partner and signing a formal agreement to support and consult on policy issues with that party, the Australian Greens could no longer be viewed as a sidelined populist movement but as a populist party approaching mainstream status.³¹ As a result, their policies came under increased evaluation, most notably their policies on climate change, mining, illegal drug use and illegal migration, with commentators highlighting the sorts of issues that led former Prime Minister John Howard to warn six years earlier that,

³⁰ An archived version of these policies is maintained at AustralianPolitics.com. See “Pauline Hanson’s One Nation: Immigration, Population And Social Cohesion Policy 1998”, *AustralianPolitics.com*, accessed 1 July 2011, <http://bit.ly/mdMwxz>.

³¹ “Government Agreements”, *Australian Labour Party*, accessed 1 July 2011, <http://bit.ly/iVyqoc>.

The Greens are not just about the environment. They have a whole lot of other very, very kooky policies in relation to things like drugs and all of that sort of stuff.³²

The “kookiness” that Howard referred to was, as in the case of One Nation, identified by both the media and other parties, particularly the Liberal Party but also by some within the Australian Labour Party, too. The position of the Greens on climate change that had seen them vault to success in the 2010 poll, where it was used as a populist call to action “for the sake of our children’s future”, were evaluated as destructive by various sources in the mainstream media and Brown himself was, at times, fumbling when attempting to explain its nuances.³³ The contradictions between the Australian Greens expressed support for Australian jobs and its broadly anti-mining policies were also criticised, as were its policies for legalising some presently illegal drugs, a policy without broad community appeal and rarely associated with a movement that professed to be focused on the environment.³⁴ Finally, the party’s position on illegal migration and that policy’s lack of appeal to the wider electorate was also a matter for media and political discussion, with cracks appearing in official responses and criticism of the party’s stance increasing as new waves of migrants appeared on Australian shores in the post-Howard era.³⁵ Finally being submitted to the sort of evaluation that mainstream parties experience daily, the Australian Greens reacted with anger, as One Nation had before them, yet could not escape the scrutiny that their position on the national scene, so long hoped for, now demanded.

Exposure

The fourth stage on the political trajectory of populist parties in Australia is exposure. The primary characteristic of this stage in the trajectory is that the populist party is, for want of a better word, revealed as unable to deliver on the promises it has made. Exposure relies chiefly on Australia’s free press holding the party to account and on the specific mechanics of

³² Alison Caldwell, “Bob Brown unfazed by conservative attacks”, accessed 20 June, 2011, <http://bit.ly/kzYKUd>.

³³ Kirsty Needham, “Brown assailed over comments”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 January, 2011, <http://bit.ly/myWwq6>.

³⁴ Lanal Vasek, “Greens accused of resorting to xenophobia over a mining tax”, *The Australian*, 29 June 2011, <http://bit.ly/kpDx5C>.

³⁵ Merv Bendle, “The end of Bob Brown?” *Quadrant Online*, 29 August, 2010, <http://bit.ly/kwHCUX>.

the Westminster system which dictate whether a minor party is able to directly influence policy (for example, a populist party holding the “balance of power” in the Australian Senate is likely to be exposed earlier than a populist party without the “balance of power” and, thus, without much chance of directly influencing government policy). The process of exposure sees internal fracturing within the party machine, with possible splits and leaders bearing much of the blame. As the populist party faces greater criticism from the media and other political groups, it will retaliate by claiming a victim status it has likely not earned and by attempting to rally supporters based on this victim trope. By the time the populist party has entered exposure, however, it may be too late for the party to survive. There is only one direction for the party to travel and that is towards eventual and inevitable extinction. The two case studies considered in this chapter make, again, for interesting comparison: One Nation, which collapsed quickly once placed under media and political scrutiny, stands as the model of populist exposure, while the Australian Greens, thanks primarily to their position in minority government with the Australian Labour Party after the 2010 federal election, are currently experiencing exposure for the very first time.

One Nation can be said to have entered the exposure stage following a period of evaluation that found most of their policies detrimental to the Australian socio-economic situation in theory and largely unworkable in practice. The continued lack of representation in the Australian Senate and the electoral redistribution that saw Pauline Hanson seeking election for a new Queensland seat added to the party’s problems, though the largest hurdle to overcome would be put in place by opposing parties.³⁶ Whether for the reasons stated by the mainstream parties - that One Nation was an extremist, racist party - or for self-serving political reasons, the mainstream centre-left and centre-right parties all preferenced the One Nation Party last at the 1998 and subsequent elections.³⁷ This effectively hamstrung One Nation which, like other populist parties, relied on preference flows to deliver candidates to the Senate and the House of Representatives. Having been exposed for a lack of good public policy and effectively shut out of the federal parliament from the 1998 federal election forward - the sole post-1998 federal representative was One

³⁶ Scott Bennett, *Federal Elections 1998* (Research Paper 9, 1998-99, Canberra, Parliamentary Library, 1998).

³⁷ The sole exception has been the Liberal Party which, in two rural seats at the 2010 federal election, preferenced One Nation ahead of the Australian Labour Party. See Brendan Nicholson, “One Nation gets preferences”, accessed 21 June 2011], <http://bit.ly/kcsGru>.

Nation Senator Len Harris, whose term expired in 2005 - the party was further exposed as unable to represent the voters it sought to attract. There was little surprise, then, that support for the party in subsequent elections declined first by around half (9% in 1998 to 5% in 2001) and then went into electoral free-fall (1.5% in 2004, 0.4% in 2007).³⁸ There would be only more stage for One Nation to endure in its rise and fall in federal politics: extinction.

The Australian Greens, on the other hand, have entered the exposure stage only recently. Despite notable efforts by some more conservative elements of the mainstream media (Sydney's *The Daily Telegraph* and Melbourne's *The Herald-Sun* newspapers among them), true exposure of the disconnect between the populist discourse of the Australian Greens and the ability of that party to effectively promote change and govern only began in earnest following the 2010 federal election. With the party joining with Julia Gillard's decimated Australian Labour Party and a small group of independent candidates to form minority government, a clear evolution in the perspective of the media and populace towards the Australian Greens took place. No longer a minor party making noise on the edge of politics but without the responsibilities or even the chance to effect real change, the Greens were now helping to govern the nation and were legitimate targets for media attention. Indeed, the conservative media was joined by the national public broadcaster, particularly high-profile and highly-respected journalists such as Chris Uhlmann on the channel's flagship current affairs program the *7.30 Report*, in holding the Greens to account. Consider the following extract from Uhlmann, published on the website of the publically funded and editorially neutral Australian Broadcasting Corporation:

...the Greens cast themselves as innately morally superior. They have posited their political worldview as synonymous with what is best for the environment and as moral true north. But no-one has a mortgage on morality and it is easy to claim your ideas are better when they never run the risk of being field-tested.

Now the game is changing for the Greens. To quote Barack Obama quoting Spiderman, "With great power comes great responsibility". With the balance of power comes an added test: how will the Greens stand scrutiny?

How will they deal with meeting the marks they daily set for others?

³⁸ Rae Wear, "The Extreme Right in Britain and Australia" (paper presented at the 55th Political Studies Association Annual Conference, University of Leeds 5-7 April, 2005): 5-8.

Not well, if recent form is any guide.³⁹

Held to real account for the first time, they were now struggling to explain basic aspects of the policies that had seen their support rise to nearly 12% of first preference votes cast for the House of Representatives. Indeed, slogans that spoke to popular concerns about the environment and climate change, in particular, were revealed as largely slogans with supporting substance and exposure of racist undercurrents in the party - the anti-Semitic policies endorsed by Greens candidates and the refusal to condemn such elements from, one can only assume, similarly inclined federal Senators being a key example in the post-election context - meant that the party was, for the first time, truly exposed as a populist movement without the ability to govern.⁴⁰ The fall of the party cannot be too far away.

Extinction

The fifth and final stage on the political trajectory of populist parties in Australia is extinction. As the name suggests, this is the point in which the party has lost all significant popular appeal and, while it is not necessary for the party to disappear completely, its ability to attract voters in numbers that would worry the major parties or enable it to exert any influence on the national political scene is effectively nil. The populist party in the extinction stage has fallen from the great heights of popularity that it once maintained and supporters characteristically depart the party for mainstream movements that are more closely aligned with their interests (for example, One Nation voters switch to vote for the Liberal Party or National Party while Greens voters will, it is projected, return to voting for the centre-left Australian Labour Party). Consigned to Australian political history, the party now becomes an example in a classroom, a cautionary tale in a party room and a source of anecdotes for commentators on election night. For all intents and purposes, the populist movement is dead, a reality the One Nation Party has lived through and which, it is held here, the Australian Greens will soon experience.

The One Nation Party floundered into the first decade of the 21st century and slowly its support diminished until it was almost non-

³⁹ Chris Uhlmann, "Harden up Greens, the game is changing", accessed 22 June 2011, <http://bit.ly/iH6HiA>.

⁴⁰ "Andrew Robb labels Greens' Israel boycott calls 'anti-semitic'", *ABC Melbourne*, accessed 1 July 2011, <http://bit.ly/luveps>.

existent.⁴¹ Two facts, in particular, demonstrate the relative extinction of the One Nation Party as a political force in Australia. The first is the fact that the former leader and public face of the populist movement has repeatedly sought office in the national parliament since the party's period of exposure and has done so without associating herself with the party or its name. Pauline Hanson has preferred to mount challenges for a Senate seat in the national parliament as an independent candidate seeking office under her own name rather than attempt to take a place in the upper house as a representative of the populist party she founded.⁴² This suggests that, at the very least, Hanson sees no political advantage to running as a One Nation candidate and, perhaps further, that running as a One Nation candidate would be ultimately even detrimental to her cause. The second is the fact that, despite its exposure as a racist populist movement, the movement was so discredited that, in the 2010 federal election, the Liberal Party felt safe to award One Nation preferences ahead of its key rival, the Australian Labour Party.⁴³ Indeed, so weak was the One Nation movement not even 15 years after its emergence that the reversal of the policy to "place One Nation last" engendered little comment at all in the national press and none of the scathing editorials reserved for party supporters by the mainstream media.⁴⁴ As a political force, then, One Nation is no more; it exists today as barely a shadow of its former self and, like any species fallen extinct, this political animal is no more for this world.⁴⁵

The Australian Greens, though, have not yet entered this stage of the populist trajectory, though it seems clear that this is the only direction that the self-titled "third party of Australian politics" can continue to follow. Having experienced the swelling of support that comes from populist explosion, the tempering of evaluation and now, following its choice to enter minority government with the Australian Labour Party, the political difficulties of exposure, the lack of economically responsible policies, the extreme, anti-Semitic and racist elements of the party's inner core and a social agenda that is increasingly being identified at odds with mainstream middle-class Australia all combine to suggest that the Australian Greens are beginning their descent into political oblivion. It seems unlikely that the Australian Greens will maintain the record levels of support that they enjoyed at the 2010 federal poll and, in light of their anti-mining and anti-globalisation agenda, that they will grow their support in mining states like

⁴¹ Wear, "The Extreme Right", 5.

⁴² Green, "Pauline Hanson".

⁴³ Nicholson, "One nation gets preferences".

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Wear, "The Extreme Right", 5.

Queensland and Western Australia or in the financial sectors or Sydney and Melbourne that rely on mining wealth to support their own endeavours. Much longer in rising than One Nation, the descent of the Australian Greens will likely be a longer, more drawn out affair. Though anti-family and even so-described anti-Western values have seen them corner a sector of the electorate, these voters will likely consider the lack of real impact that the party has had and, now given a chance to help govern Australia and proving incompetent in the extreme, the failure to deliver on party policies and choose to consign the Australian Greens to the Tasmanian backwater from whence it emerged. While this is prediction rather than present-day reality, it is a prediction that - should the Australian Greens continue along their prototypical populist political trajectory - is increasingly likely as the party moves from simple exposure towards popular extinction.

Conclusion

Whether right-wing or left-wing, anti-immigration or anti-capitalism, whether claiming to care about the “real” people of Australia or claiming to care about the future of our children, the political trajectory of populist parties in Australia sees political parties move through the same stages. First there is emergence, where the populist party finds, usually in a local or regional issue, a reason for being and is brought into the public political sphere. Explosion follows, as the party’s appeal to the base instincts of the electorate meets with success and the movement is catapulted onto the national scene, winning seats in the national parliament in the process. A period of evaluation follows wherein the party’s support plateaus and the policies of the party are finally held to account by both the news media and the competing political parties, particularly the dominant Australian Labour Party and the Liberal Party. What follows this evaluation is a period of exposure where the party is shown for what it likely is: racist, anti-Semitic or anti-globalist, for example. This exposure can only lead in one direction as the mainstream voters in the Australian electorate turn their backs on the movement they had thought would deliver the sort of change they imagined was needed, and thus the populist movement enters a period of extinction, damning the party to electoral irrelevance and consigning it to the political history books of the island continent.

The One Nation and Australian Greens parties stand as clear examples of this populist trajectory in action, though each is at a different stage in that trajectory. One Nation, later and quicker to rise, was also faster to fall, the anti-immigrant, anti-Indigenous Australian and anti-free trade policies

seeing it consigned to electoral oblivion early in the first decade of the 21st century. The Australian Greens, on the other hand, were slower to attain the sorts of recognition as a political force in Australian politics that the One Nation Party did, but have embarked on the same populist trajectory and are currently heading towards extinction. It matters little that the reason for the party's emergence was a local problem in Tasmania rather than a candidate pre-selection issue in Queensland, that its leader is a highly educated political activist individual instead of a barely educated small business woman, that it has gained nine seats in the Australian Senate rather than just a single seat in that house: the Australian Greens are currently being exposed in the media and in the electorate and will soon enter their extinction stage, if after many more years of existence on the national scene than the One Nation Party could ever claim.

The Australian Greens, though, will not be the last populist movement to rise to national prominence in Australia, nor will they be the last to fall. With a long and peaceful parliamentary tradition and a history of what might be described, a little ironically, to be sure, as common sense in national politics, Australians will surely be attracted to the next populist movement just as they have been attracted to One Nation and the Australian Greens. The appeals to "us and them" rhetoric, the "othering" of those who disagree with fundamental assumptions about the way that the country and the world work and oft-repeated commitments to doing things for the "good of the country" and "the future of our children" will continue to attract votes, if not the long-term support that mainstream parties have established over many decades. The trajectory that such new populist parties trace will likely remain the same as their late-20th and early-21st century counterparts, with their long term impact limited and their support almost assured to fade. Populism remains popular, that is certain, but it is a transient popularity that will never escape the close edges of the Australian federal political landscape.

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IN THE NAME OF THE PEOPLE! CONTEMPORARY POPULISM(S) IN SCANDINAVIA

ANDERS RAVIK JUPSKÅS

*“Although it has been trademarked [by the Christian Democrats],
I think we can continue to talk about [‘the real people’] in our speeches”*
Björn Söder, Party Secretary of The Sweden Democrats¹

Introduction

The Scandinavian party systems have witnessed a substantial decline in the votes for the established parties over the past four decades. In Denmark, support for the pre-war parties decreased from 90.1 in 1968 to 67.3% in 2007; in Norway, from 96.4 in 1969 to 68.2% in 2009; and in Sweden, from 97.7 in 1970 to 79.9% in 2010. In both Denmark and Norway, the new era of increased voter volatility and successful contender parties started with the “earthquake elections” in 1973. In particular, the major challenge has been the rise of so-called populist parties, but socialist parties (sometimes referred to as the “new left” parties) have also been fairly successful in Danish and Norwegian general elections. The Swedish party system, on the other hand, was stable for about one and a half decade longer than its neighbouring countries. However, in the course of two elections - 1988 and 1991 - three new parties entered parliament, one of them being a typical populist party. In sum, even though the Scandinavian countries have indeed been characterised by low levels of societal conflicts, populism in this region has been a success story compared to other regions in Europe.

In the academic literature on populism and in the international media, the Scandinavian countries have only been briefly touched upon,

¹ Maggie Strömberg, “KD lade beslag på ‘verklighetens folk’”, *Sydsvenskan*, 22 July 2010, URL: <http://www.sydsvenskan.se/sverige/article1181342/KD-lade-beslag-pa-Verklighetens-folk.html>, Accessed 25 July 2011.

compared with parties such as *Front National* (the National Front, FN) and *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (the Freedom Party of Austria, FPÖ).² To some extent, quite a few scholars still seem to view the Scandinavian countries as consensually oriented and politically progressive, rather than as blooming gardens for populism. In terms of both electoral stability and political influence, however, the so-called populist parties in Norway and Denmark do not fit the general theories about this phenomenon. While populist parties have been seen as a “flash” phenomenon electorally and organisationally,³ and many of them have been rejected as potential coalition partners, the Norwegian and Danish story is somewhat different. The *Fremskrittspartiet* (the Progress Party, FRP) and the *Dansk Folkeparti* (the Danish People’s Party, DF) are both highly relevant and influential parties in the Norwegian and Danish party systems and in the public sphere.

In the Norwegian parliamentary elections to *Stortinget* in 2009, the FRP became the second largest party for the second general election in a row, with 22.9% of the votes, surpassed only by the *Arbeiderpartiet* (the Labour Party, AP). Among the radical right populists in Western Europe, only the *Schweizerische Volkspartei* (the Swiss People’s Party, SVP) in Switzerland gains similar support in elections. Furthermore, the party has

² But see: Jørgen Goul Andersen and Tor Bjørklund, “Structural Changes and New Cleavages: The Progress Parties in Denmark and Norway”, *Acta Sociologica* 33 (1990); Tor Bjørklund, “Unemployment and the Radical Right in Scandinavia: Beneficial or Non-Beneficial for Electoral Support?”, *Comparative European Politics* 5 (2007); Anniken Hagelund, “The Progress Party and the Problem of Culture Immigration Politics and Right Wing Populism in Norway”, in *Movements of Exclusion: Radical Right-Wing Populism in the West*, ed. Jens Rydgren (2005); Susi Meret, “The Danish People’s Party, the Italian Northern League and the Austrian Freedom Party in a Comparative Perspective: Party Ideology and Electoral Support” (PhD diss., Aalborg University, 2010); Jens Rydgren, “Explaining the Emergence of Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties: The Case of Denmark”, *West European Politics* 27 (2004); Jens Rydgren, *From Tax Populism to Ethnic Nationalism: Radical Right-Wing Populism in Sweden* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006); Paul A. Taggart, *The New Populism and the New Politics: New Protest Parties in Sweden in a Comparative Perspective* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996); Anders Widfeldt, “Scandinavia: Mixed Success for the Populist Right”, *Parliamentary Affairs* 53 (2000).

³ Philip E. Converse and Georges Dupeux, “Politicisation of the Electorate in France and the United States”, *Public Opinion Quarterly* 26 (1962); Paul A. Taggart and Anders Widfeldt, “1990s Flash Party Organisation: The Case of New Democracy in Sweden” paper presented at Annual Conference of the Political Studies Association of the UK (Panel on Scandinavian Politics, University of Leicester, 20-22. April, 1993).

been able to influence the policy position of both the mainstream right and the mainstream left.⁴ In the 2007 election to the Danish parliament - *Folketinget* - the DF became the third largest party, with 13.9% of the votes, beaten only by the *Socialdemokraterne* (the Social Democrats, SAP) and the liberal-conservative party *Venstre* (the Liberal Party of Denmark, V). Moreover, according to De Lange and Akkerman (2011), the political influence of the DF is comparable only to the radical right in Austria. Contrary to widely held predictions, the DF has turned out to be a stable supporter of the Danish right-wing government for over ten years. The question, then, is whether these two parties should still be classified as populist. After many years of ordinary parliamentary work: Are they more or less populist than the other parties?

The electoral trajectory and parliamentary behaviour of Sweden's first populist party - *Ny Demokrati* (New Democracy, ND) - was more in line with the classical populist theory. In contrast to the Danish and Norwegian progress parties, the ND stayed poorly organised and the party disappeared from the national political scene after only three years.⁵ In the most recent election, 2010, yet another party with so-called populist features made its way into *Riksdagen*, the Swedish parliament, namely the *Sverigedemokraterna* (the Sweden Democrats, SD). However, to what extent the SD is in fact a populist party remains uncertain. As noted by Rydgren, this party might be "as close to the nationalistic far right as it is to populism".⁶ But, as I will argue later, these are not necessarily two incompatible ideologies. A party could be either nationalist or populist, or both at the same time. The latter seems to be the case in other accounts of Scandinavian populism.⁷ But populism is also compatible with other ideologies. In an analysis of the transformation undergone by the progress parties, for instance, populism is assumed to be a stable feature, while the other ideological component has changed from "tax revolt to neoliberalism and xenophobia".⁸

⁴ Robert Harmel and Lars Svåsand, "The Influence of New Parties on Old Parties' Platforms", *Party Politics* 3 (1997); Mirjana Gazica, "Fornuft og følelser: en analyse av Arbeiderpartiets og Fremskrittspartiets argumentasjon i innvandrings- og integreringsdiskursen på stortingsdebatter fra 1990 til i dag" (M.A. Thesis., Universitetet i Oslo, 2010).

⁵ Jens Rydgren, *From Tax Populism to Ethnic Nationalism: Radical Right-Wing Populism in Sweden* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 69-86.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷ Jens Rydgren, "Explaining the Emergence of Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties: The Case of Denmark", *West European Politics* 27 (2004).

⁸ Jørgen Goul Andersen and Tor Bjørklund, "Radical Right-Wing Populism in Scandinavia: From Tax Revolt to Neo-Liberalism and Xenophobia", in *The*

The goal of this chapter is therefore to present a typology of different types of populism and then to show its usefulness in contemporary Scandinavian politics. But first we need to move beyond the assumption that *only one party* in each country could be populist. Two questions are at the core of chapter: 1) Which *political parties* in Scandinavia have populist elements? And 2) What *kind of* populism is present in contemporary Scandinavian politics? These two questions will be answered through an investigation of all the contemporary party manifestos in the Scandinavian countries. The method is quite straightforward: based on a minimal definition of populism, a populist party should present (at least a few) appeals to “the people” and against “the elite” in their party manifestos. Through a simple counting technique, all kinds of references to the “people” are located in the manifestos. These references are then subsequently interpreted in light of the theoretical framework (see below). Rather than assuming that, for instance, a neoliberal party also advocates “neoliberal populism”, which is the case in recent analyses of Belgian populism⁹, the qualitative part increases the possibility of a more accurate interpretation of the specific appeal, which in turn strengthens the validity of the conclusions.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. First, I will discuss different approaches to populism. Most fruitful - also in a Scandinavian context - is to define populism as a thin ideology, which holds that politics is ultimately a struggle between two homogenous groups: “the people” and “the elite”. While the consensual political culture makes the populist language softer than in other regions, all populist parties still mobilise mistrust and resentment in the name of “the people”. Second, after presenting a minimal definition of populism, I develop a typology of different types of populism. Acknowledging that “the people” can have several meanings, depending on the ideological anchorage point of the appeal, what differs between the different types of populism is the content of the two homogenous groups, “the people” and “the elite”. The typology differentiates between “neoliberal”, “nativist”, “socialist”, “regional”, “periphery”, “conservative”, and “fascist” populism. Thirdly, in the empirical part of the chapter, I use this typology to analyse contemporary forms of populism in the three Scandinavian countries: Norway, Denmark and Sweden.

Politics of the Extreme Right: From the Margins to the Mainstream, ed. Paul Hainsworth (London: Pinter, 2000), 193.

⁹ See, for instance, Teun Pauwels, “Measuring Populism: A Quantitative Text Analysis of Party Literature in Belgium”, *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 21 (2011).

The Many Faces of Populism

Populism has been said to haunt modern liberal democracies.¹⁰ However, it is probably also correct to say that it haunts the disciplines of party politics and political theory. Most scholars of populism would agree that this phenomenon has “an essential impalpability, an awkward conceptual slipperiness”.¹¹ Populism has been called an ideology, a strategy, a discourse, a world-view, or a communication style, to name some of the most important contributions.¹² Some scholars even see populism as a distinct organisational structure, characterised by a loosely organised party structure and charismatic leadership. According to Mouzelis, for instance, a populist party tends to “conduce to a type of authority structure that is quite distinct from that of other radically oriented popular movements and parties”.¹³ Also, in a classical definition from 1978, the leadership element is included in the definition: populism is here seen as “a political movement which challenges established elites in the name of a union between a leader and “the people“ (undifferentiated by group or class)”.¹⁴ However, there are both historical and contemporary movements that deserve the label populism without having a distinct leader. Paul Taggart’s *archetype*, the People’s Party in America in the 1870s, and the Tea Party Movement could serve as well-known examples.¹⁵

¹⁰ Ghiță Ionescu and Ernest Gellner, *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 1.

¹¹ Paul A. Taggart, *Populism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), 1.

¹² Donald MacRae, “Populism as an Ideology”, in *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, ed. Ernest Gellner and Ghiță Ionescu (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969); Jens Rydgren, *From Tax Populism to Ethnic Nationalism: Radical Right-Wing Populism in Sweden* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006); Kurt Weyland, “Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the study of Latin American politics”, *Comparative Politics* 34 (2001) Ernesto Laclau, “Populism: What’s in a Name?”, in *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, ed. Francisco Panizza (New York and London: Verso, 2005) Kirk A. Hawkins, *Venezuela’s Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) J. Jagers and S. Walgrave, “Populism as Political Communication Style: An Empirical Study of Political Parties’ Discourse in Belgium”, *European Journal of Political Research* 46 (2007).

¹³ Nicos Mouzelis, “On the Concept of Populism: Populist and Clientelist Modes of Incorporation in Semiperipheral Polities”, *Politics & Society* 14 (1985): 341.

¹⁴ Robert H. Dix, “The Varieties of Populism: the Case of Colombia”, *The Western Political Quarterly* 31 (1978): 334.

¹⁵ David Barstow, “Tea Party Lights Fuse for Rebellion on Right”, *New York Times*, 16 February 2010,

Recent theoretical research argues that we should disentangle the organisational, strategic and ideological component of political parties, even though they might be empirically related to each other. According to this perspective, populism is best defined as a thin-ideology, in contrast to thick ideologies.¹⁶ The distinction between thick and thin-centred ideologies goes back to Freedén's work, where the basic idea is that some ideologies are more comprehensive than others; they simply cover more of social life and interaction.¹⁷ Examples of thick ideologies would be Marxism, Liberalism and, perhaps, Conservatism. Thin-ideologies, while not necessarily being less sophisticated, refer to narrower, less wide-ranging ideologies, such as Feminism and Ecologism. These thin ideologies focus rather on key aspects of societal organisation and human life (such as gender-based relationships in Feminism and environmental issues in Ecologism).

A minimal definition of populism according to this framework is:

a thin centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite", and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* of the people.¹⁸

Key elements are thus the anti-establishment position and the antagonistic view of the relationship between "the elite" and "the people".¹⁹ Both groups have specific features: While "the people" are presented as a superior entity, which transcends different classes or social groups, "the elite" is corrupt and morally inferior to the people. Phrased differently, populism is characterised by "the positive valorisation of 'the people' and

<http://www.thewaxhawgazette.com/Tea%20Party%20Lights%20Fuse.pdf>.

(Accessed 16 July 2011); Paul A. Taggart, "Problems with Populism" (paper presented at Populism in Europe, Radboud University, Nijmegen School of Management, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, January 21st, 2011).

¹⁶ e.g. Margaret Canovan, "Taking Politics to the People: Populism as the Ideology of Democracy", in *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, ed. Yves Meny and Yves Surel (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002); Cas Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist", *Government and Opposition* 39 (2004); Ben Stanley, "The Thin Ideology of Populism", *Journal of Political Ideologies* 13 (2008).

¹⁷ Michael Freedén, "Is Nationalism a Distinct Ideology?", *Political Studies* 46 (1998).

¹⁸ Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 23.

¹⁹ Margaret Canovan, "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy", *Political Studies* 47 (1999).

denigration of ‘the elite’”.²⁰ Moreover, the anti-establishment rhetoric in combination with the special relationship to “the people” tends to make the populist language both folksy and simplified. Political struggles are presented in a black-and-white framework and radical solutions are proposed without respect for any judicial constraints or economic theories.

However, the thin-ideology alone is still regarded to be ineffective and unsuccessful as a political, electoral and parliamentary project.²¹ In most cases, populism is only one of many features characterising a political party. The thin-centred ideology of populism therefore needs to attach itself to other more viable ideological projects, such as (neo)-liberalism, nationalism, socialism or agrarianism. Although the academic literature on populism has focused, in recent years, primarily on right-wing populism, three decades ago Canovan noted that the “so-called ‘populists’ are to be found on the right, left and centre of the political spectrum”.²² Similarly, Taggart reminds us that “populism has been a tool of progressive, of reactionaries, of democrats, of autocrats of the left and right”.²³ Hence, populism seems to be a powerful instrument available to all specific political projects, though some ideologies might be easier to combine with populism than others.

Already in her early work Canovan discussed three different types of populism: political, economic and agrarian populism.²⁴ More influential, however, is the frequently quoted work by Hans-Georg Betz.²⁵ Analysing contemporary West-European populism, including parties such as the Scandinavian Progress Parties, Vlaams Blok, *Front National*, etc., Betz claimed that there were “two faces of populism”: “neoliberal” and “nationalist” populist parties. More recently, Cas Mudde has distinguished three main families of populist parties in contemporary European politics.²⁶ The neoliberal stays untouched, while the nationalist has been

²⁰ Ben Stanley, “The Thin Ideology of Populism”, *Journal of Political Ideologies* 13 (2008): 102.

²¹ *Ibid.*; Peter Učeň, “Parties, Populism, and Anti-Establishment Politics in East Central Europe”, *SAIS review* 27 (2007).

²² Margaret Canovan, “People, Politicians and Populism”, *Government and Opposition* 19 (1984): 313.

²³ Paul A. Taggart, *Populism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), 3.

²⁴ Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981).

²⁵ Hans-Georg Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994); Hans-Georg Betz, “The Two Faces of Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe”, *The Review of Politics* 55 (1993).

²⁶ Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 47-48.

renamed as the “radical right”, and yet another new category of left-wing populism - which Mudde calls “social populism” - has been added.²⁷ Others differentiate between the broad categories of right- and left-wing as well as a centre-oriented populism. The latter is used to describe both Berlusconi’s *Il Popolo della Libertà* and contemporary populism in Eastern Europe.²⁸ While the logic of populism is the same, irrespective of which ideology it is coupled with, the meaning of “the people” is different. When Jean Marie Le Pen, the former leader of *Front National*, and Jan Marijnissen, the former leader of the Dutch *Socialistische Partij*, speak of the “the people”, they certainly do not refer to *the same group of people*. Consequently, it is crucial that we continue to distinguish between different appeals to “the people”.

First, politicians can “appeal to the united people, the nation or country, as against the parties and factions that divide it”.²⁹ Many conservative thinkers were sceptical towards emerging political parties in the late 19th century. Parties were viewed as delaminating entities, making it more difficult to pursue policies for the greater good of the nation’s future. Let us therefore call this “conservative populism”. “The people”, according to this view, are carriers of national identity, and they have a collective consciousness that is developed progressively over several generations. Conservative populists are not committed to specific religions or ethnic communities. Rather they draw upon three specific doctrines inherent in the ideology of conservatism: scepticism, traditionalism and organisms.³⁰ In a conservative populist tradition, “the people” implies “a corporate whole that encompasses all living members, but that also reaches back into the past and stretches out to the future”.³¹

Second, and perhaps most widely known in contemporary politics, some politicians appeal to “what used to be called ‘the common people’, but would now be better called ‘ordinary people’ against the privileged,

²⁷ See also L. March and C. Mudde, “What’s Left of the Radical Left? The European Radical Left after 1989: Decline and Mutation”, *Comparative European Politics* 3 (2005): 34-36.

²⁸ Andrej Zaslove, “Here to Stay? Populism as a New Party Type”, *European Review* 16 (2008); Peter Učeň, “Parties, Populism, and Anti-Establishment Politics in East Central Europe”, *SAIS review* 27 (2007): 12.

²⁹ Margaret Canovan, “Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy”, *Political Studies* 47 (1999): 5.

³⁰ Anthony Quinton, “Conservatism”, in *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, ed. Richard Gooden and Philip Pettit (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

³¹ Margaret Canovan, “People, Politicians and Populism”, *Government and Opposition* 19 (1984): 315.

highly educated, cosmopolitan elite".³² In this discourse, "the people" are framed as suppressed by "the elite". For different reasons - such as the lack of economic, cultural or social capital - the interests of "the silent majority" are not properly represented in the current system.³³ However, this appeal could take shape either as a "neoliberal populism" or a "socialist populism", depending on whether the enemy of "the people" is the bureaucracy or the economic elite. For neoliberal populists, "the people" means ordinary tax-payers, making heavy reduction in taxation their prime political object. Phrased differently, this type of populism is an "ideological construct based on the image of a society which pits the productive majority of taxpayers against a minority of politicians, bureaucrats, and their clients, which consumes the fruits of the majority's labour".³⁴ Reversely, "the people" can substitute either the Marxist notion of the "working class" or a vaguer category of a large underprivileged group in society. According to the first perspective, populism does not necessarily have to erase class division; a populist discourse can rather refer to both "the people" and "the class", and class is seen as the main agent of the people's interests.³⁵ According to another perspective, the appeal to "the people" is more of an electoral than a deeply theoretically founded strategy. As pointed out by March and Mudde, "the social-populist parties are less overtly Marxist, and as concerned with extending their vote as constituency representation".³⁶ Moreover, "left-populism has both a progressive and an illiberal 'dark side' that depends very much on context and the nature of the populist actor, but it should not be seen as inevitably inimical to democracy".³⁷

³² Margaret Canovan, "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy", *Political Studies* 47 (1999): 5.

³³ Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1998), 52.

³⁴ Hans-Georg Betz, "Introduction", in *The New Politics of the Right. Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies*, ed. Hans-Georg Betz and Stefan Immerfall (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 5.

³⁵ Ernesto Laclau, "Om populisme", in *Demokrati & Hegemoni*, ed. Carsten Jensen (København: Akademisk Forlag, 1997), 89.

³⁶ L. March and C. Mudde, "What's Left of the Radical Left? The European Radical Left after 1989: Decline and Mutation", *Comparative European Politics* 3 (2005): 35.

³⁷ L. March, "From Vanguard of the Proletariat to Vox Populi: Left-Populism as a 'Shadow' of Contemporary Socialism", *SAIS review* 27 (2007): 1.

Third, politicians can appeal to “our people, often in the sense of our ethnic kith and kin”.³⁸ Used in this way, “the people” is similar to the German notion *Volk*. Also in this perspective, the people is a homogenous entity, but not in a political sense, as in common people or united people. Here the people are given qualities and meaning in light of their ethnic and/or cultural characteristics. People that do not belong to the same ethnic community or cultural traditions are excluded from the concept, and the result is a discriminating and static image of the features of “our people”. This type of populism has been called either “xenophobic, exclusionary populism”³⁹ or “ethnic nationalism”.⁴⁰ Here, I call it “nativist populism”.⁴¹ The political logic behind this appeal is “a form of defensive nationalism, based on the notion that ‘some influence originated abroad’, poses a threat to ‘the very life of the nation from within’”.⁴² Important to note is that the resistance to immigration is not necessarily based on a hierarchal understanding of cultures (as opposed to some other types of nationalism). Rather than this pyramidal thinking, nativism asserts what Taguieff labelled a “defence of cultural identities” based on “the privileging of difference”.⁴³ Thus, these parties recognise other cultures (at least in theory), but at the same time they argue for special protection being granted to their own culture and tradition.

Fourth, we find yet another right-wing appeal to “the people” in the fascist tradition. Already in 1969, Wiles argued that “there is very much populism in fascism”, although he pointed out that traditional fascism is, in theory, much more elitist than populism.⁴⁴ Contrary to the above-

³⁸ Margaret Canovan, “Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy”, *Political Studies* 47 (1999): 5.

³⁹ R.A. DeAngelis, “A Rising Tide for Jean-Marie, Jörg, & Pauline? Xenophobic Populism in Comparative Perspective”, *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 49 (2003): 75.

⁴⁰ Jens Rydgren, *From Tax Populism to Ethnic Nationalism: Radical Right-Wing Populism in Sweden* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006).

⁴¹ W. Kymlicka and K. Banting, “Immigration, Multiculturalism, and the Welfare State”, *Ethics & International Affairs* 20 (2006).

⁴² Hans-Georg Betz, “Against the ‘Green Totalitarianism’: Anti-Islamic Nativism in Contemporary Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe”, in *Europe for the Europeans: The Foreign and Security Policy of the Populist Radical Right*, ed. C.S. Liang (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

⁴³ P.A. Taguieff, “The New Cultural Racism in France”, *Telos* 83 (1990).

⁴⁴ Peter Wiles, “A Syndrome, Not a Doctrine”, in *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, ed. Ernest Gellner and Ghiță Ionescu (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 176. Moreover, in classical Fascist thinking, the relationship between the state and people is turned upside-down compared to

mentioned types, this is undemocratic. While populists always present themselves as the true representatives of “the people’s will”, it does not necessarily mean that they support free and fair elections, which is the most fundamental part of any modern democracy nowadays. The relationship between populism and democracy is rather a matter of dispute and compromise; populism can be a form of representation, a syndrome or “the underside of democracy”.⁴⁵ Combined with fascism, populism becomes the latter. For fascist populists, “the people” is equivalent to “the masses”. The fascist tendency to create scapegoats fits perfectly with the populist thin-ideology. In contrast to the defensive nationalism of nativist populism (see above), the logic of fascist populism rests on an aggressive nationalism. According to Mann, fascism is “essentially an aggressive, statist and class-biased form of nationalism”.⁴⁶ Groups such as socialists, anarchists, liberals, and ethnic and regional minorities are all seen as “traitors to the nation” and they make “democracy unworkable”.⁴⁷

Fifth, an appeal to “the people” can also refer to a group living in a specific region in the country. We could label this type “regional populism”.⁴⁸ With rhetorical slogans such as “against Rome!” and “Roma ladrona, la Lega non perdona” [Thief of Rome, the League does not forgive], the Lega Nord in Italy is a prototype of regional populism (albeit there are some important differences between leftist and rightist regionalists).⁴⁹ In general, regional populism seeks to “vindicate traditions and customs against centralised political institutions that have supposedly lost touch with their constituencies and whose continued colonisation of local identities threatens their integrity”.⁵⁰ The enemies who are frequently

populism. While populism means that the state should serve the people, the opposite situation occurs in Fascism.

⁴⁵ Benjamin Arditi, *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism: Difference, Populism, Revolution, Agitation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 81-88.

⁴⁶ Michael Mann, “A Political Theory of Nationalism and Its Excesses”, in *Notions of nationalism*, ed. Sukumar Perival (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1995), 59.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ For instance, Mario Diani, “Linking mobilisation Frames and Political Opportunities: Insights from Regional Populism in Italy”, *American Sociological Review* 61 (1996); J.D. Martz, “The Regionalist Expression of Populism: guayaquil and the CFP, 1948-1960”, *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 22 (1980).

⁴⁹ B. Giordano, “Italian Regionalism or Padanian nationalism - The Political Project of the Lega Nord in Italian Politics”, *Political Geography* 19 (2000).

⁵⁰ D. Woods, “The Crisis of Centre-Periphery Integration in Italy and the Rise of Regional Populism: The Lombard League”, *Comparative Politics* 27 (1995): 195.

present in the regionalist ideology represent an argument for increased local autonomy. Hence, their main enemy is the centralised government administration, especially if it governs and overrules local political decisions.

Sixth, and related to the regional populist appeal, is the appeal to “the people on the outskirts”, those who live their ordinary lives far away from the centre of power. I call this “periphery populism”. This type of populism mobilises on the traditional centre-periphery cleavage well known in many countries, and the defence of local democracy is probably its main goal. The content of “the people” and “the elite”, as well as the political logic (or ideological affiliation) in all these types of populism, is summarised in Table 1. In the empirical section, we investigate to what extent these types of populisms are present in contemporary Scandinavian party politics. We start with Denmark, continue with Norway and end with Sweden.

Table 1: Different Ideal Types of Populism⁵¹

Features/ Faces	“The People” vs. “The Elite”	Political logic
Conservative populism	People as the nation vs. parties and factions	Traditionalism and scepticism
Neoliberal populism	Ordinary people vs. bureaucracy	Neoliberalism
Socialist populism	People as the underdogs (or as a class) vs. the economic and bourgeois elite	Socialism or Marxist-Leninism
Nativist populism	“Our people” vs. the cultural and political elite	Defensive nationalism
Fascist populism	The people as “the masses” vs. external and internal enemies of the people	Aggressive (or perverted) nationalism
Regional populism	People in one part of the country vs. elites that strive for state unity	Regionalism
Periphery populism	People on the outskirts vs. centralised bureaucracy and the political elite	Centre-periphery

⁵¹ The table is adopted and expanded from Anders Ravik Jupskås, “Populisme på norsk: en typologi med belegg fra partilederdebatte 1973-2005” (M.A. Thesis, Universitetet i Oslo, 2008).

Denmark: The Transformation of Neoliberal into Nativist Populism

In literature, Denmark has been described as the most harmonious of the Scandinavian countries. Characteristics such as lack of political violence, a homogenous population and a moderate class struggle make the harmony thesis popular when describing the nation-building processes in Denmark.⁵² However, in 1973, five new parties entered parliament, the Social Democratic Party lost one third of their seats, and more than one third of all parliamentarians were new. Mogens Pedersen appropriately called the election “the defeat of all parties”.⁵³ 15.9% for the populist party, the FRPD, was particularly impressive. In fact, this result made this party the second largest in Denmark. In the mid-1990s, this party experienced a party split after long time disagreement over (i) internal organisation and (ii) collaboration with other parties. A new party, the DF, was founded, and while the FRPD lost all representation in the 2001 election, the DF turned out to be capable of electoral survival - at least for the time being. Today, this party is regarded as the main populist actor in Danish politics⁵⁴, but some of the groups behind the *Enhedslisten* (Unity List, EL) have also been described as left-wing populists.⁵⁵

⁵² Knut Heidar, “Danmark”, in *Politikk i Europa. Partier. Regjeringsmakt. Styreform.*, ed. Knut Heidar, Einar Berntzen, and Elisabeth Bakke (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2008).

⁵³ Mogens N. Pedersen, “The Defeat of All Parties: The Danish Folketing Election, 1973”, in *When Parties Fail: emerging alternative organisations*, ed. K. Lawson and P. Merkl (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

⁵⁴ Karina Pedersen, “Driving a Populist Party: The Danish Peoples Party”, *Institut for Statskundskab Arbejdpapir* (2006); Jens Rydgren, “Explaining the Emergence of Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties: The Case of Denmark”, *West European Politics* 27 (2004).

⁵⁵ Knut Heidar, “Danmark”, in *Politikk i Europa. Partier. Regjeringsmakt. Styreform.*, ed. Knut Heidar, Einar Berntzen, and Elisabeth Bakke (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2008), 77.

Table 2: Different Types of References to “People”, Danish Parties 2010

Party	“people”	“the people”	“common people”/ “ordinary people”	“working people”	“popular”	Number of words
The Danish People’s Party	7	2	0	0	0	970
The Unity List	5	3	0	0	14	15 469
The Socialist People’s Party	3	0	0	0	19	11 977
The Liberals	3	0	0	0	4	8 342
The Conservatives	2	0	0	0	0	5 785
The Christian Democrats	1	0	0	0	2	9 624
The Social Democrats	0	2	0	0	4	5 742
The Danish Social Liberal Party	0	0	0	0	0	1 945
The Liberal Alliance	(1)	0	0	0	0	2 096

Source: See Appendix 1.

Note: The categories are mutually exclusive, which means that a specific reference cannot be classified more than once. References to other “people” are not included.

If we compare all the programs of principles for the Danish parties, the results seem to confirm the thesis that the DF and the EL are the most populist parties in Denmark (see Table 2). The DF has 2 references to “the people” and 7 references to “people”, while the Unity List has 3 and 5, respectively. Most of the other parties have only a few references to either “the people” or “people”. Interestingly, not a single party has any references to ordinary, common, or working people - references that are typical in neoliberal or socialist populism. Furthermore, the two cultural-liberal parties, the Social Liberal Party (RV) and the Liberal Alliance (LA) - the latter being more right-wing in economic issues - do not have any references at all, perhaps because both parties are primarily supported by highly educated voters.⁵⁶ Let us take a closer look at the parties *with* appeals to either “people” or “the people”.

⁵⁶ Jakob Rathlev and Christian Eg Sloth, “Væk er al snak om Ny Alliance”, *Politiken: Analyse*, 19. Dec., 2010,

As already mentioned, the *Danish People's Party* (DF) was founded in 1995 after a split from the FRPD. While its predecessor, the FRPD, registered a decrease in their support in almost every election since the party was founded, the electoral trajectory of the DF has been the opposite. In all the four elections the party has participated in, the result has been better than in the previous election. In the most recent election of 2007, the party gained 13.9% of the votes. However, more important is the political influence the party has acquired over the past decade due to its position as a permanent support party for the Danish liberal-conservative government. In their relatively short political platform - only 970 words (see Table 2) - we find, not surprisingly, many examples of nativist populism. First of all, the party underlines in a nativist framework that its main objective is to “ensure the Danish people's freedom in their own country and to preserve and expand democracy and monarchy” (my italics).⁵⁷ As many as five times, “people” is put in relation with “Danish”.⁵⁸ The party sees the culture as the product of “the Danish people's history” (my italics) - which they define as experience, beliefs, language and customs. Elements that threaten this culture should be combated; instead, the party wants a “comprehensive effort to strengthen Danishness”, even outside of Denmark. Secondly, religion, culture and political institutions (such as the rule of law) are all used to mark off Denmark and the Danish people from other states, cultures and people. Christianity, for instance, is said to be “inseparable from the people's lives” and this particular religion “still is immense and engraves the Danish way of living”. As we see from this argument, there is nothing about Christianity being better or more ethical than other religions; the DF simply argues that the Danish people have a special and deep relationship with this specific religion. According to the DF, the most prominent enemies of the preservation of an authentic Danish society are a “multi-ethnic transformation of the country” and the European Union. The latter is seen as a threat to the sovereignty of Denmark.

The Unity List (EL) is the other party with quite a few references to “people” or “the people” in their political platform. This party was founded in 1989, and ideologically the party has been classified as

<http://politiken.dk/debat/analyse/ECE1146663/vaek-er-al-snak-om-ny-alliance/>. (Accessed 18 July 2011); Rune Stubager, “The Development of the Education Cleavage: Denmark as a Critical Case”, *West European Politics* 33 (2010): 523

⁵⁷ All translations from the different manifestos are by the author.

⁵⁸ Moreover, the importance of Danish culture and values is highly visible in the rest of the program. The idea of something being particularly “Danish” is supported by as many as 15 references to that concept.

“communist”.⁵⁹ Still, for the most part, the party is passed over in silence in the literature on left-wing parties, and it is certainly not mentioned among the so-called left-wing populists.⁶⁰ The party define themselves as a “socialist and democratic grassroots party” and they have collective leadership similar to the green parties.⁶¹ Despite little comparative attention, the party has been able to obtain parliamentary seats since 1994, making them the only far-left parliamentary party in the Scandinavian region. In the two last elections, the party gained 3.4 and 2.2%, respectively, and due to a low electoral threshold in Denmark, this is enough to get into parliament. In its political platform, the party underlines that “to us, democracy means the people’s power”. They argue, in contrast to earlier so-called socialist experiments, that socialism means deepening “the democratic rights, the personal and collective freedom rights and mak[ing] them real”. Such a new social organisation can only be achieved through the “abolition of enormous economic and social inequality”, which, according to the party, exists in a capitalist society. The EL sees “the people” first and foremost as an economically and socially underprivileged group, but also as *political subjects*: “a socialist democracy ... should ensure that those involved have the opportunity to participate directly in the decision-making processes”. However, even though the party might show tendencies of a socialist populism, there is still much left of more traditional left-wing rhetoric. For instance, concepts such as “class struggle”, “the bourgeoisie” and “working-class” are mentioned 14, 26 and 49 times, respectively.

For the other parties, the picture is even more blurry. For instance, the next party on the list - the *Socialist People’s Party* (SF) - explicitly presents a nuanced theory of power relations between different groups in society. In their class theory, there is room for the working class, the middle class, the petty bourgeoisie, and the capitalists, and they have different interests in light of their position within the chain of production. However, the SF seems to be even more concerned with “popular politics” than its left-wing “little brother”, the EL. Even though the political platform is shorter, they refer to “popular” 19 times, 5 more than the EL. On issues such as global justice and the negative consequences of

⁵⁹ L. March and C. Mudde, “What’s Left of the Radical Left? The European Radical Left after 1989: Decline and Mutation”, *Comparative European Politics* 3 (2005): 48.

⁶⁰ L. March, “From Vanguard of the Proletariat to Vox Populi: Left-Populism as a ‘Shadow’ of Contemporary Socialism”, *SAIS review* 27 (2007).

⁶¹ Enhedslisten, “Om Enhedslisten”, 2011, <http://enhedslisten.dk/content/om-enhedslisten> (Accessed 14 July 2011).

globalisation, the European Union project, environmentally-friendly production, peace and women's movements, the SF underlines the need for a more popularly anchored policy. Phrased differently, a socialist society, according to the SF, "presupposes a break with capitalism, and *popular support* behind a new social development where the interest of human and social development and responsibility towards the environment outweigh short-term economic interests" (p. 1, my italics). There is nevertheless not much typical socialist populism in the SF documents that are analysed in this chapter.

The same number of references to "people" as in the SF's political platforms may be found in the Liberals (V). The official story is that after Anders Fogh Rasmussen gained leadership in V in 1998, the party was transformed in a populist direction with fierce attacks on "the culture elite" and "the rule of experts" (also labelled technocracy). However, statements such as "democracy should not be reduced to the rule of experts" and "democracy ... means also *letting people decide themselves without political interference*" (my italics) were already in the political platforms from 1995.⁶² If we read the paragraphs more closely, it seems fair to characterise them as some kind of "neoliberal populism". "Freedom and democracy" presuppose, according to V, a "self-contained culture" and "favourable conditions for establishing and running private businesses" (p. 32). "The people" are seen as capable of deciding what is best for them. However, when the party is more concrete about how to deal with challenges in society, it sounds more like classical neo-conservative thinking and less like populism: for instance, different kinds of tasks are solved "by the private initiative of the individual, the family, by private companies or by private organisations" (p. 7).

In the political platforms of the *Social Democrats* (SD), there are only two references to "the people", both of which state that "democracy means government by the people" (pp. 2, 9). The SD underline that they will work for the deepening and broadening of democratic government, by lowering the voting age and by making sure that politicians can always be held accountable for decisions regarding public spending and service. In contrast to a more populist reference to "the people", there is no clear enemy in the argument of the SD. Furthermore, except for these two specific initiatives, the party seems to be more concerned with the democratisation of either international or regional institutions (e.g. the IMF and World Bank and the European Central Bank), or political

⁶² Venstre, "Menneske frem for systemet - principprogram for Venstre", 1995, <http://www.kb.dk/pamphlets/dasmaa/2008/feb/partiprogrammer/da/object19172/> (Accessed 10 July 2011).

institutions in third-world countries. The *Conservative People's Party* (CPP) and the *Christian Democrats* (CD) also have a few references to people or the need for a popular anchoring of current policy. None of the references are typically populist. Both parties discuss "people" in relation to the voluntary sector. The CD wants the government to work together with popular organisations, while the CPP to facilitate voluntary work in people's everyday life. The last reference to popular is in fact the opposite of populism, since the CD rather than contrast the elite and the people, argue that society must give space to both elite and popular expressions of cultural life.

Norway: A Blooming Garden for Different Populism(s)

Populism probably has a longer history in Norway than in other Scandinavian countries. Studies suggest that the broad left-liberal movement from the second half of the 18th century was strongly influenced by populism.⁶³ Nordby, for instance, points to the national leader in 1905, Christian Michelsen, who broke with the Liberals in the hope of building a strong bourgeois alliance in the fight against a rising labour movement that wanted greater political influence.⁶⁴ However, the concept of populism was not used until the politician and sociologist Ottar Brox explicitly brought populism into Norwegian politics in his book *Hva skjer i Nord-Norge* (What Happens in Northern Norway), published in 1966.⁶⁵ In this book, he criticised the sector-oriented and mixed-market economy of the post-war governments. This development was, according to Brox, negative for those who lived on the outskirts of Norway in general and the people from the northern parts of Norway in particular. While this form of "periphery populism" was important in mobilising against Norwegian membership in the EEC in 1972 and against the EU in 1994, a new form of right-wing populism also entered the political stage in the early 1970s. In the general elections of 1973, *Anders Lange's Party* (later renamed as the *Progress Party*) had their electoral breakthrough. Even though "periphery populism" has been kept alive in the rhetorical toolbox of the *Centre Party* (SP), populism today is almost synonymous with the *Progress Party* (FRP). Let us see if it is true that the FRP and, partly, the SP are the only two parties referring to "people".

⁶³ For instance, Rune Slagstad, *De nasjonale strateger* (Oslo: Oslo, 1998).

⁶⁴ Trond Nordby, *I politikken sentrum. Variasjoner i Stortingets makt 1814-2000* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2000), 122.

⁶⁵ Ottar Brox, *Hva skjer i Nord-Norge?: En studie i norsk utkantpolitikk* (Oslo: Pax forlag, 1966).

Table 3: Different Types of References to “People”, Norwegian Parties 2010

Party	“people”	“the people”	“common people”/ “ordinary people”	“working people”	“popular”	Number of words
The Centre Party	68	15	2	1	1	58 238
Red	59	5	7	5	5	31 794
The Socialist Left Party	32	3	3	1	8	46 519
The Labour Party	31	4	0	0	1	27 418
The FRP	31	6	13	0	1	32 605
The Coastal Party	25	8	6	0	0	18 667
The Liberals	12	1	0	0	1	34 121
The Christian P. Party	12	1	1	0	1	43 745
The Democrats	10	0	1	0	1	15 870
The Conservatives	8	1	0	0	0	21 180
The Greens	7	0	0	0	3	10 926

Source: Party manifestos from 2009, except for Red, where the manifesto is from 2010. See more information in Appendix 1.

Notes: The categories are mutually exclusive, which means that a specific reference cannot be classified more than once. All references are included, except when it is clear that the party manifesto refers to another “people”, such as the Iraqi people in the manifesto of the Centre Party or the Romani people in the Labour Party’s manifesto or people coming to get asylum as in the Socialist Left Party’s manifesto. Neither are any references to the Sami people included. The Norwegian for common people and ordinary people is “folk flest” or “vanlig folk”.

Compared to Denmark and Sweden (see below), “people” and “the people” seem to be much more frequently used in the Norwegian manifestos. However, we should keep in mind that the Norwegian manifestos are more comprehensive than in Sweden and Denmark.⁶⁶ All parties except for two refer to “the people” and all except for four refer to “ordinary” - or “common people”. However, compared to the two leftist parties in Denmark, none of the parties in Norway seems to be concerned with “popular” politics. Since “people” seems to be a well-used concept in the Norwegian manifestos, this section focuses on the other categories.

The *Progress Party* (FRP) was founded by Anders Lange in 1973, and the party received 5% in the national election held only four months later.

⁶⁶ The mean length for an election manifesto in Sweden is 5 420 words. The mean length for the political platforms in Denmark is 6 883. In Norway, however, the mean length for the party manifestos is as many as 31 008 words. That is 5.7 times the length in Sweden and 4.5 times the length in Denmark.

With the exception of one period (1977-81), it has functioned in parliament ever since, for 32 years in total. But the party has never held government portfolios. Electorally, the real breakthrough (12.3%) came in the 1987 local election, Norway's first "immigration election"⁶⁷ and the latest parliamentary election, from 2009, resulted in an all-time high result of 22.9%. It has proved difficult to get a firm grip of the party's ideology, but Hagelund, for instance, argues that it is "a rather erratic mixture of neo-liberalism, conservatism and populism".⁶⁸ Compared to the other parties in Norway, the FRP is a frequent user of the concept "folk flest" (ordinary people). Not surprisingly, since this has been their main slogan since the mid-1990s. In the manifesto, this particular concept is related to issues such as crime prevention (i.e. making the streets safer for "ordinary people"), culture (i.e. public support for art and culture should be in the "ordinary people's favour"), lower taxes (i.e. to create more negative freedom for "ordinary people") and increased local democracy (i.e. decrease the distance between "ordinary people" and "those in power"). Threats against these policy measurements, according to the FRP, are criminal immigrants, the authorities, "laws and regulations that currently govern our lives and our choices", parliament or the government. As should be clear from this list of policy issues, the FRP seems to combine quite different types of populism. While the support for the "ordinary people's" culture and the threatening picture of criminal immigrants are closely related to "nativist populism", the lowering of taxes is typical "neoliberal populism". Finally, the antagonistic framing of "ordinary people" in their local environment and "the power in parliament and in the governmental districts"(p. 7), is classical "periphery populism". Not surprisingly, as a right-wing party, the FRP makes no references to "working people".

As a direct response to the growing conflict between the primary and the secondary economy (the agricultural-industrial cleavage), the *Centre Party* (SP) was founded in 1920.⁶⁹ With the EU-elections in 1993 as an exception (the SP gained 16.7%), the electoral support has been stable, between 6 and 11% after WWII. Ideologically, the party has defended the

⁶⁷ Tor Bjørklund and Johannes Bergh, "Innvandrere i lokalpolitikken - En suksesshistorie?", in *Lokalvalg og lokalt folkestyre*, ed. Jo Saglie and Tor Bjørklund (Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk, 2005).

⁶⁸ Anniken Hagelund, "A Matter of Decency? The Progress Party in Norwegian Immigration Politics", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 29 (2003): 47.

⁶⁹ Dag Arne Christensen, "Senterpartiene i Norge og Sverige", in *Partiernas århundre. Fempartimodellens uppgång och fall i Norge och Sverige*, ed. Marie Demker and Lars Svåsand (Stockholm: Santérus Förlag, 2005).

interests of the rural areas and the periphery, making decentralisation one of its main concerns.⁷⁰ This doctrine is visible also in the way the SP appeals to “the people”, which they do quite often. However, while most of the references to “the people” are connected to national sovereignty, public industrial policy, or local democracy, there are also a few in relation to crime abatement, similar to the FRP. The enemies of “the people” are first and foremost the European Union, centralised governmental offices, but also judges (since they impose penalties that are too lenient) and “dangerous criminals”. We find the most typical populist appeal under the heading of “National State and the People’s Rule”: “The aim of Centre Party is to build a government that serves the people and not a state that governs the people through bureaucracy and expert power” (p. 10). However, in contrast to “neoliberal” and “nativist populism”, bureaucracy is not a threat to the private initiative or “the experts” are not the target because they tend to be multiculturalists. In this particular “periphery populism”, “experts, bureaucracy and the elite networks around the state” are accused of controlling the “laymen’s judgements and the people’s opinion formation” (p. 10).

A party that, to some extent, is the protest version of the Centre Party, is the *Coastal Party* (KP). Compared to other parties in this analysis, this party is relatively new, and it was formally founded in 1997. The party had one seat in parliament from 1997-2001 and from 2001-2005. Since 2005, the party has been without national representation. With slogans such as “the Coastal Party’s program is suitable for common people!” and “Coastal Party - We seriously listen to the people!”⁷¹, one expects this party to have populist elements in their manifesto. The results confirm this expectation, and there are 14 references to either “the people” or the “common people” altogether. For the KP, the appeals to “the people” are placed in relation with the need to maintain national ownership over the natural resources, power plants, oil companies, and fish stocks. Moreover, the party is, just like the SP, concerned with the health of local democracy. In essence, the KP follows the saying that “less is more”. The party is against larger regions, and they oppose the “merger of municipalities against the will of the people”. Finally, the KP is also questioning “professional evaluations”, arguing that “the people shall decide the administration of their own locality”. Consequently, this party is another example of “periphery populism”.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁷¹ Anders Ravik Jupskås, “Populisme på norsk: en typologi med belegg fra partilederdebatter 1973-2005” (M.A. Thesis, Universitetet i Oslo, 2008), 85.

We also find populist appeals in the manifesto of the two parties on the left-wing spectrum, the *Socialist Left Party* (SV) and *Red* (R). These two parties were founded in 1951 and 1973, respectively. The latter party has its ideological roots in Marxism-Leninism, which is an ideology with obvious populist tendencies.⁷² The former, on the other hand, has a more traditional socialist background and in the late 1960s it incorporated green thinking. Just like the SP and the KP, the SV sees the European Union as a threat to “the people” and its ability to influence Norwegian policy. While this might be classified as “periphery populism”, the SV also appeals to “the people” in a more “socialist populist” way. For instance, the party argues that “the freedom of ordinary people is dependent upon joint strength won through [...] trade unions and other interest organisations” (p. 23). The party also regularly presents an antagonistic framework, in which “people’s power” (*folkemakt*) is put up against “money power” (*pengemakt*) (p. 6). In the case of R, there is an even more radical interpretation of “the people”: it is now a revolutionary entity and in the manifesto, the people is encouraged to “gain power and steer the development towards a [...] classless society” (p. 1). The enemies of the people are the established parties, both on the left and on the right. According to R, even the police force and the judicial system are politicised and class biased because they prioritise crimes committed by the working class and “the people” rather than by the economic elite and the bourgeoisie. In general, “ordinary people” are presented as economically oppressed and in need of a profound redistribution of economic resources in society. R is therefore also an example of “socialist populism”.

Sweden: Defending “The Real People” - But Not Too Much...

The established parties in Sweden have for a long time experienced less decline in voter loyalty and therefore less successful contender parties at the national level, although there were several local upsurges in the Southern parts of the country in the mid-1980s.⁷³ Not until 1988 did a new

⁷² Simon Clarke, “Was Lenin a Marxist? The Populist Roots of Marxism-Leninism”, in *What is to Be Done? Leninism, Anti-Leninist Marxism and the Question of Revolution Today*, ed. Werner Bonefeld and Sergio Tischler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

⁷³ For instance, T. Peterson, M. Stigendal, and B. Fryklund, *Skånepartiet. Om folkeligt missnöje i Malmö*. (Lund: Arkiv Förlag, 1988)

party, *the Environmental Party the Greens* (MDG), successfully challenge the established parties in the Swedish Parliament.⁷⁴ Only three years later, two other new parties gained seats for the first time, the populist party *New Democracy* (ND) and the *Christian Democratic Social Party* (later renamed as the Christian Democrats, CD), while the Greens lost representation.⁷⁵ ND turned out to be a short-lived experience, and Sweden continued to be a populist free-zone at the national level, resisting any party-political mobilisation on immigration scepticism, welfare chauvinism and anti-establishment sentiments for many years.⁷⁶ After the *Sweden Democrats* (SD) passed the electoral threshold of 4% in the recent 2010 election, some would argue that Sweden is no longer a deviant case with regard to populist parties in a Scandinavian context. When Swedish scholars analyse populism, they focus exclusively on these two parties.⁷⁷ However, in a recent paper presented by Hellström, the CD is also included (more about this below).⁷⁸ But are these really the only Swedish parties that refer to “the people” in their manifestos?

⁷⁴ Knut Heidar, “Sverige”, in *Politikk i Europa. Partier. Regjeringsmakt. Styreform.*, ed. Knut Heidar, Einar Berntzen, and Elisabeth Bakke (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2008), 65.

⁷⁵ Three years later the Greens were back in the Swedish Parliament, a position they have kept ever since. In the last election from 2010, the party became the third largest, with 7.34% of the votes.

⁷⁶ Jens Rydgren, “Radical Right Populism in Sweden: Still a Failure, but for How Long?”, *Scandinavian Political Studies* 25 (2002).

⁷⁷ David Arter, “Black Faces in the Blond Crowd: Populist Racialism In Scandinavia”, *Parliamentary Affairs* 45 (1992); Jens Rydgren, *From Tax Populism to Ethnic Nationalism: Radical Right-Wing Populism in Sweden* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006); D. Westlind, *The Politics of Popular Identity: Understanding Recent Populist Movements in Sweden and the United States* (Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press, 1996); Anders Widfeldt, “Scandinavia: Mixed Success for the Populist Right”, *Parliamentary Affairs* 53 (2000).

⁷⁸ Anders Hellström, “Help! The Populists are Coming” (paper presented at ECPR Joint Session of Workshops, St Gallen, Switzerland, April 2011, 2011).

Table 4: Different Types of References to “People”, Swedish Parties 2010

Party	“people”	“the people”	“common people”/ “ordinary people”	“working people”	“popular”	Number of words
The Christian Democrats	2	0	0	0	0	3 598
The Sweden Democrats	1	1	0	0	2	1 810
The Social Democrats	1	2	0	0	0	2 653
The Pirate Party ²	0	1	0	0	0	7 972
The Swedish Party for Pensioners ³	0	0	0	0	1	7 504
The Left Party	0	0	0	0	0	2 691
The Greens	0	0	0	0	0	2 467
The Centre Party	0	0	0	0	0	7 085
The Liberal Party	0	0	0	0	0	9 938
The Conservatives	0	0	0	0	0	10 892
The Feminist Initiative	0	0	0	0	0	3 013

Sources: The election manifestos for Swedish parties 2010. 1. Except for the Conservatives, where the election manifesto is from 2006, due to the missing manifesto from 2010. That year the Conservatives only presented a joint manifesto with their governmental coalition partners. 2. For the Pirate Party, the three different manifestos from 2010 - knowledge, integrity and culture - are put together. 3. For the Swedish Party for Pensioners, the party manifesto from 2009 is used as a source due to their missing election manifesto.

Note: The categories are mutually exclusive, which means that a specific reference cannot be classified more than once. References to “the people” that point to people in another country are not counted (e.g. When the Christian Democrats speak of “the people” in authoritarian regimes, or when the Feminist Initiative criticises the political views of the SD, arguing that this particular party sees the Swedish people as a homogenous entity).

Comparing all the election manifestos from the previous election for all of the 11 largest parties in Sweden (8 in parliament and 3 outside) reveals that there are extremely few references to “people” or “the people” (see Table 4). Only four parties have any references at all: the Social Democrats, the Christian Democrats, the Sweden Democrats and the newly created Pirate Party. The last one has only one reference, so I will go more in-depth in my analysis of the three first parties.

The *Christian Democrats* (CD) was founded in 1964; over 30 years later than its Norwegian counterpart, but six years before a similar party came into existence in Denmark. However, the party did not enter

parliament until the previously mentioned “earthquake election” of 1991. The best election result came in 1998 with 11.77% of the votes. In the subsequent elections (2002, 2006 and 2010), the electoral support continues to trend downwards. As part of the run-up to the last national election, the party leader Göran Hägglund introduced the concept *verklighetens folk* (“the real people”).⁷⁹ However, it was not really a new concept. In the early 1990s, the above-mentioned populist party - New Democracy - also referred to “the real people”.⁸⁰ In order to protect the concept from being hijacked by other parties, such as the SD, on 16 July 2010 the KD had a patent issued for the concept. In the election manifesto, however, this rhetoric has not yet been introduced. Here, “people” is only put in relation to a safer society - in terms of both reducing crime and combating discrimination. We will have to wait and see if the populist framework is to be found in their election manifesto in the future.

The *Sweden Democrats* (SD) was officially founded in 1988 as the party-political successor of the ultra-nationalist organisation Keep Sweden Swedish; an organisation which dates back to the late 1970s. Despite the party’s recent extremist history and the almost complete boycott from mainstream parties and the media (known as the cordon sanitaire strategy), it received 5.7% in the 2010 election to *Riksdagen*, the Swedish Parliament. Many scholars and commentators view the party as populist. Widfeldt for instance claims that “since the demise of New Democracy, the biggest on the Swedish populist right has been Sverigedemokraterna”.⁸¹ However, in the party’s elections manifesto from 2010, there are only one reference to “people” and one to “the people”. In the first reference, the image of the Swedes is related to a vibrant and active rural community. According to the SD, “[an] open landscape of fields and pastures [...] is part of the Swedish identity as a people”. Moreover, the Swedish people are said to be particularly concerned with animal rights and the humane

⁷⁹ Douglas Brommesson, “Svenska kristdemokrater i förändring. Från konfessionellt universella till sekulärt partikulära”, *Statsvetenskaplig tidsskrift* 2 (2010): 170.

⁸⁰ Maggie Strömberg, “KD lade beslag på ‘verklighetens folk’”, *Sydsvenskan*, July 22, 2010, URL: <http://www.sydsvenskan.se/sverige/article1181342/KD-lade-beslag-pa-Verklighetens-folk.html>, Accessed 25 July 2011.

⁸¹ Anders Widfeldt, “Party Change as a Necessity - The Case of the Sweden Democrats”, *Representation* 44 (2008): 265. However, in another recent article that “explores the ideological positioning of the SD in contemporary Swedish politics”, Hellström and Nilsson argue that the label “populism... is too vague and thus risks obscuring the analysis” and that due to pragmatic reasons, they “employ the notion of ‘nationalist’ to describe SD politics”. For an article that sets out to analyse the ideology of a party, this approach seems like “the easy way out”. See A. Hellström and T. Nilsson, “We Are the Good Guys”, *Ethnicities* 10 (2010).

treatment of animals. While the SD claims the latter to be threatened by ritual slaughter, in particular by the Muslims, parts of the rural community are under attack from the European Union. In terms of the type of populism, the first would be nativist, and the second periphery populism. The most explicit populist reference to “the people” is found in the paragraphs against the European Union. As a classical expression of a “populist democracy”⁸², the SD underlines that “in our Sweden, the Swedish people have the power themselves to create, through elections, their own common future”. The supranational arrangement that the EU represents is thus seen as a direct threat against the independence of Sweden and its people. Without any further elaboration, the party also states that Turkey should not become a member of the EU. In other statements it is pretty clear that the main motive for holding Turkey out of EU is its Muslim culture and population. However, a general anti-Islam statement does not necessarily qualify as populism. While there are only a few direct references to “people”, there are a few more references to “popular”. With regard to two policy areas, namely culture and criminality, both of which are usually important policy areas for the contemporary radical right in Western Europe, the SD argues that Sweden should strive for “a popular based Swedish culture” and that the government should pay more attention to the “popular sense of justice”. Following the measurement proposed by the SD, this culture policy involves financial support for traditional Swedish culture and cultural heritage tourism, the foundation of a Swedish canon, and the withdrawal of support for shocking and provocative art. Under the paragraph of immigration, the protection culture traditions are explicitly connected to the (re-)foundation of *Folkhemmet*: “In our Sweden, the Swedish cultural heritage is protected; a *Folkhem* is built on shared values and the Swedes’ right to develop their own culture on their own terms”. Again this is a typical example of nativist populism: Ideas, values which are seen as alien in the Swedish society should be pushed out, or at least they should not be supported by the government. Alien persons (i.e. immigrants in general and Muslims in particular) should not be allowed to enter, and those who are already in the country should be assimilated.

The last party with references to “the people” is the *Social Democrats* Party, which was founded in 1889. Together with the Labour Party in Norway, it has been one of the most state-bearing parties in

⁸² Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 154-55.

Western Europe since the 1930s.⁸³ Since WWII, the party has been in office except for only 14 years (1976-1982, 1991-1994 and 2006-present). Hence, the Swedish Social Democrats are, above anything, *the establishment*. But even though being in power makes adopting the thin ideology of populism less suitable, we know this is possible from other contemporary countries (e.g. Italy and Venezuela). However, as far as I know, there has not been any account of Swedish politics arguing that the Social Democrats Party has been mobilising continuous regime support through populism. An analysis of the references made by the Social Democrats confirms this view; none of them can count as populist.⁸⁴ Both references to “the people” are made when the party argues that the tax reductions introduced by the right-centre government have given as much to the one% rich people as to a quarter of “the entire Swedish people” (pp. 5 and 7). The final reference is more obscure, and relates to measures the party wants to introduce to make it easier for “people” to meet the requirements on the labour market. This reference is also not a typical populist reference to “people”. Having said this, one feature of the Social Democrats might deserve some attention. One of the most important metaphors in the historical and contemporary Swedish society, in general, and within the Swedish social democracy, in particular, is *Folkehemmet* (“the people’s home”). What is missing from the use of the metaphor “the people’s home” is the enemy (i.e. any type of corrupt or greedy elite). By and large, this has been an inclusive term. Although belonging to a left-wing ideology, the concept of “the people’s home” was never used to mobilise against the economic elite.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked more closely at traces of populism in the manifestos of contemporary parties from the Scandinavia region. Since scholars argue that European politics is caught in a “populist Zeitgeist”⁸⁵, I started out by questioning the assumption that only one, or maybe two parties in each party system can appeal to “the people” in a populist way. Furthermore, I developed a new typology of populism based on several theoretical contributions. In the empirical part, I consequently analysed all

⁸³ Ulf Lindström, “De socialdemokratiska partierna”, in *Partiernas århundrada. Fempartimodellens uppgång och fall i Norge och Sverige*, ed. Lars Svåsand and Marie Demker (Stockholm: Santérus Förlag, 2005), 79.

⁸⁴ Not even in the bigger document “Political Guidelines” from 2009 are there any references to “people”.

⁸⁵ Cas Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist”, *Government and Opposition* 39 (2004).

the manifestos for both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary parties (running for national elections), and classified references to “people” based on this new typology. While the results confirm the expectations that the “usual suspects” are more populist than other (established) parties, the analysis also reveals that a few other parties have populist elements. Moreover, the analysis clearly shows how differently populism can be expressed, depending on the deeper ideological commitment of the party. In this respect, this analysis is yet another validation of Taggart’s claim that populism is “*de facto* substantially contextually contingent”.⁸⁶ However, in contemporary Scandinavian politics, it is hard to find any examples of conservative, regional, and fascist populism. On the other hand, we find several examples of nativist, socialist, periphery and, to a lesser extent, neoliberal populism. Finally, the analysis seems to indicate that populism is not a widespread phenomenon in Scandinavia - perhaps with the exception of Norway, although we would have to wait for similar studies of other regions in order to come up with a more valid conclusion. Nevertheless, if we accept that manifestos are a good data source for analysing the degree of populism, Sweden seems to be almost a populist free-zone nowadays, and Denmark follows close on Sweden’s heels.

⁸⁶ Paul A. Taggart, “Populism and Representative Politics in Contemporary Europe”, *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9 (2004): 275.

Appendix 1:

List of party documents analysed in the chapter

Party	Name	Type	Year
Denmark			
The Social Democrats	Hånden på hjertet	Principles	2004
The Liberals	Fremtid i frihed og fællesskab	Principles	2006
The Conservatives	Frihed i stærke fællesskaber debatoplæg til et nyt konservativt partiprogram	Proposal for a new party manifesto	2010
The Danish People's Party	Principprogram	Principles	2002
The Danish Social Liberal Party	Principprogram	Principles	1997
The Socialist People's Party	SF's princip- og perspektiv program	Principles	2003
The Unity List	Kapitalisme og socialisme i det 21. århundrede	Principles	2003-2004
The Liberal Alliance	"Anders Samuelsen" and "Mod til reformer"	Pamphlets	2011
The Christian Democrats			
Norway			
The Centre Party	Senterpartiets prinsipp- og handlingsprogram 2009 - 2013	Party manifesto	2009
Red	Arbeidsprogram for Rødt. 2010-2012	Party manifesto	2010
The Socialist Left Party	SVs arbeidsprogram for perioden 2009-2013	Party manifesto	2009
The Labour Party	Skape og dele	Party manifesto	2009
The FRP	Handlingsprogram 2009-2013 (FrP fornyer Norge)	Party manifesto	2009
The Coastal Party	Program for stortingsperioden 2009-2013.	Party manifesto	2009
The Liberals	Trygghet i hverdagen Frihet og ansvar. Et sosialliberalt samfunn. Venstres stortingsvalgprogram 2009-	Party manifesto	2009

2013.			
The Christian Party	Politisk program 2009-2013 (Livskvalitet i hverdagen)	Party manifesto	2009
The Democrats	PROGRAM 2009 - 2013	Party manifesto	2009
The Conservative	Muligheter for alle. Høyres Stortingsvalgprogram 2009-2013	Party manifesto	2009
The Greens	Arbeidsprogram 2009-2013	Party manifesto	2009
Sweden			
The Left Party	Valplattform 2010	Election manifesto	2010
The Social Democrats	Vi kan inte vänta med att göra Sverige till världens bästa land att leva i	Election manifesto	2010
The Greens	Framtiden är här	Election manifesto	2010
The Centre Party	Framtiden tillhör dem som vågar	Election manifesto	2010
The Liberal Party	Folkpartiet liberalernas valmanifest 2010 Utmaningar efter valsegern	Election manifesto	2010
The Christian Democrats	13 steg och 89 vallöften for ett mänskligare Sverige	Election manifesto	2010
The Conservatives	Nytt hopp för Sverige	Election manifesto	2006
The SD	99 förslag för ett bättre Sverige.	Election manifesto	2010
The Pirate Party	Valmanifest: Kunskap, kultur, integritet	Election manifesto	2010
Feminist Initiative	Politik för livet	Election manifesto	2010
The Swedish Party for Pensioners	Partiprogram	Party manifesto	2009

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ITALY: VARIETIES OF POPULIST LEADERSHIP

FLAVIO CHIAPPONI

Introduction

According to a number of scholars, populist parties and movements are typically led by charismatic leaders. In fact, many political personalities leading populist movements in Western Europe fall under this umbrella: from Jean-Marie Le Pen in France to Umberto Bossi in Italy or Jörg Haider in Austria, to the recent examples of Geert Wilders in the Netherlands and Jean-Marie Dedecker in Belgium¹. In an age of the widespread personalisation and mediatisation of politics, they have become their party's basic brand, appearing in newspapers as well as on TV screens and on the web.

What are, then, the central features of charismatic leadership? Max Weber gives us a prompt response: "In the case of charismatic authority, it is the charismatically qualified leader as such who is obeyed by virtue of

¹ See, among the others, Daphne Van der Pas et al., "A Leader without a Party: Exploring the Relationship between Geert Wilders' Leadership Performance in the Media and his Electoral Success", *Party Politics*, <http://ppq.sagepub.com/content/early/2011/07/13/1354068811407579> (accessed 31 July 2012); Herbert Kitschelt, "Popular Dissatisfaction with Democracy: Populism and Party Systems", in *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, ed. Yves Mény and Yves Surel (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 195; Teun Pauwels, "Explaining the Success of Neo-liberal Populist Parties: The Case of Lijst Dedecker in Belgium", *Political Studies* 58 (2010): 1009-29; Ami Pedahzur and Avraham Brichta, "The Institutionalisation of Extreme Right-Wing Charismatic Parties: A Paradox?", *Party Politics* 8 (2002), 31-49; Paul Taggart, "New Populist Parties in Western Europe," *West European Politics* 18 (1995), 34-51; Pierre-André Taguieff, "Le populisme et la science politique: du mirage conceptuel aux vrais problèmes", *Vingtième Siècle* 14 (1997), 4-33; Marco Tarchi, "Italy: A Country of Many Populisms", in *Twenty-First Century Populism. The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, ed. Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 84-99.

personal trust in him and his revelation, his heroism or his exemplary qualities so far as they fall within the scope of the individual's belief in his charisma".² More precisely, the word "charisma" stands for the "exceptional powers or qualities" showed by an individual who is treated as a leader just because he can prove to his followers that he possesses those powers or qualities. In stating this, Weber depicts a power relationship whose efficacy lies essentially in the followers' behaviour; namely, "It is recognition on the part of those subject to authority which is *decisive* for the validity of charisma".³

Despite this clear suggestion, many analyses of populist charismatic leadership in Western Europe do not pay much attention to followers, focusing mainly on the personality of the single party leader, in order to identify what these "exceptional qualities" are. On the other hand, sociological and social psychological approaches to charismatic authority have often stressed the heuristic value of anything that happens on the subjects' side.⁴ In order to grasp the meaning of charismatic authority correctly, it is necessary to take into consideration this (often) dark side. Indeed, recent research "suggests caution in attributing charisma to populist party leaders without specifying more precisely what it is about their interaction with followers that makes the relationship between them charismatic".⁵

In sum, charismatic leadership is grounded on the *personal* qualities of the leader, but this kind of authority is not identical to *personal* authority *tout court*: there are those special ("exceptional") qualities which make sense of "charisma". At the same time, the connection between charisma and populist leadership should not to be hypostatized: in populist parties and movements, the leaders' power is squarely based on their personal appeal, as it happens in every *personal party*.⁶ This leads us to two

² Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 46-7.

³ Max Weber, *On Charisma...*, 49 (italics added).

⁴ Examples are the following: Douglas Madsen and Peter G. Snow, *The Charismatic Bond. Political Behavior in Time of Crisis* (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1991); Jay A. Conger and Rabintra N. Kanungo, "Toward a Behavioral Theory of Charismatic Leadership in Organisational Settings", *The Academy of Management Review* 12 (1987): 637-47; Jay A. Conger et al., "Leadership and Follower Effects", *Journal of Organisational Behavior* 21 (2000): 747-67.

⁵ Wouter van der Brug and Anthony Mughan, "Charisma, Leader Effects and Support for Right-Wing Populist Parties", *Party Politics* 13 (2007): 44.

⁶ Mauro Calise, *Il partito personale. I due corpi del leader* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2010).

considerations. First, the personalisation of politics is a widespread phenomenon in Western European party systems and we cannot distinguish the populist family on this basis. Second, charismatic leadership embodies only *one type* of personal leadership, and there is no reason to exclude that populist parties may exhibit other types of leaders' authority, founded on different, yet personal, bases.

Elaborating on the relational nature of party leaders' personal authority, this chapter attempts to draw a typology of populist leadership in Italy. If Italy is a "country of many populisms"⁷, how many types of populist leaders are there? This is the question that my argument seeks to address. Starting from the Weberian concept of "charisma", the next section focuses on those approaches in political science aimed at employing this notion as a tool for empirical research. Then I summarise the main results of these efforts and attempt to unpack the notion of "personal leadership" - using "charisma" as a criterion, among others, to reach the objective. The chief outcome will be a four-box typology of populist leadership, which I will apply to Italian populist leaders, such as Silvio Berlusconi, Umberto Bossi, Antonio di Pietro and Beppe Grillo - the latter, a former comedian, being the leader of the new comer among populist protests in the Italian party system, the "Five Stars Movement". My approach will be more "configurative" than historical, which means that I will pay more attention to shedding light on the crucial traits of leadership styles than to precisely reconstructing their parties' history since 1994 onwards, as many contributions have already done.⁸ I will conclude the discussion with some comments about the major directions along which further research on populist leadership in Italy may be developed.

Charismatic Leadership, Non-Charismatic Personalism and Situational Charisma

Let me begin by pointing out the key features of Max Weber's notion of "charismatic leadership". According to Pappas, who has recently investigated this topic in connection with contemporary democracies, the

⁷ Marco Tarchi, "Italy: A Country...", 84.

⁸ Roberto Biorcio, *La Padania promessa* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1997); Marco Tarchi, *L'Italia populista. Dal qualunquismo ai girotondi* (Bologna: Il Mulino:2003), 117-208; Alfio Mastropaolo, *La mucca pazza della democrazia. Nuove destre, populismo, antipolitica* (Torino: Bollati-Boringhieri, 2005).

core of the Weberian concept of “charisma” lies in its extraordinariness.⁹ One may appreciate this character once charismatic leadership is compared to “ordinary” democratic leadership - Weber’s “legal-rational” authority. The latter is embodied in an office, so it is quite impersonal; simultaneously, it cherishes moderation as a crucial aim of political action. On the other hand, charismatic (exceptional) leadership is strongly personal, as we already know, and seeks to implement a radical transformation of an established institutional order. Here I am particularly interested in elucidating the first aspect: how can we measure the degree of personalisation showed by the leader-led relationship? Pappas supplies us with a three-fold answer: the charismatic leader exercises absolute control over the party or mass organisation that he leads; his power stands on the “emotional seizure” of the followers¹⁰, i.e. their loyalty to the charismatic leader is accompanied by a great amount of emotional passion; finally, personalised leadership typically displays a delegative trait, which means that the bearer of charismatic qualities usually exerts his power in an unrestricted way. Then, for a leader-led relationship to be qualified as “charismatic” from the point view of its level of personalisation, it must tick all the three boxes.

Among these factors, the first one - the strong control that the charismatic leader holds over the members of the party - stands out. Indeed, in populist movements the charismatic response of the followers may grow as a rational action instead of being inspired by emotional passion¹¹; moreover, the third trait finds its necessary (logical) premise in the first one, because it is quite difficult to think of a leader who handles “delegative power” without holding absolute control over his followers. My argument is, then, that the crucial feature of the charismatic relationship between the leader and his disciples lies in his strong hold over them. This conclusion is not unworthy: it calls attention to an aspect

⁹ Takis S. Pappas, *Political Charisma Revisited, and Reclaimed for Political Science* (San Domenico di Fiesole: European University Institute, Working Papers, 2011), <http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Publications/> (accessed 31 July 2012).

¹⁰ This is the English word for *Ergriffenheit*, “in which the conscious and unconscious feelings are in full accord and both together generate definite attitudes by and towards the leader, other followers, adherents and enemies”: see Arthur Schweitzer, “Theory and Political Charisma,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16 (1974): 157.

¹¹ For instance, Knight has convincingly put forward the thesis by which the personal relationship between the populist leader and his followers should not be depicted as necessarily charged with passion: see Alan Knight, “Populism and Neo-Populism in Latin America, Especially Mexico”, *Journal of Latin American Studies* 30 (1998): 226-31.

which could be valuably used as a tool in order to unpack the still unexplored field of *personal leadership*, separating the charismatic type from the other forms of authority.

Ansell and Fish clearly aim at this target.¹² They claim that Weber's theory of authority as a form of legitimate power lacks a fourth type that has to be added to his three-fold classification of traditional, legal-rational and charismatic types of authority: they call it *non-charismatic personalism*. Briefly, this new form of political leadership characteristically pairs "the substitution of transcendent means for transcendent ends" as it happens in legal-rational authority, with the personal basis needed for the leader's legitimacy, thus approaching charismatic authority.¹³ In this regard, "members of the organisation identify with the leader as a person more than as an officeholder". In sum, Ansell and Fish state that there was a "missing cell" in Weber's typology and that it is necessary to complete it with non-charismatic personalism, showing that it is possible to find a type of legitimate power which combines an orientation toward technical means (a character shared with legal-rational authority) with loyalty to the person of the leader.

Then, Weber's revised typology is employed to explain today's leadership in personal parties. In other words, the focus here is on those parties where the power exerted by the leaders is firmly grounded on personal bases rather than on highly formalised procedures as in legal-rational (bureaucratic) organisations. They thus draw a four-box typology, aimed at describing the main forms of political leadership in "personalist parties". They distinguish: patronage parties, charismatic parties, quasi-charismatic parties, and non-charismatic personalist parties, each of them discriminated by a specific structure of leadership authority. Particularly, differences lie in the character of the leaders' roles, as well as in their sources of political authority, personal styles and, finally, the means by which they hold on to their power. These variations are summarised in Table 1.

¹² Christopher K. Ansell e M. Steven Fish, "The Art of Being Indispensable. Noncharismatic Personalism in Contemporary Political Parties", *Comparative Political Studies* 32 (1999): 283.

¹³ Christopher K. Ansell e M. Steven Fish, "The Art of Being Indispensable...", 284-5.

Table 1: Leadership in Personalist Political Parties

	Character of Leader's Role	Leader's Source of Political Identity	Leader's Personal Style	Method of Maintaining Power
Patronage Party	Distributional	One faction in the party	Paternal	Dominance of section of party; negotiation with other sectional leaders
Charismatic Party	Transformational	Self	Messianic	Fanatical loyalty of party members
Quasi-Charismatic Party	<i>Representational</i>	Specific Ideology/Program	Dynamic, audacious	Dominance of ascendant faction of party
Non-charismatic Personalist Party	Transactional	Party organisation as a whole	Stolid, Dignified	"Robust action"

Source: Christopher K. Ansell and M. Steven Fish, "The Art of Being Indispensable. Noncharismatic Personalism in Contemporary Political Parties", 287.

Here, I do not intend to illustrate each type of leadership, but to put forward a couple of considerations. Firstly, it seems to me that only two types of "personalist party leadership" are neatly defined: charismatic leadership and patronage leadership.¹⁴ Both the "quasi-charismatic party" and the "non-charismatic personalist party" appear as hybrid cases, whose organisational traits are not so clear. For instance, what does it mean that

¹⁴ Even if Nye has sustained that charismatic leaders do not *necessarily* display a transformational behaviour: see Joseph S. Nye Jr., *The Power to Lead* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

in non-charismatic parties the leader carries out a “robust action” with the goal of maintaining his power? Ansell and Fish say that it “involves an aptitude for speaking effectively to multiple, often diverse, audiences within the party and for convincing each audience that he or she [the personalist leader] represents its interests and aspirations”¹⁵, but in this regard, then, what exactly does make the difference with patronage leadership, as in the latter we find that the leader negotiates with factions in order to conserve his top post?

Second, these difficulties stem from a major problem in Ansell and Fish’s typology: three out of four types seem based, more or less, on the Weberian concept of “charisma”. To put it differently, charismatic leadership, quasi-charismatic leadership and non-charismatic personal leadership look like three cases of a single type of party (charismatic party), where we may simply observe a different measure of certain qualities in the leaders’ behaviour: i.e., charismatic qualities. Their framework may be useful in order to unpack personalised party leadership: but we must be cautious in tracing boundaries among types, especially when we have to handle highly sophisticated theoretical concepts. This is the case of “charisma”: indeed, it is not so easy to transform this notion into empirical indicators that we may scrutinise in leader-led relationships. At the same time, as Weber argued, it is extremely rare to find purely charismatic leadership in the real world: if we intend to apply this concept in empirical political research, we have to be prepared to observe diverse levels of its presence/absence in the cases under examination.

Starting from this suggestion, Tucker creates the notion of “situational charisma”.¹⁶ He follows Weber’s articulation of the concept, adding that in most real cases we may not encounter pure cases of “charismatic leadership”. He focuses especially on the followers’ behaviour, stating that the “first determinant of charismatic response is situational”. It means that a state of acute distress “predisposes people to perceive as extraordinarily qualified and to follow with enthusiastic loyalty a leadership offering salvation from distress”.¹⁷ History supplies us with many examples of this phenomenon: in times of war, the political leadership of Sir Winston Churchill no doubt obtained, to some extent, a charismatic response, even if nothing in his personality seemed to qualify him as a charismatic leader.

¹⁵ Christopher K. Ansell e M. Steven Fish, “The Art of Being Indispensable...”, 289.

¹⁶ Robert C. Tucker, “The Theory of Charismatic Leadership”, in *Philosophers and Kings: Studies in Leadership* ed. Dankwart A. Rustow (New York: George Braziller, 1970): 81-2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

The situational nature of the followers' response represents one of the main topics in Tucker's argument. The connection between the charismatic leader and the movement he leads is particularly interesting for our purposes. Tucker writes that the charismatic leader and the charismatic movement are inseparable, which implies that the latter is the typical habitat or creation of charismatic leadership. In turn, this has valuable methodological implications for the analysis of this type of leadership: namely, it means that "when we study a case - or possible case - of charismatic leadership, we should always go back to the beginnings of the given leader-personality's emergence as a leader, rather than start with the status achieved at the zenith of his career".¹⁸ Tucker's thesis is well-defined: a political leader does not have to achieve power - i.e., does not need to hold an office - in order to qualify as charismatic. In studying the Bolshevik movement, he found that Lenin's charismatic leadership began to emerge in an early stage, when he was exiled to Switzerland, well before the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Hence, here we have a notable result: a leader may exercise charismatic authority over the members of a political party without holding any office in its formalised structure. As I will soon explain, we might successfully exploit this outcome as a criterion for distinguishing different types of personal leadership in contemporary populist parties in Italy.

Populist Leadership in Italy: Notes for a Typology

In the previous section, I have sketched the theoretical boundaries. Let me summarise the main findings. First, a crucial feature of charismatic authority is the strong control that the leader holds over his followers. Second, charismatic leadership is not the only form of leadership grounded on a personal basis. Third, to some extent, political leaders do not need to hold an office to be perceived as charismatic by the members of the party and, consequently, to obtain their loyalty on personal grounds. How can we profit from these outcomes in order to explain and classify populist leadership in the Italian party system? I start by saying that political analysis is accustomed to recognising the main differences between two types of political leadership: charismatic leadership vs. patronage leadership.

On the one hand, in a charismatic relationship the leader possesses exceptional qualities, clearly perceived by the followers who, in turn,

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

exhibit an absolute (and often emotional) loyalty to their leader. What count here are those “great powers” possessed by the leader, to use Weber’s words; he can take for granted his control over his followers until he proves to them that he owns those qualities; the core of this power lies in the leader possessing extra-ordinary virtues and, at the same time, in the party or organisation members’ acknowledgment that the leader possesses them. On the other hand, in a political relationship grounded on patronage bases, the subjects (“clients”) typically obey, because in doing so they pursue their own interests. Truly, a *patron* is a leader who gains loyalty from below by distributing the spoils - essentially, institutional and/or party offices - to his followers. What counts here is the leader’s ability to continually supply the members with such spoils: this is a *necessary* tool if he wants to get their adherence over time.

While both of these two forms of authority are strictly *personal* in their foundations, they may nonetheless be said to be very different: in the case of charismatic leadership, there are transcendent ends pursued by the leader in his “mission”, highly symbolic deference, obedience frequently accompanied by passion; in the case of patronage leadership, followers exhibit an instrumental orientation, coupled with the promotion of an individual’s interest and not so transcendent ends. Despite this great diversity, charismatic leadership shares an important element with patronage leadership: the *strong* control that the leaders may exert on their followers. In other words: provided that the charismatic party leader regularly shows to his followers his charismatic qualities (charisma’s proof); and provided that the party patron exhibits his continuative ability to provide his followers with spoils, both may straightforwardly control the members’ behaviour.¹⁹

Accordingly, a strong control over one’s followers is a common feature of both charismatic and patronage leadership. With respect to other dimensions, we already know that these varieties of political leadership qualify differently. But there is a structural difference which I intend to call attention on: in patronage relationships, the hold of an office (often, a top office) is a *necessary* condition for the leader to exert power over his clients. There is little doubt that if he wants to seize and maintain power, the patron has to achieve a post in the party and/or maybe in an institution.

¹⁹ For a characterisation of patronage as a feasible mean to exercise political power, see Herbert Kitschelt and Steven I. Wilkinson (ed.), *Patrons, Clients, and Policies. Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Takis S. Pappas, “Patrons against Partisans. The Politics of Patronage in Mass Ideological Parties”, *Party Politics* 15 (2009): 315-34.

In other words, only the occupation of a political office or of a highly formalised role in the party or administrative structure can give the leader those indispensable means to nourish his clients' appetites, because only from the powers attached to that office may he obtain access to the spoils and resources that are to be allocated to the followers. On the contrary, we have learnt from Tucker's argument that the bearer of charismatic qualities does not necessarily have to hold an office in order to exert his political power over the members of the party or the movement he leads. In my argument, I have ultimately identified two criteria. In terms of the first, which I call "control over the followers", both charismatic and patronage leadership exhibit a high score; as far as the second is concerned, namely, the "hold of an office", these two types of leadership perform rather differently - the patron needs an office in order to exercise power, while the charismatic leader does not.

The next question is the following: are these criteria suitable for the construction of our typology of populist leadership? In order to find an appropriate answer, let me switch again to a conjectural level. In this sense, can we think of a kind of party leadership which combines a low-level control of the followers with the occupation of any political office? At a glance, the illustrations of this phenomenon in the populist field are not so few: it happens every time a political protest entrepreneur affirms his sole ownership of an issue and acts like an outsider against the political elites, blaming them for not promoting the people's interests. As I will soon explain, Italy still remains a kind of "populist paradise" from this point of view²⁰: over the past decades, sharp attacks against presumably corrupt or incompetent politicians in the name of the Italian common man have flourished, on the right as well as on the left of the Italian political spectrum. On an abstract level, I define this type as "agitator's leadership": here, without holding any office, the populist leader may mobilise a lot of followers (staff, party members and voters) around him and his movement, in order to oppose the established elites; at the same time, the followers' loyalty is typically volatile.

The last type of personal leadership in populist parties combines an office-holder leader with his scarce control over the subjects. Here the relationship is still founded on the personality of the leader, but he benefits from the office he holds in obtaining the loyalty of the followers. In this regard, this kind of leadership is similar to patronage leadership, but it differs from the latter because the leader's control over the followers is

²⁰ See Loris Zanatta, "Il populismo. Sul nucleo forte di un'ideologia debole", *Polis* 16 (2002): 286.

feebler, in the absence of further attempts by the leader to strengthen his personal authority. I call this form of populist leadership “institutional leadership”, thus emphasising the necessary occupation of a formal role (office) by the leader - at the same time, this asset does not entitle him to a number of power resources, as it happens in bureaucratic organisations that are grounded on a legal-rational basis and are highly institutionalised.²¹ This form of populist leadership has usually emerged in critical phases, such as that following Pim Fortuyn’s assassination: in May 2002, Mat Herben was elected as chairman of the Lijst Pim Fortuyn, prevailing in an internal struggle among factions. It seems that Jörg Haider’s early seizure of organisational power in the FPÖ could also fall into this category, because he succeeded in leading a colourful internal coalition - sharing mainly the opposition to a governmental coalition with the socialists - to an unexpected victory in the congress held in 1986, thus beginning his successful political career.

Thus, employing two criteria (occupation of an office or not; the extent of the leader’s control over subordinates), I suggest a typology of populist leadership (Table 2).

Table 2: Types of Populist Leadership

		Leader’s control over followers	
		Low	High
Leader as office-holder	Yes	Institutional Leadership	Patronage Leadership
	No	Agitator’s Leadership	Charismatic Leadership

²¹ Obviously, in populist parties, “institutional” means “weak” also for another reason: almost every populist party or movement has shown very little progress in time toward a full institutionalisation of its political structure. Actually, my concept of “institutional leadership” approximates that of “formal leaders”, created by Etzioni: they are “actors who occupy organisational offices which entail power and who also have personal power over subordinates”. See Amitai Etzioni, *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organisations* (New York: Free Press, 1961), 90.

This is only a first attempt to trace partitions in the assorted domain of “personal leadership”: in order to verify its explanatory potential, in the next sections I will begin to apply it to the populist parties and movements in Italy.

***Charisma and Patronage: The Rise and Fall (and Return?)
of Silvio Berlusconi and Umberto Bossi.***

The founders of the two new parties that profited most from the end of the Italian “First Republic”, Silvio Berlusconi and Umberto Bossi have not only been allied for a long time, but they are both academically considered to be the major populist leaders in Italy.²² Consequently, they qualify as good cases for testing the validity of our typology. In this sense, I must call attention on an analytical aspect that is still untouched: I have often treated leadership as a relationship between the leader and his followers, without precisely stating who the latter are. In other words: how large is the group of followers? Can we say that the party leader’s immediate staff and the voters of the party are identically qualified as “followers”? Now it is time to be more precise. In this essay, when talking about a leader-led relationship, I mean exactly the connection between the leader and his close team of supporters, together forming an “inner circle” of the party.²³ Indeed, this is also the level at which charismatic leadership may be best analysed, according to Weber’s classical formulation.²⁴

In line with the criteria laid down above, Berlusconi and Bossi appear as qualified enough to fall into the category of charismatic leadership, at least for most part of their political career. It is fairly simple to find a number of empirical confirmations of their charismatic traits. For instance, when Bossi gathered the scattered rank-and-files of the various autonomist parties in 1989 around the *Lega Nord*, he communicated to his followers

²² Roberto Biorcio, *La Padania promessa* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1997); Donatella Campus, *L’antipolitica al governo. De Gaulle, Reagan, Berlusconi* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006); Marco Tarchi, *L’Italia populista*; Marco Tarchi, “Populism Italian Style”, in *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, ed. Yves Mény and Yves Surel (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 126-35; Marco Tarchi, “Italy: a Country...”, 89-96.

²³ Despite the fact that populist parties often exhibit weak institutionalisation, there is no reason to exclude the possibility that personally mobilised inner circles emerge in populist parties as well as in mainstream parties; for the notion of “inner circle”, see Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organisation and Activity in the Modern State* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1966), 151-168.

²⁴ See Max Weber, *On Charisma...*, 50-1.

the profound sense of his mission: the freedom of Northern Italy from “Roma Ladrona” (*Rome the Thief*); then he was acclaimed as National Secretary of the federalist movement, thus starting the march toward political success. The following year, in Pontida, more than 8,000 people participated in the first mass oath swearing called forth by Bossi: every participant was asked to swear loyalty to the autonomist cause, “embodied in the Lega Lombarda and in its democratically elected leaders”. At this time, the leader did not occupy any relevant political office, nor had he obtained any national electoral triumph:²⁵ but he could count on the enthusiastic devotion of a bunch of disciples and a growing audience of voters, who perceived him as the charismatic hero sent for guiding the revenge of the Northern people against Roman elites. The same charismatic mood is clearly present in the words chosen by Berlusconi for his “taking the field”, on 26 January 1994: entering the political arena, he declared that it was necessary to defend Italy from the incumbent threat of an incipient communist government and called all the Italians to participate in his newly born movement, Forza Italia. Berlusconi, in alliance with Bossi, won the subsequent national elections held on March 1994.

At that time, the leadership of both politicians appeared to be grounded on charismatic qualities: in fact, like Forza Italia, the Lega Nord showed all the organisational traits that, according to Panebianco, firmly distinguish a charismatic party.²⁶ These typically are: 1) a cohesive dominant coalition which shares a personal loyalty to the leader; 2) the party organisation does not exhibit any bureaucratic character; 3) the organisational power is highly centralised in the hands of the charismatic leader; 4) the party is often the centre around which various groups and movements revolve, their boundaries being, to some extent, uncertain; 5) the charismatic party usually embodies an “anti-party” stance, regardless of its ideological or programmatic focus; 6) the difficulty in proceeding to

²⁵ Actually, in the national elections held in 1987, the Lega Nord obtained two parliamentary seats, one in the House of Representatives (Giuseppe Leoni) and one in the Senate of the Republic (Bossi) - but at that time these positions did not have substantial importance for establishing the ideological and programmatic keywords of the Lega: these were simply stated by Bossi as the leader of the movement, on a strictly personal basis.

²⁶ On an analytical level, we certainly have to distinguish charismatic leadership from a charismatic party: indeed, charismatic leadership may take place in parties whose ideological tradition or innate organisational traits are not so inclined to assume those characteristics associated with a charismatic party. For this proposal, see Takis S. Pappas, *Political Charisma Revisited*....

full institutionalisation, because this would mean successfully transferring the leader's charisma from his person onto the organisation. The six features thus depict a party where there is a total symbiosis between the leader and the organisational identity.²⁷

These traits have marked Berlusconi's and Bossi's leaderships for decades: they have embodied two types of populist *forma mentis* or "populist *Zeitgeist*" in Italy²⁸, one more prone to durable mass mobilisation, in the name of a territorial identity to be proudly defended (Bossi leading the Lega Nord), the other much more inclined to translate itself into "a largely improvised style", symbolically representing the common man who wants politicians to act and not to talk for the common good (Berlusconi, the self-made man, a total outsider in politics before 1994, leading first Forza Italia and then the Popolo della Libertà - Freedom's People).²⁹ Also, with the exception of a transitory period (from 1995 until 1998), Berlusconi and Bossi formed the fundamental axes of the centre-right coalition, together in governmental coalitions, together in opposition against the centre-left governments. If charismatic traits marked them for decades, my thesis is that both Berlusconi and Bossi had to face growing internal oppositions, coming from inner circles that openly challenged their power. In this process, which ultimately inaugurated a critical phase in their political career, we can observe a shift from the category of charismatic leadership to that of patronage leadership.

Let me begin by illustrating Berlusconi's case. Focusing on his last performances in government, problems started soon in 2008, when his former loyal ally, Gianfranco Fini, recently appointed President of the House of Representatives, started to frequently reject his requirements, as Prime Minister, to speed up the voting operations in Parliament, especially where crucial measures required by the Government were involved. This was the first act of a growing internal struggle (as Fini was a member of Berlusconi's party, the PDL) which ended only in July 2010. After being expelled from the PDL, Fini gathered his followers around him, founding autonomous parliamentary delegations and then, in February 2011, his own party, Futuro e Libertà (Future and Freedom). This marked a critical phase both in Berlusconi's governmental and party leaderships: needless to say, he increasingly failed to prove his charismatic qualities - the government's performance in the face of an unprecedented economic

²⁷ Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organisation and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 145.

²⁸ See Cas Mudde, "The Populist *Zeitgeist*", *Government and Opposition* 39 (2004): 543-5.

²⁹ Marco Tarchi, "Italy: a Country...", 85, 92.

crisis was poor and the rising contestations brought by the party's primary personalities, such as Minister Giulio Tremonti, forced him to make an effort in order to reinforce his leadership by distributing spoils to the followers he perceived as totally loyal to him. We can recognise these leadership traits also in the process of his succession to the helm of the PDL: on 1 July 2011, at the National Council of the party, he obtained a plebiscitary vote for his political disciple, Angelino Alfano, who was elected National Secretary by acclamation. This did not prevent Berlusconi from resigning as Prime Minister in November 2011. Alfano continues to systematically reckon his political and personal loyalty to Berlusconi, thus invoking his charming appeal and presumably returning charisma for the incoming general elections to be held in 2013.

Bossi's case seems similar, but it is fairly more complex. He has always maintained his domination over a growing mass party, which the Lega Nord became despite his serious illness from 2004.³⁰ Over the years, he gathered around him a "magical circle" - as the newspapers started to call it - formed of strictly loyal devotees, such as Roberto Calderoli, Rosi Mauro and Francesco Belsito, the latter chosen by Bossi for a trustee office, that of national treasurer of the movement. At first glance, it seems that in doing this he had progressively failed to prove his charismatic authority to his followers, appearing as a leader who was more and more interested in ensuring the spoils for his immediate personal circle, thus moving toward patronage leadership. If this has not created too many problems in maintaining a considerable electoral score for the Lega Nord, it has nonetheless fuelled a mounting internal conflict, in which Roberto Maroni, former Ministry in Berlusconi's last government, has increasingly assumed a leading role. Indeed, between 2011 and 2012, this struggle came to a dramatic end. On the one hand, Bossi's leadership was seriously damaged by the scandal which involved Mauro and Belsito, both accused of bribery for having used public funds for private purposes, together with Bossi's own family - including his son Renzo, then obliged to resign from the office of regional councillor in Lombardy. On the other hand, the faction led by Maroni, called "barbari sognanti" (the dreaming barbarians) gradually gained internal consensus, both from outstanding political personalities - such as Flavio Tosi, Mayor of Verona, or Gianluca Zaia, the powerful Governor of the Veneto region - and the rank-and-files. The

³⁰ "Bossi's full control over the party organisation was not merely achieved by suppression of internal dissent, but also through an evident ability to project a strong leadership and clear narrative for his political movement", Nicole Bolleyer et al., "New Parties in Government: Party Organisation and the Costs of Public Office", *West European Politics* 35 (2012): 985.

struggle ended in June 2012, when the National Meeting of the Lega elected Roberto Maroni as National Secretary; Bossi was not welcomed by the audience, but soon after Maroni's election he declared that he stood in the Lega as a militant. It is not predictable that in the near future he will show charismatic qualities again, perceived as such by his followers; but we may not exclude that he may try to regain the leadership of his movement.

Agitator's Leadership: From Di Pietro to Beppe Grillo.

In the previous section, I have tried to illustrate that Berlusconi and Bossi fit well into two categories of my typology: charismatic leadership in the rising phase of their political career and patronage leadership in the declining phase of their authority over the party. In this section, I focus on another couple of populist Italian leaders, Antonio di Pietro and Beppe Grillo, who represent the type of agitator's leadership.

A former magistrate and prosecutor in Tangentopoli's trials, then a Minister in the first centre-left government led by Romano Prodi (1996), now the leader of *Italia dei Valori* (the Italy of Values), Di Pietro squarely places himself on the side of the good Italian citizen, who does not want to pay growing taxes and sees increasing benefits supplied to presumably corrupt politicians and bureaucrats. In his populism, this anti-political motive is evidently dominant. Why does he fall into the "agitator's leadership" type? First, as an outsider to Italian politics, he succeeded in founding a personal party, without occupying any political office, and in mobilising public opinion against the political elites. He typically displays a kind of "internal anti-politics".³¹ Despite being a full member of the Italian party system, he attacks other parties' leaders and policies, as well as key political institutions (for example, the Presidency of the Republic). Consequently, even his loyalty to the centre-left coalition has recently been questioned. Second, there is evidence suggesting that he does not exert a strong control over his immediate followers: this weakness stands out once one focuses on the parliamentary delegation of the party. At this level, its groups have historically exhibited, both in the House of Representatives and in the Senate of the Republic, a valuable tendency to lose members - in the current Assembly, his own party has lost 5 deputies from a group of 25 in the House of Representatives and 2 senators from a group of 15.

³¹ See Vittorio Mete, "Four Types of Anti-Politics: Insights from the Italian Case", *Modern Italy* 15 (2010): 41-5.

What about Beppe Grillo? He has been for decades an appreciated comedian in Italy. Starting from the 1980s, his shows increasingly accused politicians of corruption and incompetence, but at that time this was meant to make the audience laugh, without entering the political arena directly. This happened on 8 September 2007, when Grillo called the first V-Day *via* the web (mainly by means of “meetup”), with the purpose of presenting a popular initiative law that would force all the politicians who had incurred criminal charges to leave Parliament.³² That was the first scene for Grillo to act as a political leader: in many Italian places there were mass meetings, notably thousands of people came to listen to Grillo’s speech in Bologna.³³ After the second V-Day, on March 2009 a convention gathering all “the friends of Beppe Grillo” was held in Florence, licensing the Florence Chart, a manifesto sustaining the green economy. In the summer of 2009, Grillo asked for the right to participate in the primaries for the leadership of the Democratic Party and he received a firm refusal from the party. Consequently, on 2 August he announced that his own movement was born, called “Movimento 5 Stelle” (Five Star Movement). The first article of its Statute explains that it is “a non-party”: from the beginning, a crucial feature of the movement has been the extensive use of the Internet. Grillo’s website, together with his blog and a number of linked meetups, are for the movement what party territorial branches are for a mass party. The web represents the fundamental means by which the leader communicates with the followers. In 2010, the Movement presented itself as a competitor in the local elections, winning a lot of regional assembly seats, notably in Piemonte and Emilia-Romagna. But the very triumph of the Movement took place in the municipal elections held in 2012, when it obtained more than 10% of the votes in many towns and cities and Federico Pizzarotti was elected as the new mayor of Parma, a medium size city in Emilia-Romagna, neatly defeating the centre-left candidate - and expected winner - Vincenzo Bernazzoli.³⁴

The main articulations in Grillo’s manifesto are a strong opposition to professional politicians and a sharp orientation towards the green economy; but the former is doubtlessly dominant and obviously led to his electoral success - in fact, in this field he has become Di Pietro’s prime

³² V-Day is an insulting acronym and sounds like “Fuck you day”, where the offence is directed against the whole political class sitting in the Parliament.

³³ See Mattia Miani, “L’uso politico dei nuovi media e il rischio del populismo”, *Il Mulino* 58 (2007): 882.

³⁴ It must be added that the Movement seized local power in many other and smaller localities.

competitor,³⁵ formulating a kind of “active anti-politics”.³⁶ This may be more successful than Di Pietro’s internal anti-politics, owing to the fact that Grillo is still perceived by the Italian public opinion as “more of an outsider” than the former magistrate is. This perception is certainly reinforced by his systematic reluctance to appear on the TV screens, refusing every invitation to participate in TV shows or infotainment programmes and imposing the same veto on his followers. In this regard, like in the case of Di Pietro’s movement, in Grillo’s leadership we may recognise a feeble control of the followers, which is made even more problematic by the means chosen for exerting leadership, i.e. the web. It is not by chance that recently Giovanni Favia, a regional councillor from Emilia Romagna, has publicly contested the faint internal democracy of the movement, blaming this mainly on Eugenio Casaleggio, who was appointed as the Movement’s Coordinator by Grillo himself; other militants of the Five Stars Movement have repeatedly challenged the veto to participate in TV programmes and actually did not obey Grillo’s prescriptions on this point. Grillo had no hesitation to expel those followers who did not comply with his orders, but his critics from inside the movement keep appearing. For these reasons, in my opinion, he would fit well into the category of “agitator’s leadership”.

Institutional Leadership: Not an Easy Game to Play.

Finally, what can we say about institutional leadership? Are there in the Italian party system any populist leaders who can fit into this category? At first sight, Roberto Maroni may be a good candidate. In fact, he has acquired the topmost position in the Lega Nord, but his leadership appears weak. This is because of two main reasons. First, Bossi has not completely left the scene and he could think of mobilising his personal followers in order to win leader positions in the movement again. Second, the

³⁵ There are some empirical findings that confirm this assertion: for instance, studying electoral behaviour in Parma, Cataldi has found that the electorates of both Italia dei Valori and Movimento 5 Stelle overlap: Matteo Cataldi, “I flussi elettorali a Parma tra 2010 e 2012”, in *Le elezioni comunali 2012*, ed. Lorenzo De Sio and Aldo Paparo (Roma: CISE, 2012): 87-8.

³⁶ The active anti-politics is shared by “knowledgeable and well-informed individuals, who frequently discuss politics, regularly turn up at ballot box and take part in political life in various way”: Vittorio Mete, “Four Types...”, 47-8. This seems a perfect description for the militant in the Five Stars’ Movement, as it emerges in Stefano Milani, “Grillini in Movimento”, *Micromega* 25 (2010): 181-204.

succession did not bring about a more peaceful internal situation. Certainly, the party looks now more cohesive than in the recent past; but the “inner circles” and factions have not disappeared. Thus, Maroni will have to ground his leadership on more durable bases than the occupation of an office in order to successfully maintain his leading role. In fact, as we have seen, in populist parties the holding of an office does not allow the leader to fully benefit from power resources as it would be the case in a legal-rational organisation. This does not mean a weak institutionalisation for populist parties, as some have claimed.³⁷ It simply makes clear that the mere occupation of an office is not enough for one to exercise a lasting control over one’s followers.

Conclusions

This chapter has sketched a typology of populist leadership in Italy, essentially on a high conjectural level. I have tried to apply it to concrete cases with relevant outcomes. The typology seems to be able to capture different types of populist leadership in a comparative perspective, at diverse stages of development, as we have seen in the case of Bossi and Berlusconi. It is good enough to make sense of the *shifting bases* of power in the realm of personal leadership. In doing this, it is an instrument that can capture the dynamic character of leaderships grounded on personal bases, assigning an explanatory value also to the followers: for example, if the subjects do not perceive the leader as charismatic any longer, he should ground his authority on a different basis if he wants to maintain his control over the party.

Certainly, the clarifying potential of this typology needs to be fully verified on the empirical level. From this point of view, further research should be devoted to the connection between personalisation and institutionalisation. Put differently, the forms of leadership summarised in Table 2 do not exhibit a crucial characteristic for successful leadership: its stability over time. Indeed, even stronger forms of authority in our frame, such as charismatic authority or patronage control, are vulnerable: thus, is there a form of *personal* leadership which qualifies for durability over time or may be successfully transferred to a political heir? Here lies a new challenge to political science: a challenge that now looks as yet unmet.

³⁷ See Nicole Bolleyer et al., “New Parties...”.

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NEO-POPULISM IN THE POST-COMMUNIST ZODIAC

MICHAEL SHAFIR

Introduction¹

Populism is both a widely utilised and a problematic concept. It suffers from what Giovanni Sartori has diagnosed as “conceptual overstretch”, which refers to a multiplicity of situations that may arise in different historical contexts and in different places and whose end-purposes are sometimes mutually contradictory.² Viewed from an etymological perspective, the concept makes no sense in the context of universal suffrage. If, as Cass Mudde once wrote, both the late Czech President Václav Havel and the former Slovak Premier Vladimir Mečiar could be categorised as “populists” because they both appealed to the people, then the use of this concept may lead to a dead-end.³ And the “overstretching” of populism does not stop here. In an East Central European context, no debate on populism can ignore the legacy of “narodnichestvo”⁴ and its

¹ In this article I have used parts of two previously published studies. For both, the editors’ permission to do so is graciously acknowledged. Cf. Michael Shafir, “Vox Populi, Vox Dei and the [Head] Master’s Voice: Mass and Intellectual Neo-Populism in Contemporary Romania”, in *Populism in Central Europe*, ed. Václav Nekvapil, Maria Staszkievicz (Prague: AMO Asociace Pro Mezinárodní Otázky, Association for International Affairs, 2007), 81-108; and “From Historical to ‘Dialectical’ Populism: The Case of Post-Communist Romania”, *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 50.3-4 (2008): 425-470.

² Giovanni Sartori, “Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics”, *The American Political Science Review* 64.4 (1970): 1033-1053.

³ Cas Mudde, “In the Name of the Peasantry, the Proletariat and the People: Populisms in Eastern Europe”, *East European Politics and Societies* 15.1 (2000): 33-53.

⁴ Cf. Franco Venturi’s seminal *Roots of Revolution. A History of Populist and Socialist Movements in 19th Century Russia*, revised edition (London: Phoenix, 2007). See also Andrzej Walicki, “Russia”, and Ghiță Ionescu, “Eastern Europe”, in *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, ed. Ghiță Ionescu, Ernest

influence over large parts of the region.

Populism in Historical Context

This legacy is by no means unambiguous. It influenced both the Left and the Right. Furthermore, as Joseph Held has pointed out, “In almost every East European society the populists conceived the notion of what they called ‘the third road’. This was an idea that societies whose populations were basically rural needed neither Western-style capitalism nor Soviet-style socialism, but something different from both”.⁵ The German *völkisch* thought, which had a tremendous impact on the forging of Nazi ideology and culture⁶, can also be considered to have been a variety of populism and, moreover, one that in turn influenced the East European brand of populism.⁷ Eventually, the two influences ended on opposite sides of the ideological political divide of the last century:

There was a dichotomy among the East European populists; on the one hand, they wanted to reform society and provide a greater share of worldly goods for the peasantry. Thus, some of them opposed the existing social and political system from the left. On the other hand, many of them realised that reforms could be achieved only through revolutionary ways, and the process could be speeded up through an alliance with the extreme right. The left-wing populists, therefore, cooperated with the communists, while the right wing moved closer to the fascists. Thus, the “third road”, which they espoused, led to authoritarian systems for which both the left and the right worked.⁸

If that is so, then what have we gained by using populism as a concept - apart from confusing its origins and, no less important, substituting a political pejorative for an academic one? As Klaus von Beyme notes when used in politics (alas, in political science no less), the term “frequently degenerated into an invective for allegedly unrealistic, phony policies or

Gellner (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), 62-96 and 97-121.

⁵ Joseph Held, “Antecedents”, in *Populism in Eastern Europe: Racism, Nationalism and Society*, ed. Joseph Held (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1996), 2-3.

⁶ Cf. Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970); George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981).

⁷ Joseph Held, “Antecedents”, 8-15.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

opportunistic political behaviour”.⁹ Philippe Schmitter remarks that “Politicians and political scientists invariably use the term ‘populism’ to designate persons or movements they do not like or would not like to have come to power. To be called a ‘populist’ is to be insulted and, if possible, excluded from ‘respectable’ liberal democratic practice”.¹⁰ As political adversaries trade accusations of “populism” among themselves and since it seems difficult to designate criteria on whose base such mutual accusations might be verified, the concept loses its value just like currencies subjected to inflationary pressure: the more it circulates, the less it buys.

Populism and Neo-Populism

Conceptual stretching is not overcome by pulling together phenomena distanced in space and time as Vladimir Tismăneanu does by placing “Peronismo” and post-communist populism under the same umbrella, no matter how heuristically provocative the parallel may be.¹¹ On historical grounds, a distinction must be made between movements that had the peasant at the centre of their concerns and movements that, as Mudde puts it, nowadays claim to act “in the name of the peasantry, the proletariat and the people”.¹² In other words, in its present form, populism is no longer social-class focused but “catch-all focused”, to adopt Otto Kirchheimer’s classical designation of that breed of modern political parties.¹³

There may be several grounds for that, which often intertwine. First, the Left has been discredited following the collapse of communism. The political discourse has been monopolised by either those who serenely changed the communist wagon for a social-democrat one, which generally lacked credibility and was by no means the equivalent of Western social democracy; or, on the other side of the barricade, by those in whose eyes

⁹ Klaus von Beyme, “Populism and Right-Wing Extremism in Modern Democracies”, in *Populism in Central Europe*, ed. Václav Nekvapil, Maria Staszkiwicz (Prague: AMO Asociace Pro Mezinárodní Otázky, Association for International Affairs, 2007): 26-40.

¹⁰ Philippe C. Schmitter, “A Balance of Sheet of the Vices and Virtues of ‘Populism’”, *The Romanian Journal of Political Science*, 7.2 (2007): 5.

¹¹ Vladimir Tismăneanu, “The Leninist Debris or Waiting for Peron”, *East European Politics and Societies* 10.3 (1996): 504-535.

¹² Cas Mudde, “In the Name...”.

¹³ Otto Kirchheimer, “The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems”, in *Political Parties and Political Development*, ed. Joseph LaPalombara, Myron Weiner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966): 177-200.

the Left is little else than a pathology. With the notable exception of the Czech Republic, all political parties in the region dropped the communist designation from their names. The second ground rests on the general decline of ideology in “classical” political parties, combined with a parallel diminution of organisational capabilities, which derives, in turn, from social heterogeneity. Disenchanted with what political parties had on “offer” after the goals of “consolidation” and of accessing NATO and the European Union (EU) had been reached, the East Central European electorates displayed an ever decreasing interest in “classical” political participation. This resulted in what von Beyme calls the “third wave of populism” (i.e., post WW II), manifest at first in a sharp drop in voter turnout. The erosion of ideological cleavages and the increased professionalism of the political elites “created anti-establishment feelings and spread anti-party moods in the society”.¹⁴

In the former communist countries, the very concept of party (or rather Party) was discredited as they stepped into the age of democratisation.¹⁵ While this communist legacy was apparently overcome in the first post-communist decade, disappointment with party performance (of whichever ideological shade) opened the door wide to “alternative politics”. None of these developments seems to be satisfactorily embedded in what “populism”

¹⁴ Klaus Von Beyme, “Populism...”, 28-29.

¹⁵ As one scholar notes, the former one-party or multi-party hegemonic regimes (for example, Poland) might have created a “basic aversion to the concept and the practice of ‘party’”. The “reaction to ‘party’”, the same author remarked at the outset of the process of democratisation, was “remarkably widespread in the countries of Eastern Europe... owing to the long-term dominance of party mechanisms in control in the previous Communist regimes” (Geoffrey Pridham, “Political Parties and Their Strategies in the Transition from Authoritarian Rule: The Comparative Perspective”, in *Party Formation in East-Central Europe: Post-Communist Politics in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria*, ed. Gordon Wightman (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1995), 10, 11-12. One might add that the (only apparently opposite) phenomenon of “party inflation” in the immediate post-communist period rendered similar results (in Poland, for example, there were some 50-200 groups claiming the status of political parties). Cf. Sten Berglund, Jan Ake Dellenbrant, “The Breakdown of Communism in Eastern Europe”, in *The New Democracies in Eastern Europe: Party Systems and Political Cleavages*, ed. Sten Berglund, Jan Ake Dellenbrant (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1994): 7. In turn, this created what Sartori calls the “syndrome of extreme and polarised pluralism” which invites governmental instability and hence voter disaffection from the democratic system as such, not to mention the presence of anti-system parties. Cf. Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979): 132-140.

stands for. Insofar as the former East European (not to mention other) communist countries are concerned, a way out of the dilemma has been suggested by Andrew Janos' distinction between "populism" and "neo-populism". But while the distinction is important and while I myself have used it in my earlier work,¹⁶ I have come to believe that it misses the central point. Janos distinguishes between three traditions that have influenced the "strategic choices" made by the post-communist political elites: the liberal/civic tradition, the technocratic tradition, and the neo-populist one. As he formulates it, however, the "neo in populism resides in continuity, rather than in change. It refers to such aspects as the cultivation of a self-centred apprehensive perception of 'the other', of a globalising world and to the cultivation of 'the symbols of the victim and the weak'."¹⁷ There is very little "neo" here for anyone familiar with the history of East Central Europe, indeed with the history of European radicalism in general.¹⁸

For the "neo" to become relevant in the post-communist context, it seems to me that the distinction should introduce an additional dimension: that of Sartori's "systemic" and "anti-system politics".¹⁹ I apply here concepts that were originally devised for Western political parties, and I do that with good reason. I believe that post-1989 politics in East Central Europe simply cannot be successfully conducted if openly admitting an "anti-systemic" *telos*. "In present-day Central Europe, unlike in Europe

¹⁶ Michael Shafir, "Reds, Pinks, Blacks and Blues: Radical Politics in Post-Communist East-Central Europe", *Studia Politica* 1.2 (2001): 397-446.

¹⁷ Andrew Janos, "Continuity and Change in Eastern Europe: Strategies of Post-Communist Politics", *East European Politics and Societies* 8.1 (1994): 1-31.

¹⁸ Not even globalism can be viewed as a novel element here, since a distinction is made between "thin" globalism, which is several centuries old, and "thick" globalism, which is of a more recent nature. See Joseph S. Nye, Robert O. Keohane, "Globalisation: What's New? What's Not (And So What)", in Joseph S. Nye, *Power in the Global Information Age: From Realism to Globalisation* (London and New York: 2004), 191-200.

¹⁹ Sartori, 132-133, *passim*. Piero Ignazi has also used the Sartorian systemic/non-systemic dichotomy to underline the distinction between parties that function within the democratic rules of the game and those whose activity amounts to infringing on and aspiring to change those rules. Cf. his "The Silent Counter-Revolution: Hypotheses on the Emergence of Extreme Right-Wing Parties in Europe", *European Journal of Political Research* 22.1-2 (1992): 3-34, "The Extreme Right in Europe: A Survey", *The Revival of Right-Wing Extremism in the Nineties*, ed. Peter H. Merkl, Leonard Weinberg (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 47-64, and *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

during the 1930s, there is no ideological alternative to democracy”, Ivan Krastev wrote back in 2007, adding that the “streets of Budapest and Warsaw today are flooded not by ruthless paramilitary formations in search of a final solution, but by restless consumers in search of a final sale”.²⁰ In turn, Rupnik observes that Eastern Europe’s populists (or rather neo-populists) “are not anti-democratic (indeed they claim to be the “true voice of the people” and keep demanding new elections and referenda) but anti-liberal”.²¹ Events would prove Krastev wrong, for the streets of Budapest would soon fill up with the paramilitary hooligans of the Hungarian Guard and the Movement for a Better Hungary, or *Jobbik*, would garner enough votes to become the country’s third-largest political party in the 2010 elections (22 seats). But it was not Jobbik that dominated the country after that scrutiny; rather, the neo-populist Alliance of Young Democrats - the Hungarian Civic Party (FIDESZ-MPP) won 66% of all seats in parliament that year, in an unprecedented performance.

Neo-Populism and the Radical Right

Neo-populist anti-liberalism in the sense employed by Rupnik does not imply a rejection of the market economy, as we shall yet observe. On the contrary, it may even inscribe neoliberalism (in its economic sense) on its banner, advocating wild capitalism, whose chief victims are the weakest strata of the population. That is not to claim that there are no “anti-system” parties, organisations or personalities in post-communist Europe. There are plenty of them, and we shall yet dwell on the difference between neo-populists and the anti-system Radical Right. Although they share some traits, one must nonetheless differentiate between neo-populism and the anti-systemic Radical Right. Neo-populist parties such as FIDESZ do not overtly appeal to ultranationalist values (although they might covertly do so in coded idiom) and do not advocate wholesale systemic change (although they often advance proposals for constitutional amendments aimed at replacing substantial with formal democracy). Briefly put, Poland’s Law and Justice Party (PiS) is not the League of Polish Families (LPR), Bulgaria’s Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) is not Ataka, Hungary’s FIDESZ is not Jobbik and Romania’s Liberal-Democratic Party (PDL) is not the Greater Romania Party (PRM).

²⁰ Ivan Krastev, “The Strange Death of the Liberal Consensus”, *Journal of Democracy*, 19.4 (2007): 57.

²¹ Jacques Rupnik, “Populism in East Central Europe”, *Eurozine*, www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-09-10-rupnik-en.html (Accessed 3 August 2008).

The latter formation could raise a claim to neo-populism, since one of the main traits of neo-populism is the pretence of being the champions of anti-corruption and of “righteousness” (see *infra*). It is not the PRM’s well-recorded chauvinism that nullifies the claim as much as anti-systemic acts (e.g. its involvement in the unsuccessful Jiu Valley miners’ 1999 attempt to descend on Bucharest and forcefully overthrow the government).²²

In one way or another, in East Central Europe even those belonging to the category of the Radical Right are aware that this affiliation would transform them into *pariahs* both inside and, especially, outside their own political communities. This clearly shows both the influence and the limitations of what have been termed “international regimes” by which is meant “implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations”.²³ The East European members of the EU and NATO constitute precisely such an international regime, adherence to which is voluntary.²⁴ As it has been pointed out, however, the EU’s ability to influence and pressure the new East Central European members to avoid “non-democratic backsliding” is considerable up to accession, but drops dramatically after that point.²⁵

This largely explains the fact that, as Alina Mungiu-Pippidi observes,

Radical populists from Central and Eastern Europe may be more violent in their language or more overtly anti-Semitic than West European populists, but none of their programs feature truly antidemocratic policies, such as abolishing the rights of minority groups. The values that they profess in their speeches are neither liberal nor democratic, but so far one cannot charge them with having taken any antidemocratic action.²⁶

²² Cf. Gabriel Andreescu, *Extremismul de dreapta în România* (Cluj: Centrul de Resurse pentru Diversitate Etnoculturală, 2003), 33-34.

²³ Stephen Krasner, “Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables”, in *International Regimes*, ed. Stephen D. Krasner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), cited in Paul R. Viotti, Mark V. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism, and Beyond* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1987), 79.

²⁴ Viotti, Kauppi, 215.

²⁵ “EU tutelage works until you get in, but once you have joined, there are few incentives or means to induce democratic norms” (Krastev, 22). See also Martin Bútora, “Nightmares from the Past, Dreams of the Future”, *Journal of Democracy* 18.4 (2007): 47-55, and Béla Greskovits, “Economic Woes and Political Disaffection”, *Journal of Democracy* 18.4 (2007): 40-46.

²⁶ Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, “EU Accession Is No ‘End of History’”, *Journal of Democracy* 18.4 (2007): 11.

I disagree. First, because the values promoted by neo-populists are democratic. Second, I disagree on the grounds of non-differentiation between neo-populists and the anti-systemic Radical Right. In fact, neo-populists are different from both interwar populists and from the earlier populists of the socialist or *völkisch* shades. Unlike their predecessors, they no longer denounce the “evils” of capitalism, only the “rapaciousness” of *some* capitalists who allegedly forgot where they came from (the people). In neo-populism, there are “virtuous” and “corrupt” capitalists, and the former engage in self-sacrifice by entering politics allegedly against their own personal interests. The image neo-populists pursue is, as Mudde pointed out, that of “reluctant politicians”, where politics is presented as a “necessary evil” in a self-sacrificing posture. Hence, neo-populists are, at least in appearance, “systemic”. Not only do they not claim, as their predecessors did, “system destructive” objectives, but, on the contrary, they claim to do so in order to safeguard genuine democracy. The claim, as Mudde writes, is built upon a rigid dichotomy of the “pure people”, whom they reluctantly have taken upon themselves to represent, *versus* “the corrupt elite”.²⁷ The struggle against corruption is, without a doubt, the utmost image all neo-populists aspire to.²⁸ According to Krastev, “The populists’ obsession with corruption is the most powerful expression” of the

new understanding of the meaning of politics. The new populist majorities perceive elections not as an opportunity to choose between policy options but as a revolt against privileged minorities - in the case of Central Europe, corrupted elites and morally corrupting “others” such as ethnic or sexual minorities.²⁹

The dichotomy is at the core of the very definition of populism provided by Mudde:

[P]opulism is understood as a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite”, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people... In the populist democracy, nothing is more important than the “general will” of the people, not even human rights or constitutional

²⁷ Cas Mudde, “In the Name”, 37.

²⁸ See Marian L. Tupy, *The Rise of Populist Parties in Central Europe. Big Government, Corruption, and the Threat to Liberalism* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2006).

²⁹ Ivan Krastev, “The Strange Death”, 63.

guarantees.³⁰

This definition is very much in line with that provided by Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnel. They portray the populists as pitting:

a virtuous and homogenous people against a set of elites and dangerous “others” who, together, are depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice.³¹

Yet, as will be shown below, the assumption of the people’s “homogeneity” and the dangerousness’ of the “others” is an essential feature of the Radical Right populists, but not all populists necessarily belong to the Radical Right. Moreover, as the case of Slovakia under former Premier Mečiar and the first cabinet (2006-2010) headed by the current Premier Robert Fico (a Leftist) demonstrates, neo-populists may form coalitions with either the Radical Right or the Left, or with both at the same time. None of the above rules out the continuity from populism to neo-populism. It is striking, however, that this continuity is often denied when neo-populists are confronted with uncomfortable parallels drawn either by their domestic opponents or by foreign political critics. Furthermore, not only is the democratic veneer considered to be inevitable, but neo-populists are particularly gifted in mobilising support by claiming to be the personal embodiment of popular grievances and/or the values promoted by influential segments in their societies.

The difference between neo-populists and populists belonging to the Radical Right is often overlooked.³² This is due to the historic legacy of ultranationalism, which populists utilised with great success in the past. The distinction is rendered difficult by the undeniable fact that some neo-populists (Hungary’s Viktor Orbán is an obvious example) continue this populist tradition and often resort to nationalist manipulation. According to Mudde, even when the Radical Right claims acceptance of liberal democracy, democracy is endangered by “its monism, most strongly expressed in its nativism and populism”. As a result, “the more liberal a democracy is, the more anti-system the populist radical right will be”. But

³⁰ Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 23. Author’s emphasis.

³¹ Daniele Albertazzi, Duncan McDonnel, *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre for Western European Democracy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 3.

³² For example, Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation. Democracy. Nationalism and Myth in Post-Communist Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) or *National Populism and Slovak-Hungarian Relations 2006-2009*, ed. Kálman Petőcz (Samorin-Sormoja: Forum Minority Research Institute, 2009).

the opposite effect is also predictable, namely “the more ethnic and plebiscitary a democracy, the more pro-system the populist radical right”. For reasons discussed below, I am inclined to add: the more *illiberal* a democracy becomes, the more inclusive for supporters of the Radical Right it turns to be. Mudde also observes that the tension between the Radical Right’s acceptance of democratic procedure and its ideology is not eliminated:

At the core of this tension is the distinction between monism and pluralism: whereas populist radical right democracy considers societies to be essentially homogenous collectives, liberal democracy presupposes societies to be made up of groups of fundamentally different individuals.³³

Neither all populists, nor all neo-populists are members of the Radical Right family; likewise, not all those who belong to the Radical Right are populists or neo-populists. Ignorance of the distinction partly explains why the term “populist” is used pejoratively. According to Mudde, three core elements characterise the populist Radical Right: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism. His definition of populism has been cited above. By “nativism” he understands

an ideology, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (“the nation”) and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state.³⁴

Finally, adopting the definition provided by Theodor Adorno and his Frankfurt School, authoritarianism is “a general disposition to glorify, to be subservient to and remain uncritical toward authoritative figures of the ingroup and to take an attitude of punishing outgroup figures in the name of some moral authority”.³⁵

From Nomenclatura to Clientelist Counter-Clientura

The blame for the Hungarian Socialist Party’s (MSZP) collapse in the 2010 elections might be, to a large extent, placed at the door of their former leader and Premier Ferenc Gyurcsány, whom the German weekly

³³ Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*, 156, 157.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 18. Author’s emphasis.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

Der Spiegel sarcastically dubbed “the honest liar”.³⁶ In an attempt to get his party colleagues’ backing for long-due reforms and austerity measures, Gyurcsány admitted that the socialists had “lied” to the electorate before the last elections. He was thus confirming what the opposition FIDESZ had been claiming all along, while at the same time emphasising the ruling party’s corruption. However, taking advantage of an absolute majority of 52% resulting in two-thirds of parliamentary seats, FIDESZ was now capable not only of introducing reforms by far more severe than those proposed by the MSZP, but also to practically rule in disregard of democratic practice and even of changing the Constitution.

It is not difficult to understand why the slogan of “healing” the post-communist political system by “sanitising out” the corrupt elements that have made it to top positions and act via “mafia” structures is so popular throughout East Central Europe. The privatisation process introduced (albeit with considerable differences) after the collapse of communism has been perceived and, to a great extent, continues to be viewed as signifying little else than (in David Stark’s brilliant formulation) a transition “from plan to clan” or what the Hungarian political scientist Attila Ágh terms as the transition “from nomenclatura to clientura”.³⁷ In other words, structures connected by an umbilical cord (from birth) with the former nomenclatura and benefitting from the experience accumulated through contacts with capitalist markets under the former regime are perceived as having either directly or *via* intermediaries laid hands on the capital they possessed *de facto* under the communist system, which turned into *de jure* property in post-communism. Neo-populists exploit the resentment of the “losers” of this process, who can be found among large masses affected by unemployment, loss of social security and uncertainty in face of the future, as well as among *lumpenintellectuals* owing their yesterday’s position to nothing but blind obedience to the regime. And they do so despite being

³⁶ Philip Wittrock, Bjorn Hengst, “Der erliche Lügner”, *Spiegel Online*, 19 September 2006, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,438001,00.html>.

³⁷ David Stark cited in Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Next?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 212; Attila Ágh, “From Nomenclatura to Clientura: The Emergence of the New Political Elite in East-Central Europe”, in *Stabilising Fragile Democracies: Comparing New Party Systems in Southern and Eastern Europe*, eds. Geoffrey Pridham, Paul G. Lewis (London: Routledge, 1996), 44-68; Stark cited in Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Next?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 212; Attila Ágh, “From Nomenclatura to Clientura: The Emergence of the New Political Elite in East-Central Europe”, in *Stabilising Fragile Democracies: Comparing New Party Systems in Southern and Eastern Europe*, eds. Geoffrey Pridham, Paul G. Lewis (London: Routledge, 1996), 44-68.

themselves often enough descendants of the same unholy alliance(s). Once in power, however, neo-populists will turn their backs on the new “*miserablés*”, who propelled them to the helm.

At the top, neo-populists and their coalition partners often prove to be no less corrupt. Former clienteles are replaced by *counter-clienteles*, i.e. by the new rulers’ own clientele networks (economic, but also political and cultural), and strange bedfellows make their appearance sharing among them nothing but the common effort to replace the first post-communist clientele networks. One thus witnesses the emergence of a particularly unselective counter-hegemony (in the Gramscian sense of the word) whose instrumental purpose (replacing the former rulers) is transformed into its only existential purpose (surviving in power and acquiring profit). This was the case of the Polish Republic’s Self-Defence (*Samoobrona Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej*), PiS’s coalition partner in Poland, or that of Fico’s Slovak ally, the National Slovak Party (*Slovenská národná strana*). Neo-populists may attempt to deflect the attention of the public opinion from this “more of the same” phenomenon by constantly referring to alleged conspiracies involving informal networks whose members are political adversaries, former and current members of the secret services, businessmen and straightforward criminals. Former Polish Premier Jarosław Kaczyński excels in the performance, using a specially designated word - the *układ* - for the alleged conspiracy.³⁸

In Russia, the shoes of the *układ* are filled by “oligarchs”, while in Romania - by “moguls”, “magnates” and (more recently) “jail-candidates”, as President Traian Băsescu likes to refer to his political opponents. In all three cases (Poland, Russia, and Romania), neo-populists use expressions designed to satisfy the collective mentality, providing the public at large with “ready-to-wear” pseudo-explanations for their own or group failure. The “decent people” have been deceived and dispossessed by the “evil forces” cunningly taking advantage of their naivety. Little does it matter that they themselves stem from precisely the same “forces of darkness”. Classical points in case are the Bulgarian Premier Boyko Borisov (a former body guard of the communist dictator Teodor Zhivkov), whose parliamentary survival is due to support from the extremist Ataka party, suspected of ties with the mafia; Vladimir Putin (whose KGB career is well known and who owes his political career to the ultra-clientelist Boris Yeltsin); and the Romanian President Traian Băsescu, apparently linked to

³⁸ Jacek Kohanowicz, “Polish politics at the beginning of the twenty-first century”, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-09-14-kochanowicz-en.html>

corruption scandals and a shady secret service past.³⁹

Finally, one might note that although corruption is a general post-communist malady, it particularly affects those states for which the “extraction point” from communism meant leaving behind a regime that had perpetuated pre-communist traditions of authoritarianism or absolutism, these communist regimes pertaining to what Herbert Kitschelt designates as “patrimonial communism”.⁴⁰

Neo-Populism as a “Movement”: The Case of Romania

The alienation of individuals from politics brought about by these post-communist developments increased volatility and made room for social movements. “Populists think in terms of ‘social movements’ rather than organising a party”, von Beyme notes.⁴¹ Schmitter also refers to populism in terms of “movements”, in his definition of the concept:

a political movement that draws its support across or with disregard for the lines of cleavage that are embodied in existing political formations and does so by focusing on the person of its leader who claims to be able to resolve a package of issues previously believed to be unattainable, incompatible or excluded.⁴²

Viewed from this perspective, it is significant that the term “party” is more and more frequently making room for that of “movement” or “union”, both of which imply that forces formerly divided by ideological vision or other cleavages can unify in the service of common social or national purposes. Putin’s political party calls itself *Yedinaya Rossiya* (Unified Russia). In Bulgaria, the party in power is called *Grazhdani za evropeisko razvitiie na Bulgariya* (Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria) and has been propelled to the top on the same wave of eliminating corruption dubbed by von Beyme as populism’s “third wave”. The first politician to have signalled this idiomatic shift in East Central Europe was Hungary’s Orbán. Sensing the ideological void left by the

³⁹ For Bănescu’s former ties with the *Securitate*, see the chapter entitled “Shadows of the Past” in Marius Oprea, *Adevărata față a lui Traian Bănescu* (Bucharest: Editura Jurnalul național, 2012), 139-176.

⁴⁰ Belonging to this category alongside Romania are Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Macedonia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine. See Herbert Kitschelt *et al.*, *Postcommunist Party Systems: Competition, Representation and Inter-Party Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1999), 19-42.

⁴¹ Klaus Von Beyme, “Populism...”, 28-29.

⁴² Philippe C. Schmitter, 6. Author’s emphasis.

conservative Hungarian Democratic Forum (the winner of the first post-communist free ballot) after its electoral collapse, Orbán left the Liberal International and redefined FIDESZ as a conservative political formation; no less importantly, he added the term “union” of civic forces to its denomination (*Magyar Polgári Szövetség*).

Since 2007, Romania has witnessed a similar drive. Just like Orbán in 1994, President Bănescu feels apparently unbound by any consistent ideological creed. In 1991, he started his political career on the Left as Minister of Transportation in the government headed by Petre Roman, the country’s first post-communist Prime Minister. Together with Roman, he then co-founded the Democratic Party, a formation that was, for some time, Romania’s only social-democrat formation associated to the Socialist International. In 2001, he turned his back on Roman and replaced him as President of the Democratic Party. Before the 2004 elections, Bănescu allied his formation with the National Liberal Party (PNL), creating the Justice and Truth Alliance, and winning that year’s presidential elections as its candidate. In 2005 he engineered a rift with the PNL, accusing his former allies of corruption and patronage of corruption and manoeuvring a split amongst the Liberals; a new political formation was created, calling itself the Democratic Liberal Party (PDL). That party would soon raise claims to being the sole “genuine representative of the Right” in Romania. Like in the case of Orbán’s FIDEZ, this move was followed by adherence to the European Popular Party in the EU Parliament. Remarkably, both before but particularly after the political divorce from the PNL, as well as during the electoral campaign for the 2009 presidential elections, which he won at a difference of a few thousand votes, Bănescu strove to depict himself as the champion of “the little man” against the “corrupt system”.⁴³

⁴³ One example would suffice for this purpose. Interviewed on Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in May 2007, when he was struggling (successfully, as it turned out) against the first attempt to impeach him, Bănescu told the interviewer: “I am not demanding a break-up between the business world and the political class. They cannot live without each other, and politicians always have to feel the pulse of the business community. What I want is the removal of the oligarch from politics. The oligarchs should not be confused with the business community. They are the few who have made fortunes thanks to facilities from the government, people who have become very rich and are now giving orders to politicians, those who are supported financially by the oligarchs and who have turned into the puppets of certain businessmen...This is what I demand: the people who have made fortunes thanks to the laws serving the interests of certain men, rather than the general public interest must go. These very rich people have to understand that they are not in control of political power, too. At this moment, the risk Romania is facing consists in the fact that decisions are made by people who are not elected

He had a few skeletons in his own closet. Among them was a ten-year old file on the questionable privatisation of Romania's merchant fleet that took place while Băsescu was Transportation Minister in the governments led by Roman and Theodor Stolojan in 1991-1992. That investigation was first launched in 1996, when Băsescu willingly resigned from Parliament and gave up his immunity in order to allow the investigation to run its course. The inquiry produced nothing, but it was reopened in 2003. Since, as president, he enjoys immunity from prosecution, the case must now await the end of his two five-year terms. There have also been questions about his having purchased a luxury house well below the market price during his tenure as Mayor of Bucharest (1997-2004) - and the president acknowledged that he might have acted improperly, though not illegally: he had simply taken advantage of the legislation enacted by the post-communist Party of Social Democracy in Romania, though at that point, he belonged to and led the rival Democratic Party.⁴⁴ When his current political rivals indulged in politicking, raising pensions by 43% on the eve of a referendum on his possible impeachment, Băsescu seemed to step into the shoes of "Mr Right", vetoing the legislation on the grounds that it would upset the budget. The Cabinet was quick to react, showing that the costs of the hike would be around 400 million euro, while Băsescu envisaged the purchase of a new presidential plane at an estimated cost of 300 million euro.⁴⁵ Before a second attempt to impeach Băsescu in 2012, the Social Democratic Party's (PSD) Premier Victor Ponta disclosed that while instituting harsh austerity measures that

and that its politicians act like monkeys reacting to the orders of very rich individuals". "Romania: Embattled President Takes on Political Elite", Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, <http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1076457.html> (Accessed 19 September 2008).

⁴⁴ On the allegations concerning his involvement in dubious corruption-tainted deals, cf. (among many others), Oprea, *passim*; WikiLeaks Romania, "Despre dosarul Flota. Dovada că Băsescu era implicat", (I-II) <http://www.romanialeaks.org/2010/12/wikileaks-romania-despre-dosarul-flota.html>, <http://www.romanialeaks.org/2011/03/wikileaks-romania-despre-dosarul-flota.html>, both accessed 7 November 2011; and for more recent allegations, Oana Stancu, "Motivele pentru care Băsescu riscă 12 ani de închisoare. Cum se închide cercul tranzacțiilor cu Cășuneanu", *Jurnalul național*, 30 October 2011, <http://www.jurnalul.ro/special/motivele-pentru-care-basescu-risca-12-ani-de-inchisoare-cum-se-inchide-cercul-tranzactiilor-cu-casuneanu-595129.htm>, accessed 8 November 2011.

⁴⁵ Zoltán Tibori Szabó, "The Dreams of the Romanian President", *Népszabadság*, 26 July 2007. English translation in <http://www.carpathianobserver.com/RomPres.html> (Accessed 14 December 2007).

involved drastic cuts in salaries, pensions and services in 2010, Băsescu had been preparing a luxurious Bucharest villa to serve as his residence at the end of his second term, the costs amounting to some 1.2 million euro, which had been a terrible burden for the country's choked budget.⁴⁶

The similarity between Băsescu and Orbán does not stop at the ideological pendulum. They also share the effort to overcome the narrow straightjacket of the “party”, with its implication that it represents only a *part* of the nation (this is also obvious in his habitual reference to “Romanians” rather than to the “citizens of Romania”). In 2007, after Parliament's impeachment attempt had failed to be ratified in a referendum, the journalist Traian Ungureanu, an MEP representing the PDL since 2009, wrote that this result had laid a founding stone for launching an anti-systemic *movement*:

The pro-Băsescu electorate - an anti-system electorate - includes sympathisers of all political parties and of different generations, beginning with exasperated veterans and ending with young invaders of the political scene... [It is an electorate that] is tied to Traian Băsescu and recognised as such by the society that has allied itself with the anti-system project. Society can now respond with a novel project, endorsed by Traian Băsescu: a large political movement, with a distinct name and a credible composition.⁴⁷

One should note the ambiguity of the word “system” as employed by Ungureanu. Its meaning shifts from a “democratic” to a “mafia” type of system, in the sense of the *uklad* as used by Kaczyński. It is the latter meaning that Ungureanu had in mind, but other intellectuals close to the president had no hesitation in venturing the idea that formal democracy would not suffer if all other political parties except a party of liberal-conservative extraction (read the PDL) were to disappear from the political scene. This was what Presidential Counsellor Cătălin Avramescu

⁴⁶ Mediafax, 25 July 2012. Băsescu denies it, demanding that Ponta show an order signed by him on the matter, in what sounds like the Holocaust deniers' demand that they be shown Hitler's order for the start of the Holocaust. Liviu Pop “Cu banii dați pe vila Dante, Băsescu putea să renoveze un penitenciar”, *Ziare.com*, <http://www.ziare.com/basescu/presedinte-suspendat/liviu-pop-cu-banii-dati-pe-vila-dante-basescu-putea-sa-renoveze-un-penitenciar-118105> (Accessed 5 August 2012).

⁴⁷ Traian Ungureanu, “Nașterea noului”, *Cotidianul*, 3 June 2007, http://www.cotidianul.ro/nasterea_noului-27139.html (Accessed 19 September 2008).

claimed⁴⁸ before being appointed Ambassador to Finland. The project of creating a movement with the PDL as its backbone seemed to have been abandoned for a few years, but was resuscitated in 2011 by another former Presidential Counsellor, the sociologist and pollster Sebastian Lăzăroiu, who had briefly served as Labour Minister that year. Lăzăroiu announced the intention to form the Popular Movement, whose task would be to facilitate the victory of the PDL in the parliamentary elections scheduled for late 2012 and the presidential elections due in 2014. The new movement was defined as “a coalition of civic movements and parties” or as “a joint project of political parties and people with a Rightist vision”. Lăzăroiu’s proposal had been coordinated by Băsescu, who had (at least) tacitly encouraged it. But since its author had also been critical of the nominal PDL President, Prime Minister Emil Boc, and of his ministerial team, Lăzăroiu lost his governmental portfolio and his proposal seemed to have been buried.⁴⁹

But it was so only nominally. Hand in hand with the debates about creating a “movement”, another debate was underway. At its centre was an envisaged constitutional reform. Just like in Hungary, where the second Orbán Government introduced a constitutional amendment stipulating a lower number of deputies from 386 to 200 starting with the next legislature,⁵⁰ the reform proposed by Băsescu and approved in a consultative (non-binding) referendum in 2009 envisaged cutting the number of Members of Parliament and abolishing the Upper House (the Senate) altogether. It also envisaged (though less prominently stated) enhancing the presidential prerogatives at the expense of the legislature,

⁴⁸ Cătălin Avramescu, “Democrație fără opoziție”, *Bursa*, 11 December 2007, http://www.bursa.ro/on-line/?s=cautare_arhiva&sr=cauta (Accessed 19 September 2008).

⁴⁹ Luminița Pîrvu, “Cum s-a transformat Albă ca Zăpada în Mișcarea Populară”, *HotNews*, 9 September 2011, <http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-politic-10080178-cum-transformat-alba-zapada-miscarea-populara-cine-rol-are-viitoare-structura-centru-dreapta.htm>; “Sebastian Lăzăroiu la interviurile Gândul: Fără Albă ca Zăpada, PDL va pierde și președintele, și guvernarea”, *Gândul*, 15 September 2011, <http://www.gandul.info/interviurile-gandul/sebastian-lazaroiu-la-interviurile-gandul-fara-alba-ca-zapada-pdl-va-pierde-si-presedintele-si-guvernarea-video-8754914>; “Emil Boc îl dă afară pe Sebastian Lăzăroiu din guvern. Ieri, Lăzăroiu critica dur PDL la Interviurile Gândul”, *Gândul*, 16 September 2011, <http://www.gandul.info/politica/emil-boc-il-da-afara-pe-sebastian-lazaroiu-din-guvern-ieri-lazaroiu-critica-dur-pdl-la-interviurile-gandul-8761341>, all accessed on 7 November 2011.

⁵⁰ See the Hungarian governmental site <http://www.kormany.hu/en/hungary/the-electoral-system-parliamentary-changes> (accessed 8 November 2011).

which was perceived by Bănescu as the *habitus* of corruption, inefficiency and the seat of hindrances against his intention - announced right after his 2004 victory - to become a “player” in politics rather than merely fulfil the role of a “mediator”, as stipulated in the current Constitution. Along these lines, Bănescu’s supporters from the ranks of the intelligentsia launched the concept of a “New Republic”. They were apparently inspired by the supporters of the late Polish President Lech Kaczyński, who had been calling for a “Fourth Republic” to replace the “Third Republic”, which had had the constitutional (and, in their eyes, compromising) premises for serving as the background for the transition.⁵¹ One must note that the East Central European neo-populists are not singular; as von Beyme has observed, in Italy the former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi advocated the founding of a “Second Republic”, while in Austria the late populist leader Jörg Heider often referred to the necessity of setting up a “Fourth Austrian Republic”.

None of these had in mind a “systemic” change; instead, they advocated a systemic *transformation* (*Umbau*, in the Austrian case) that would facilitate the existing democratic system becoming more efficient and facing the provocations of “post-democracy”. The final result would have been (or has already been) “an integration of populism into the system”.⁵² In the Romanian case, discussions revolved around a “Third Republic” and its inspirer (as he would eventually confirm himself⁵³) was the U.S. political scientist Vladimir Tismăneanu, who is well acquainted with the Polish political scene. Tismăneanu, who in 2006 was appointed by Bănescu to head a presidential commission on the crimes of the communist regime, is one of the most ardent intellectuals rallying behind the president. The Third Republic syntagm was resuscitated in 2011, now serving a different political end. It was meant to be a possible alternative to the Popular Movement Lăzăroiu had referred to as a coalition having the PDL at its centre. And instead of the Third Republic, it was now dubbed the New Republic. Lăzăroiu welcomed the idea and was in turn complemented by Mihail Neamțu, its young standard-bearer, in whom he

⁵¹ Ivan Krastev, “The Strange Death”, 58; Jacek Kochanowicz, “Right Turn: Polish Politics at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century”, *Eurozine* (2007), www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-09-14-kochanowicz-en-html, accessed 19 September 2008.

⁵² Klaus Von Beyme, “Populism...”, 34.

⁵³ See the interview with him in the weekly *Academia Catavencu*, 27 November 2007,

www.catavencu.ro/intern/interviu/vladimir_tismaneanu_nu_exista_scuza_pentru_n_aivitate_noastra_2.html, accessed 19 September 2008.

saw a personality “with leadership potential”.⁵⁴

Neamțu is a young theologian who used to be an admirer of the Legionary Movement (Romania’s fascist movement), or the Iron Guard.⁵⁵ He is also close to Tismăneanu, with whose support he became Scientific Director of the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile (IICMER), a position held between March–September 2011. At that time, the U.S.-based political scientist was the *de facto* leader of that institute. Numerous pundits drew attention to Neamțu’s flirtation with the Radical Right,⁵⁶ but neither the Platform nor the Manifesto of the New Republic appears to justify those presumptions. As a matter of fact, the genuine neo-Iron Guardists had taken distance from Neamțu.⁵⁷ Rather than following the instructions outlined by Iron Guard founder Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, he seems to have followed the indications from some “Manual of Academic and Political Patronage”.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Cf. Avram Eliza, “Lăzăroiu a salutat apariția platformei ‘Noua Republică’, care propune înnoirea dreptei”, *România liberă*, 9 October 2011, <http://www.romanialibera.ro/actualitate/politica/lazaroiu-a-salutat-aparitia-platformei-noua-republica-care-propune-innoirea-dreptei-240427.html>; Cristina Dobreanu, “Mihai Neamțu (Noua Republică): Sebastian Lăzăroiu are potențialul unui lider”, *România liberă*, 19 October 2011, <http://www.romanialibera.ro/exclusiv-rl/dezbateri/mihail-neamtu-noua-republica-sebastian-lazaroiu-are-potentialul-unui-lider-241620.html>, both accessed 7 November 2011.

⁵⁵ Cf. Carmen Mușat, “Căpitanul și umbra lui”, *Observator Cultural*, 596, 4 November 2011, http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Capitanul-si-umbra-lui*articleID_25994-articles_details.html, accessed 9 November 2011.

⁵⁶ Liviu Antonesei, “Mișcarea Populară și Noua Republică”, *Cotidianul*, 5 October 2011, <http://www.cotidianul.ro/miscarea-populara-si-noua-republica-159934/>; Alex. Cistelcan, “Manualul de luptă al Noii Republici. Adică, de ce trebuie, și urmează, să o luăm în gură de la fasciști”, *CriticAtac*, 5 October 2011, <http://www.criticatac.ro/10518/manualul-de-lupta-al-noii-republici-adica-de-ce-trebuie-si-urmeaza-sa-o-luam-in-gura-de-la-fascisti/>, both accessed 9 November 2011.

⁵⁷ Cf. Iulian Capsali, “Generația de mancurți cu Pata-Pleșu tata și muma”, *Victor Roncea Blog*, 26 August 2008, <http://roncea.ro/tag/neamtu/>, accessed 9 November 2011.

⁵⁸ When launching the first version of the New Republic Manifesto, Neamțu clumsily titled it “Manual for Struggle”, inviting a parallel with Codreanu’s book, which had been sub-titled “Manual for the Iron Guard”. See Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Cărticica șefului de Cuib. Manual al Gărzii de Fier, Obiectiv Legionar* 1.4 (October 2003), respectively Ciprian Domnișoru, “Cetățeni de dreapta, citiți cărticica pitpalacului de cuib!”, *VoxPublica*, 30 September 2011,

Nothing Neamțu had published in the past justified his appointment as IICMER Director except his close links to Tismăneanu. In fact, the IICMER itself is a typical example of “politicised academia”. Set up as an Institute for the Study of Communist Crimes in 2005 by the government headed by the PNL Premier Călin Popescu Tăriceanu and having as its Director the PNL member Marius Oprea, a historian who specialised in the study of the *Securitate* and its crimes, the institute underwent transformations once the Tăriceanu Cabinet was replaced by the one led by the PDL President Emil Boc. It was unified with the Institute for the Memory of the Romanian Exile and Tismăneanu was named President of its Scientific Council. Memory (and the lucrative positions associated with its research) was now safely monopolised by the PDL supporters.⁵⁹ Not for very long, as it turned out. In April 2012, following large-scale street protests, Boc was replaced as Prime Minister with the Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service, Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu. Not long after that, however, following a no-confidence vote in Parliament, Băsescu had to appoint the PSD leader Victor Ponta as Premier. Soon afterwards, Tismăneanu and his team had to make room for the appointees of the PNL (now in alliance with the PSD). They protested against this “politicisation”, which Tismăneanu saw as based on “aggressive revenge” and “brazen clientilism”, forgetting how he and his team had been installed at the head of the IICMER in the first place.⁶⁰ Oprea was back at the head of one of the institute’s departments.

To return to Neamțu, I believe the writer Vasile Ernu was correct when he stated that:

The theologian Mihai Neamțu’s problem is not the “legionary flame of youth”, but rather the compromise he has recently made. For example, I was surprised by his panegyric texts, genuine odes to President Băsescu. I do not believe an intellectual should ever indulge in writing such texts, no matter how much he supports and appreciates the incumbent president. For President Băsescu is *in power* and he no longer needs odes, but analytical

<http://voxpública.realitatea.net/politica-societate/cetateni-de-dreapta-cititi-cartica-pitpalacului-de-cuib-68713.html>, accessed 9 November 2011.

⁵⁹ Cf. “Politizarea IICMER”, *Observator cultural* 515 (15 March 2010), http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Politizarea-IICMER*articleID_23324-articles_details.html and the articles on this topic in the same issue. Accessed 9 November 2011.

⁶⁰ “Tismăneanu: Ponta și Antonescu sunt doar marionetele lui Iliescu, Năstase și Felix”, *Realitatea.net*, 24 May 2012, http://www.realitatea.net/tismaneanu-restaura-ia-autoritara-e-in-plina-defa-urare-nu-am-demisionat-cand-mi-a-fid-dorit_945726.html.

and critical texts. When Mihai Neamțu was writing those texts, he was in a leading position at the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of Exile (IICMER). Such odes cannot but question the New Republic's "independence". But the chief reproach I must make is linked to his position in the IICMER. On numerous occasions I have heard him speak about the need for a minimal state, for free competition and for meritocracy. Personally, I participated in a TV debate with him, where he preached on these themes at length. How can one possibly speak so when one finds oneself in a delicate position? Mihai Neamțu obtained the position of Scientific Director of the IICMER without competitive examination [as stipulated by the law]. More than that: without being an expert on recent history. In order for him to present himself as even remotely close to the position's requirements, the theologian Mihai Neamțu suddenly began to introduce himself as a "historian of ideas". It is common knowledge that he never wrote a scientific text in this field, hence he had no legitimacy and no authority to head this scientific institute. How was that possible? Was he a political appointee? Is the IICMER leadership at fault? What is certain is that in Romanian this is called imposture and clientilism. If he makes such compromises at the age of thirty-three, I am afraid that these will later take a far graver turn. As for the rest, I believe that the suspicion of his being just a phalanx of Cotroceni [the presidential palace] and of the PDL looms large over the New Republic.⁶¹

Indeed, Neamțu officially launched the New Republic as a political party in June 2012. But it very soon turned out that the party was little else than a satellite of the PDL, with Neamțu playing the role of cheer-leader at the demonstrations organised after Băsescu was suspended from office as president for the second time, in early July.⁶²

The New Republic's platform states that

The world is changing and the Romanians need a New Republic, one that is neither Gheorghiu-Dej's republic [Romania's first communist leader], nor the transition republic of [the first post-communist president] Ion Iliescu and Antonie Iorgovan [chief architect of Romania's Constitution of

⁶¹ Vasile Ernu, "Dreapta intelectuală conservatoare: de la ciine de pază la ciine de companie", *Critic Atac*, 19 October 2011, <http://www.criticatac.ro/10846/dreapta-intelectuala-conservatoare-de-la-ciine-de-paza-la-ciine-de-companie/>, Accessed 9 November 2011. Author's emphasis.

⁶² "Noul președinte al Partidului Noua Republică speră la 25 de locuri în Parlament", *Ziare.com*, <http://www.ziare.com/politica/partid/mihail-neamtu-ales-presedinte-al-partidului-noua-republica-1174732>; "Neamțu miting București", <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZOESU2aHo&list=UU67NwrOYhwBRSpvE6SOdsVQ&index=4&feature=plcp>. Both accessed 5 August 2012.

1991]. A New Republic of Romanians from all over the world.⁶³

The New Republic's ideological-social premises easily reveal an effort to mobilise the electorate behind policies favoured by Bănescu as president. The platform calls for "Political liberty to tell the truth in face of any oligarchic power", in a clear allusion to the confrontation between Parliament and the president; when the Platform was launched, the PDL had a shaky majority in Parliament, insufficient for passing "organic" laws that require special majorities and even less sufficient for approving the constitutional amendments favoured by Bănescu; it eventually lost that majority altogether. Alluding to the presidential constitutional proposal approved by the non-binding referendum of 2009, the platform called for "A New Republic where the law is the law and not subject to bargaining". It claimed that "the Romanians are defying the imposture of televisions" [a clear hint to those private channels owned by the so-called "moguls"] and lashed at the "cynicism of politicians who do little else than sow noise, intrigue, hate or discouragement around". The well-known "them vs. us" communist syndrome was thus resuscitated in typical neo-populist fashion, juxtaposing the alleged champions of "the honest many" with the corruption and rapaciousness of the few post-communist beneficiaries. In the Provisional Manifesto of the New Republic, it is similarly stated that "Romania must serve the interests of Romanians everywhere, and not the interests of the professional politicians' caste".⁶⁴

Ideologically, the New Republic belongs to the traditional Right. The Manifesto states that the "New Republic is a democratic platform that blends, in a coherent and visible action, the classical Liberal, Conservative and Christian-Democratic sensibilities", while emphasising that "in interwar Romania, the notion of the Right was compromised by anti-capitalist, anti-liberal, collectivist and anti-Semitic fascism; (from Ion Iliescu onward) the propaganda of the Left has sought to discourage the renaissance of a European and civilised Right".⁶⁵ It is also stated that

Socialism (be it even disguised as liberal-socialism) instigates to envy and class struggle. Capitalism creates work places and stability. A Rightist governance guarantees for Romania a positive image in the eyes of the free market. The Left leaves us at the mercy of usurers and of states with a

⁶³ "Crez politic: Noua Republică", 5 October 2011, <http://nouarepublica.ro/>, accessed 9 November 2011.

⁶⁴ "Noua Republică: Manifest (Provizoriu)", no date, <http://www.imondo.ro/blog/?p=4026>, accessed on 8 November 2011.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

communist past and present.⁶⁶

The Left, it is asserted in an opaque allusion to the economic austerity policies imposed by the Bănescu-Boc team, “would jettison Romania into an unending spiral of wasteful and reckless spending”. It is essential to emphasise that it is precisely against this background that the PDL and its supporters accuse their political rivals (the Socialist-Liberal or the USL Alliance) of “populism” (by which they mean promises that are economically unsustainable), thus confirming the “inflationist pejorative process” discussed above.

Unsurprisingly, the Manifesto would not miss the opportunity to tackle the typical East Central European neo-populist approach to “de-communisation”. I have dealt with some aspects of this problem elsewhere.⁶⁷ For the purpose of this presentation, suffice it to emphasise that as a result of the Tismăneanu Commission’s work, the president condemned, in a speech delivered before Parliament on 18 December 2006, the communist regime in Romania, branding it “illegal and criminal”.⁶⁸ That skyrocketed his popularity among a prominent segment of Romania’s intellectual elite, on whom he would be able to count for backing his proposals. Only a few among this intellectual segment sensed Bănescu’s opportunist turn-around gesture, given that just one year earlier, he had wondered in an interview whether condemning communism made sense at all,⁶⁹ triggering their wrath at that time. As the Professor of Sociology Liviu Antonesei fittingly observes,⁷⁰ demagoguery (an inherent trait of neo-populism) is not confined to consumption by the *vulgus* alone: “there is demagoguery for the more cultivated elites as well”.

Indeed, speaking on 24 November 2007 - when launching the book-

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Michael Shafir, “Nürnberg II? Mitul denazificării și utilizarea acestuia în martirologia competitivă Holocaust-Gulag”, *Caietele Echinoc* 13 (2007): 87-104 and “Raportul Tismăneanu. Note din public și din culise”, *Tribuna* 108 (2007), supplement *Tribuna documenta*, I-X.

⁶⁸ “Mesajul președintelui României, domnul Traian Bănescu, adresat Parlamentului cu prilejul prezentării Raportului Comisiei Prezidențiale pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România (Parlamentul României, 18 decembrie 2006)” in Comisia Prezidențială Pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România, *Raport Final* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2007), 11-18.

⁶⁹ See the interview published in *Revista* 22, 15.801 (13 July 2005) titled “Traian Bănescu: Alianța nu se va rupe”, <http://www.revista22.ro/alianța-nu-se-va-rupe-1875.html>.

⁷⁰ Liviu Antonesei, *Polis și paideia: șapte studii despre educație, cultură și politici educative* (Iași: Polirom, 1994), 35.

format of the Tismăneanu Commission's final version of the report - the philosopher Gabriel Liiceanu, Director of the Humanitas Publishing House, openly admitted that his support of Băseescu's campaign for enhancing the presidential at the expense of the parliamentary prerogatives was due to the president's having taken the lead in the process of condemning the communist past and lustrating the former communist officials. Liiceanu was a prominent member of a group of intellectuals whose positions might well be dubbed as "neo-populist elitism". Tismăneanu and his IICMER team were at the segment's forefront. Consequently, in the New Republic's Platform, one reads: "Under the dome of constitutional-democratic values, we need people and institutions that did not serve the structures of the Communist Party, people who did not lose their dignity serving the age-old *securitate*".⁷¹ The Manifesto states: "The Romanian Left has never distanced itself from communism in the moral or judicial sense. The New Republic piously respects the memory of the victims of all dictatorships, whether they pertain to the extreme Left or the extreme Right".⁷²

Many of the New Republic's statements seem to be little else than "communism in reverse", with a clear trace of specific local colour. As Alexandru Matei observes, the "pragmatic idealism" of the Manifesto was "precisely [like] the idealism invoked by Ceaușescu when he launched the syntagm 'revolutionary romanticism'". The Communist Party leader was cited by Matei to have stated: "Let us not forget that being a communist requires being a bit idealistic as well, not in the sense of an idealistic outlook on life, but in that of a romantic revolutionary perspective, as we used to call it in the past". Following this, Matei adds a sarcastic remark:

The citizen is told that although led by a party self-entitled as "Rightist", all his disappointments stem from the legacy of "the Left"; it is this legacy that "perpetuates bribery and theft" and that, above all, "pawns our future". Ceaușescu was thinking along the same lines: you must endure the cold and all manner of humiliations for a couple of years, while Romania's treasury fills up and Romania will be prosperous. Neamțu believes the idea is a good one; it is not by chance that he became a theologian. The present must be sacrificed on the altar of the future; this should be the attitude of the true citizen, whereas the Left tries to keep us locked in the fold of the present, as if we were some "consumer" animals. That is to say, the Right

⁷¹ "Crez politic: Noua Republică".

⁷² "Noua Republică: Manifest (Provizoriu)".

is eschatological, whereas the Left is present-minded.⁷³

Matei also observes that the slogan “We want a state where the free market awards labour and merit, not laziness and theft”, used by Neamțu in the platform, could be easily viewed as tantamount to the communist slogan “Neither work without bread, nor bread without work”. Or “He who does not work shall not eat”, I am tempted to add. However, the use of this slogan as well as of other slogans - such as “Romanians who are free and powerful are worthy of their country’s history. They do not beg privileges, but earn their bread by themselves” - aims at a radically different end: doing away with any vestiges of the social state. Just like their peers in Hungary (but not those in Poland, who mobilised the traditions of *Solidarność* to their side, displaying a sort of paternalism in defence of the workers who had been subjected to the effects of privatisation⁷⁴), the Romanian neo-populists incite to a polarisation of the society. On one side, they place the so-called “productive” forces, and on the other side, the “parasites”, a category including the weakest social segments: pensioners, the jobless, wage earners losing the right to collective contracts, as well as ethnic minorities, like the Roma. It is worth mentioning that in Slovakia, the neo-populist Fico Cabinet did not introduce such measures, but neither did it abolish them once in returned to power in April 2012.

Conclusions

In East Central Europe, neo-populism is a relatively recent phenomenon and our conclusions can therefore be only preliminary. If Minerva’s owl spreads its wings only at dusk, as Hegel told us, the political scientist must pack his suitcase and let the historian dwell there all by himself. But the costs of such gestures may be too high. It may be true that history is written only after its end, but only determinists (and I am not one of them) know that end *a priori*. The political scientists’ task is to outline tendencies. An ungrateful task that, on the one hand, always clashes with possibly affected interests, regardless of the accuracy or inaccuracy of the analysis, and on the other hand, inevitably reflects the analysts’ own values. Neutrality might exist in chemistry, but not in the social sciences.

⁷³ Alexandru Matei, “La muncă, nu la șuncă”, *Observator Cultural*, 596, 14 October 2011, http://www.observatorcultural.ro/La-munca-nu-la-sunca*articleID_26002-articles_details.html, accessed 9 November 2011.

⁷⁴ Cf. David Öst, *The Defeat of Solidarity. Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 60-120.

This fault may, however, be attenuated (though never fully eliminated) by pre-emptive sincerity. Consequently, I confess that my perspective reflects the values of social democracy; in my eyes, those values rest on two pillars: relative economic equality and political liberalism.

As it has been noted above, post-communist neo-populism is no longer focused on a single social class or a single ethnicity, as its populist predecessor had been. It is rather of a “catch-all” nature and, once again, unlike its forerunners, it is not anti-systemic in orientation. It espouses democracy and it supports the market economy; indeed, it is often the partisan of “wild capitalism” against the background of a so-called socialism that has fallen into disrepute due to the Communist Party’s dictatorship and monopoly over the means of production and commerce, that is to say a centrally planned economy. I have elsewhere noted that there exists a substantial difference between the populism of the Radical Right, resurrected after the collapse of communism (what I call the “radical return”⁷⁵), and neo-populism.

If the democratic system is no longer placed under a question mark in post-communist European societies by parties pretending to represent segments thereof (at least in official declarations), not the same holds true for perceptions of democracy itself. Back in 1982, William Riker drew a thick line between liberal democracy and populist democracy.⁷⁶ Regrettably, the distinction is largely ignored in current debates about “third wave” populism, although there are a few notable exceptions.⁷⁷ Daniel Smirnov and Ivan Krastev implicitly make the distinction by using “illiberal democracy” as a substitute for populist democracy.⁷⁸ Jacques Rupnik also notes that the East Central European neo-populists are not anti-democratic, but anti-liberal.⁷⁹

For these reasons, though necessary, the distinction between system and anti-system parties or movements is insufficient to cover all post-communist nuances. The distinction must be accompanied by one differentiating between *formal* procedures on one hand, and their radically

⁷⁵ Shafir, “Reds, Pinks, Blacks and Blues”.

⁷⁶ William Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1982).

⁷⁷ For example, Grigorij Mesežnikov *et. al*, *Populist Politics and Liberal Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe* (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 2008), www.ivo.sk/docs/publikacie/subory/Populist_politics.pdf, accessed 9 August 2008.

⁷⁸ Daniel Smilov, Ivan Krastev, “The Rise of Populism in Eastern Europe: Policy Paper”, in Mesežnikov *et. al.*, 7-13.

⁷⁹ Rupnik, “Populism in East Central Europe”.

different possible outcomes, on the other. This might be another way of saying that the road to Hell might be paved with apparently democratic intentions or at least with intentions apparently lacking undemocratic traits. Only after making this distinction might one proceed to answering the questions: “What kind of liberalism do the neo-populists embrace?” and “What kind of liberalism do they reject?”. The inevitable answer (from my own subjective perspective) is that the East Central European neo-populists are supporters of neo-liberal economics and reject democratic pluralism (sometimes in practice, at other times in open declarations). In other words, they promote politically *illiberal* values. As Krzysztof Jasiewicz shows in an analysis of the Polish case, in democratic systems the “threat... may come from the instrumental treatment of democratic procedures, from a perception that if the objective is noble, then any means to achieve it may be justified”. This approach, he adds, is reminiscent of the communist system, “which held up a utopian vision that was to be realised by any means necessary”. Thus, the amendment introduced by the Kaczyński brothers to the Lustration Law was “in full compliance with formal democratic procedure” but “violated several important principles of liberal-democratic jurisprudence and encroached on basic human and civil rights”.⁸⁰ According to the amended law, passed in 2006, no less than 700,000 persons occupying 53 influential positions, including positions in the private sector and in the academia, had to sign a declaration stating whether or not they had collaborated with the communist secret police. Prominent figures from Polish political life, among them former Premier Tadeusz Mazowiecki and former Foreign Affairs Minister Bronisław Geremek, both associated with the Solidarność Movement, ostentatiously refused to sign this statement. In 2007, the Constitutional Court ruled that some of the provisions in the new law and, in particular, the requirement on collaboration, contradicted the basic law.⁸¹ In post-2010 Hungary too, constitutional changes, and the new Press Law in particular, are considered by many analysts to respect formal democratic procedures, but to infringe democratic principles. As a matter of fact, the Press Law had to be partly amended in the wake of pressures exercised by the European Commission.⁸²

⁸⁰ Krzysztof Jasiewicz, “The Political Party Landscape”, *Journal of Democracy*, 18.4 (2007): 30, 31.

⁸¹ Lavinia Stan (coord.), *Prezentul trecutului recent. Lustrare și decommunizare în postcomunism* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2010), 170-171.

⁸² Matej Hruska, “Hungarian media law ‘turns clock back to Communism’, say press advocates”, *euobserver.com*, 5 August 2010, euobserver.com/843/3058;

Jasiewicz makes another important remark: “formal rules can be abused, suspended, or used selectively, often in the name of some commonly accepted value. *The short-term outcomes of such actions may even be desirable: the long term results, however, are likely to be harmful*”.⁸³ Indeed, they might prove to be harmful in unexpected, devious ways. In Romania, President Băsescu has walked the constitutional tightrope with remarkable skill. The appointment of the Tăriceanu Cabinet in 2004 was at the limit of legality, for the rival alliance led by the PSD had in fact won the parliamentary elections. He engineered the defection of the Humanist Party from its alliance with the PSD, then described that move as a “shameful compromise” and turned against the party’s leader, Senator Dan Voiculescu, the chief embodiment of what he would eventually designate as “moguls”. The Humanists were ousted from the ruling coalition, following which Băsescu turned against Premier Tăriceanu, whom he accused of condoning corruption. Ahead of the 2008 parliamentary elections, Băsescu and his PDL were claiming that teachers and other governmental employees’ salaries can be raised by as much as 50%, and that it was Tăriceanu’s PNL that refused to do so in order to protect the Mafioso interests.

Yet once in power after the elections, not only did the president’s supporters refuse to implement their promises, but in 2010 they introduced the harsh austerity measures that would lead to the first vote of no-confidence in the Romanian post-communist parliamentary history. At that point, the PSD, the PNL and the Conservative Party (as the former Humanists have been called since 2005) formed a parliamentary majority that backed the Mayor of Sibiu, Klaus Johannis (a German ethnic) for the premiership. Again walking the constitutional tightrope, Băsescu refused to do so, engineering defections from the opposition parties and reappointing Boc as Premier. Using a constitutional provision called the “governmental assumption of responsibility” no less than 16 times, as well as a huge number of governmental ordinances, the Boc Cabinet bypassed

Freedom House, “Proposed Hungarian Media Law would threaten freedom”, 13 December 2011,

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=70&release=1292>;

Erich Follath, Cristoph Schult, “Hungary’s ‘Orbanisation’ Is Worrying Europe”, *Spiegel Online*, 28 December 2010,

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,736706,00.html><http://>;

Judit Bayer, “Why Hungary’s Media Law is unacceptable despite amendments”, *MediaLaws*, 15 March 2011, <http://www.medialaws.eu/why-hungarys-media-law-is-still-unacceptable-despite-amendments/>, all accessed on 10 November 2011.

⁸³ Jasiewicz, “The Political Party Landscape”, 30. Emphasis mine.

Parliament, practically ruling by decrees. Eventually, however, the opposition beat Băsescu at his own game. It, too, engineered defections, and after securing a majority in the legislature in 2012, it forced the president to appoint Ponta as Premier. It was now the turn of the new coalition to walk the constitutional tightrope, turning Băsescu's arsenal of formal democratic procedures against him. In less than two months, it ousted the PDL-appointed people's Ombudsman to make sure that no one could contest its decision before the Constitutional Court; it then ousted the two PDL speakers of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate; and finally, for the second time, it suspended the president from office, proposing that his dismissal should be ratified by referendum. The Constitutional Court, to which Băsescu and the PDL appealed describing these developments as a "parliamentary coup d'état", ruled that the moves had been legal. Indeed, they had taken place within the country's *formal* letter of democratic law. But it is doubtful whether they were also conducted in a democratic *spirit*. Băsescu himself had sown the wind of formality, the USL harvested it, but Romania as a whole was the loser.

Rupnik emphasises that "If democracy means popular legitimacy and constitutionalism" (the separation of powers), then the populists [or rather the neo-populists, I would add] accept the former and reject the latter".⁸⁴ Not always, as we shall soon see. In other words, according to the French political scientist, in neo-populist perceptions, constitutional norms and representative democracy occupy (at best) second place *vis-à-vis* the legitimacy conferred by the popular vote. Unless it affects them, I hasten to add. When Băsescu was crushed by a popular vote in 2012, with nearly 89% voting for impeachment and only some 11% supporting him to continue in office (in 2007, 74% had voted against impeachment) the president escaped invalidation due to a lack of quorum (50% plus one vote), as slightly more than 46% of eligible voters had cast a ballot.⁸⁵ After having declared that he would refuse to remain in office if the popular vote dismissed him, Băsescu and his party (the PDL) engineered an electoral boycott to ensure that the quorum was not met.⁸⁶ The president will quite obviously interpret the quorum or its absence as it best suits his purpose.

⁸⁴ Rupnik, "Populism in East Central Europe".

⁸⁵ Biroul Electoral Central, "Comunicat privind rezultatele referendumului național din data de 29 iulie 2012 pentru demiterea președintelui României", <http://www.becreferendum2012.ro/DOCUMENTE%20BEC/Rezultate/Rezultate%20finale.pdf>

⁸⁶ "Romanian opposition urges boycott of impeachment referendum", *EurActiv*, 24 July 2012, <http://www.euractiv.com/elections/basescu-supporters-boycott-impea-news-514096>, accessed 6 August 2012.

He interpreted the rejection of his impeachment in 2007 as signifying popular support for the policies he had promoted, although this issue was not subjected to the plebiscite.⁸⁷ When the electorate was offered the choice on one of these issues (the electoral system change) in a referendum held jointly with the November 2007 elections for the EU Parliament, the plebiscite did not meet the quorum and was invalidated. On that occasion, only 26% expressed an opinion,⁸⁸ no less than 71% of those questioned in a poll held before the referendum answered that they understood nothing of what they were supposed to decide upon.⁸⁹ Yet Bănescu would time and time again claim that 80% of Romanians had backed his proposal to reform the political class, although the 80% amounted to less than one-quarter of the eligible voters. He used again the instrument of a referendum in 2009, this time linking the plebiscite with the first round of the parliamentary elections held on 22 November. These elections stirred a higher interest than the elections for European Parliament and the plebiscite was validated, even though the turnout was just above the quorum (50.1%). The voters approved changing the bicameral parliamentary legislature into a single-chamber parliament (77.7%) and cutting the number of deputies to a maximum of 300 (88.8%). But, as mentioned before, this referendum was non-binding. Notwithstanding all this, the president and his supporters would claim that Parliament infringed the law by not proceeding to immediately revise the Constitution.

In fact, several presidential statements seem to indicate that in Bănescu's view, all the three state powers are subordinated to himself as chief of state. In a TV interview from July 2011, he said in reference to judicial decisions of which he disapproved:

There are three powers: the executive, the legislative, and the judicial. All

⁸⁷ Mentioned by the President was the introduction of a Lustration Law (which he had previously rejected, cf. note 70) and the change of the electoral system from proportional to majoritarian with two rounds of voting. At that time, the law did not include a minimum turnover quorum, which was later changed to ensure impeachment would become more difficult. And indeed, the overwhelming 2012 popular vote for Bănescu's impeachment was invalidated by the Constitutional Court on a "failure to meet the quorum" basis. See "Traian Bănescu revine la Cotroceni", *Observator cultural*, no. 637, 17 August 2012, http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Traian-Basescu-revine-la-Cotroceni*articleID_27445-articles_details.html (accessed 21 August 2012).

⁸⁸ Mediafax, 28 November 2007.

⁸⁹ "De ce nu s-au dus românii la vot", *Evenimentul zilei*, 28 November 2008, www.express.ro/articole/detalii-articol/469787/, accessed 19 December 2008.

three have, at the top, the one called the head of state. They cannot hinder the head of state from expressing his opinions, all the more so since they correctly reflect some realities in the [system of] justice.

He was, he said, “fed up with those dusty judges”.⁹⁰ That would not hinder Bănescu from telling the voters, before the July 2012 referendum on his impeachment, that he was the sole guarantor of an independent judiciary and that the “conspiracy *putsch*” was not directed against his person, but rather at “subordinating the judicial system” to the same Mafioso interests.

Daniel Smirnov and Ivan Krastev use the notions of *soft* and *hard* populism to differentiate among populist initiatives for constitutional change. *Soft* populism “is a challenge to the existing system of representation and mainly to the existing party system”, whereas *hard* populism “is characterised by more sensitive threats to the constitutional framework: it challenges not only the existing structure of representation but also some of the fundamental principles of liberal democracy, such as the protection of individual and minority rights”. Traian Bănescu and the Bulgarian Prime Minister Borisov, I incline to believe, belong to the *soft* category (one that “thrives on popular perceptions that they form cartels and are alienated from the people, that they are too ideological”), while Orbán and Jarosław Kaczyński are rather *hard* populists. Nonetheless, the two political scientists write that “the dividing line between the ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ versions of populism is fluid and ever changing”.⁹¹ Indeed. Smilov and Krastev placed Orbán in the *soft* category before he went on to change the constitution; after that “feat”, he could not be left among the *softs*, for that would have meant that the political scientists were untrue to their own taxonomy. This fluidity, it must be added, can also be due to the analyst’s own subjectivity, for we tend to be more severe on those we perceive as negatively affecting our personal fate. Finally, the same fluidity might be due to changes in the behaviour of the object of our scrutiny, in the sense of either a radicalisation or a softening of that behaviour, depending on the distance between the neo-populist politician and the “supreme moment of truth” or election day. Referring to the Polish case, Rupnik notes:

The populist challenge to the modernising political and technocratic elite... comes in two guises: as an anti-corruption drive, on one hand, and as “de-communisation” on the other. In Poland we find an interesting combination

⁹⁰ “Traian Bănescu critică CSM: Birocraţ prăfuiţ. M-am săturat de sensibilităţile lor excesive”, Antena 3, 26 July 2011, <http://www.antena3.ro/politica/traian-basescu-critica-csm-birocrati-prafuiti-m-am-saturat-de-sensibilitatile-lor-excesive-131794.html>, accessed 10 November 2011.

⁹¹ Smilov and Krastev, “The Rise of Populism...”, 9.

of the two with the denunciation of the “original sin” of the 1989 compromise between a moderate dissident elite and a moderate communist elite which allowed a non-violent exit from communism. This moral and political mistake has allegedly allowed the ex-communists to convert their political power into economic power and slide into the widespread corruption that has accompanied the privatisation process. Hence the need for a two-pronged attack: anti-corruption and de-communisation, which is a leitmotif of the Kaczyński twins, Orbán, and to some extent of the right-wing (ODS) party in Prague.⁹²

Bănescu and his PDL have pushed Romania into the neo-populist club by borrowing some aspects from the Poles and other aspects from the Hungarians. Unfortunately, it is a none-too-selective club that includes many other former communist states east of Romania. More worrisome is that the future does not look brighter either within or outside the country’s borders. Inside the frontiers, counter neo-populism is a poor justification that cannot last long. As for outside, Smilov and Krastev attribute the generalised tendency of the rising neo-populism in the region to several factors. Among the most important are the falling trust in the liberal parties, to which I would add the tendencies of the “established” parties to transform themselves into “movements” and the political adversaries’ response of setting up counter-movements. In short, one deals with a general slide into *illiberalism*, which can hardly be stopped by (politically) liberal parties, whose programmes “come dangerously close to each other; as a result, voters fail to see any differences among them” and the “motivation for voting for parties which have accepted all the... [democratic] constraints is low”.⁹³ As long as joining the NATO or the EU was still a target ahead, the liberal parties still had a platform capable of mobilising large segments of the electorate. Ironically, since that purpose was achieved, EU membership has brought more benefits to the illiberal than to the liberal formations. Membership to a powerful “family”, such as the People’s Party, has generated defence for FIDESZ against accusations of democratic infringement and an offensive against the USL after replacing the PDL and launching the second attempt to impeach Bănescu.

Against the background of trans-party corruption, before joining the NATO and the EU, “Ordinary citizens experienced transitional democracies as regimes where voters could change governments, but could not change policies”, since there was a general consensus on that objective.⁹⁴ In the post-accession phase, the liberal electorate is demotivated

⁹² Rupnik, “Populism in East Central Europe”.

⁹³ Smilov and Krastev, “The Rise of Populism...”, 10.

⁹⁴ Krastev, “The Strange Death”, 59.

and tends to be absent at the ballot. Even in the best case scenario, “the better off (the ‘winners’ of the transition) are only motivated to vote for liberal parties when they perceive a serious danger from a ‘hard populist’ but remain unmoved in the case of challenges from a ‘soft populist’”.⁹⁵ The two authors conclude that post-communist parties “are the weakest link” in liberal-democratic structures. While parties in “consolidated democracies are usually expected to be stable and programmatic”, the success of populist parties in Central and Eastern Europe has “dealt a death blow to many ‘established’ parties of the transition period and has brought to the fore a host of new players”. Not only has populism not made political parties more programmatic, “but on the contrary: it has almost made the concept ‘party program’ devoid of meaning”. One is entitled to ask whether the region is not witnessing a phenomenon of the “deconsolidation of democracy”.⁹⁶

The earlier assumption that democratic consolidation is cumulative and linear - that there can never be a “backlash” once democratic take-off has been left behind - appears to be one of transition’s fallacies.⁹⁷ Furthermore, “there is no evidence suggesting that populism in the region is a temporary aberration from a certain vision of ‘normality’”.⁹⁸ It may be true that “Central and East Europeans have not turned their back on democracy”, as Alina Mungiu-Pippidi writes. Electorates seem rather “fed up with the behaviour of the improvised political class that has governed the region since 1990”. But it is precisely this aspect that makes neo-populism an ever-growing possibility. For “Either this political class will reform itself so as to become more accountable, or else voters are bound to turn to new alternatives”.⁹⁹ If the “transitions” in the region turn out to have been merely from the “people’s democracies” of the late 1940s to the “democratic populism” of the 2000s, the results might be rather disappointing. Noticing that in countries with a far longer democratic tradition (Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Italy, or France), populism (with or without the “neo” prefix) or support for the Radical Right is also on rise can be no consolation. The causes might be different there, but the outcomes are similar and invite to drawing parallels. East Central Europe,

⁹⁵ Smilov and Krastev, “The Rise of Populism...”, 10.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10. For the distinction between “clientilist and patronage reward” parties and “programmatic parties”, see Kitschelt *et al.*, *Postcommunist Party Systems...*, 47-48.

⁹⁷ Jacques Rupnik, “From Democracy Fatigue to Populist Backlash”, *Journal of Democracy* 18.4 (2007): 19.

⁹⁸ Smilov and Krastev, “The Rise of Populism...”, 10.

⁹⁹ Mungiu-Pippidi, 11.

however, should not indulge in *Schadenfreude* without remembering the old Latin dictum: *quod licet Iovi, non licet bovi*.

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OLD AND NEW POPULISM IN RUSSIAN POLITICS

MARA MORINI

Introduction

In comparative politics, the term “populism” is widely used in political discourse to characterise a specific style of making politics in many contemporary systems. Its origins can be traced to social movements, political strategies and actions, ideological schemes, or mass protests. It has been labelled as a psychological attitude, a rhetorical style, an ideology, or a leadership style. This concept has gradually received a negative connotation, mainly with reference to the leaders’ behaviour that ignores the citizens’ needs.¹ Consequently, the notion of populism is a clear example of conceptual stretching in the social sciences: it has paved the way to different definitions and properties, generating theoretical or empirical vagueness and ambiguity when applied to compare different political systems or leadership styles.²

This aspect is also due to the absence of a common definition that may progressively enlarge its semantic borders and determine the proliferation of synonyms.³ Nevertheless, as Tarchi points out, there is a *fundamentum divisionis* of this concept that allows for capturing its large number of manifestations⁴: the appeal to “the people”, which becomes the main political actor in the process of political representation. As Alan Knight

¹ See Marco Tarchi, *L'Italia populista. Dal qualunquismo ai girotondi* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2003), 7-13.

² See Giovanni Sartori, *Logica, metodo e linguaggio nelle scienze sociali* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2011).

³ See Flavio Chiapponi, “Populismo russo e populismo americano”. *Studi in onore di Mario Stoppino (1935-2001)*, ed. Giorgio Fedel (Milano: Giuffrè, 2005), 307-339. For instance, Yves Meny, et Yves Surel, *Par le peuple, pour le peuple* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2000).

⁴ See Marco Tarchi, *L'Italia populista. Dal qualunquismo ai girotondi* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2003).

emphasises, the concept of populism is used in the scientific literature due to its explanatory and descriptive elements.⁵ Populism can be represented as a box made of many elements that range from charismatic leadership, the cult of personality, authoritarianism, contempt towards representative regimes, or corporativism to nationalism or xenophobia. In the 21st century, it is possible to distinguish three main conceptions - leaders, people and consensus - that can be related to the new kind of populism emerging on the grounds of broad media consumption and electoral marketing.⁶

Even those who aspire to a political career do not need to have previous experience in the field and can rely on the means of “pop politics” to acquire it.⁷ This situation tends to develop in those political systems that are characterised by a shift from political manifestos to candidates, i.e. where charisma prevails over political parties, programmes and policies. Some theoretical hypotheses on the emergence of populist leaders and movements underline the fact that the weaknesses of political structures - unable to represent electoral demands and solve political, social and economic problems - have paved the way to the personalisation of politics with charismatic people being prone to become heroes of the “homeland”.

For instance, the Italian dictionary provides four different definitions of the concept “populism”: 1) political behaviour or movement which celebrates the roles and values of the popular classes; 2) demagogic behaviour oriented towards satisfying people’s expectations; 3) in arts, the depiction of people as a positive ethical model; 4) a Russian movement of the second half of the 18th century. While the first definition concerns the category “populism-people” and the will to represent social classes, the second one is often used by the media and political communication with a negative meaning, describing populists who criticise the elites’ actions and declare themselves to be part of “the people”.

A populist leader relies on specific feelings such as fear, envy, selfishness and, to a certain extent, on racism and nationalism: populists are often demagogues who make use of techniques of persuasion and manipulate the public opinion in order to get wider support. This image is

⁵ For a different perspective, see Alan Knight, “Populism and Neopopulism in Latin America, especially Mexico”, *Journal of Latin American Studies* (1998): 223-248.

⁶ Gianpietro Mazzoleni and Anna Sfondini, *Politica pop. Da “Porta a Porta” a “L’Isola dei Famosi”* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2009).

⁷ *Ibid.*

widespread in many classifications.⁸ The large number of definitions makes it difficult to summarise them into a single conception, as Pierre-André Taguieff⁹ suggests when talking about “a political style applied to different ideological features”.¹⁰ What is important to analyse is to what extent populism is based on political perceptions in contrast with those of the *polity*. If we consider the people and its community as the core of power, it is not possible to separate it from the idea of a democratic system, as best described by the word *demos*.

The reason why populism cannot be considered strongly included in a specific ideology is due to the role that people have in political systems, in social communities, i.e. different languages, ethnicities, religions. Against such a background, an analytical description of the different stages in the development of populism will be provided: from a *bottom-up* approach, referred to in the classical definition of populism, to a *top-down* feature, developed in those political systems with a low quality level of democracy and with large social inequality, where populism can be perceived as a tool of social control rather than as an incentive to mobilisation. Another relevant aspect, especially in the Russian case, is that populism may be seen as a façade mechanism of recruitment and legitimisation for authoritarian regimes. Shifting from the cultural legacies of the past to modern populism, the Russian case represents both the origins of such a phenomenon and an interesting approach to the analysis of a concept that still has relevance in social and political life.

The Historiographical Debate: How Many Populisms?

A journey back to the origins of Russian populism entails describing a specific historical period characterised by agricultural backwardness and the abolition of slavery, implemented by the Tsar Alexander II's edict of 1864, which *de facto* improved the farmers' social status and standard of living but, at the same time, paved the way to mass protests and the first reactions of those who later established the “old” Russian populism. In Russia, the terms “populism” (*narodnichestvo*) and “populist” (*narodnik*) appeared in 1870¹¹ to indicate those people who defended the farmers'

⁸ Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (London: Junction Books, 1981).

⁹ Pierre-André Taguieff, *L'illusion populiste* (Paris: Berg, 2002).

¹⁰ Yves Meny (2001) points out that “populism without ideology” can be related to the Russian case of the late 18th century, as well as to Fascism and Nazism during the very first stages of their legitimisation.

¹¹ The origins of both terms - *narodnichestvo* and *narodnik* - were discussed by Richard Pipes in 1964 to show how this phenomenon gained shape between 1875-

needs and rights; this idea was expressed in different political thoughts - of the democrats, radicals, socialists, communists and nihilists - and went against the idea of European socialism.¹² Nevertheless, it is with the so-called movement "Go to the People", supported by students in the countryside between 1874 and 1877, that the term "populism" spread throughout the country as a political action against the Russian Empire.

Russian populism also emerged in cultural clubs, founded by the young aristocrats and the bourgeoisie (*raznocsintsy*) who were used to discussing the political, economic and social situation of the country. Reaching its highest expression in the second half of the 18th century, when Tsar Alexander II sent out his "Statute of Farmers Released from Slavery", guaranteeing their freedom as well as the distribution of lands through specific provisions that allowed farmers to redeem their social status, those people did not approve of these rules and moved to the rural suburbs to become part of and settle down in the rural community. From such a perspective, the attempt to mobilise the Russian people can be analysed following the revolutionary messages and goals they wanted to achieve.¹³ In September 1861, Michael Lavronic Michajlov and Nikolaj Vasilevic Selgunov published a "samizdat" in London, speaking to the "Young Generation" in order to create revolutionary clubs fighting against the autocratic regime and to form a popular representation that was aimed at implementing the new legislation on farmers. Moreover, the so-called "Young Russia"¹⁴ was created to organise the peasant revolution

1878, after the failure of "Go to the People" movement and before the terroristic attempt of *Narodnaja Volija* by M. Natanson and A. Michajlov, who considered that the *intelligentsija* ought to listen to the people's needs and implement a rural socialism.

¹² See Richard Pipes, "Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Inquiry", *Slavic Review* (1964): 441-458.

¹³ See Giovanna Cigliano, "Il populismo russo", *Ricerche di storia politica* (2004): 407-424.

¹⁴ The political values and ideology of 19th century reached the Russian political setting thanks to the political and human relationship between Giuseppe Mazzini and Aleksandr Ivanovič Herzen. They met in London in September 1849 and shared the experience of political situations characterised by oppression and the struggle for freedom within their own countries, realising the need to set up political organisations in order to face the political regimes of those times. Mazzini, in particular, wished to build up the "International Union of Democratic Forces"; this idea was supported by Herzen, who tried to spread the ideas and values of his Italian friend throughout Russia. Mazzini also tried to support the idea of implementing a "Giovine Russia", but failed; nevertheless, he was able to suggest to Aleksandr Sleptsov and Nikolaj Serno-Solov'evic that they should

previously led by Stenka Razin and Pugacev.¹⁵ In November 1861, the brothers Nikolaj and Aleksandr Solovevic, together with Vasilij Slepzov, founded the illegal association “Zemlja i Volja” (Land and Freedom) that was supported by both Chernyshevsky in Russia and Herzen in London. The poet Olgarev defended the manifesto labelled “What Do People Need?” and in his article on the journal *The Bell*, he claimed that the old feudal slavery had been substituted by a new one.

Herzen, one of the main “founding fathers” in the debate between Slavophiles and Westerners, was against any sort of despotism. Interested in European socialism, he saw it as the only way to awake a minority of the thinking people. According to this idea, populism created the basis of Russian socialism and the so-called *obscina* - the rural community - the cell of peasant life based on the principle of solidarity and self-government that would have fought against the development of the bourgeoisie and would have strengthened the European idea of individual freedom. In 1862, Chernyshevsky was arrested and deported to Siberia, where he wrote the novel *What Is to Be Done?*, which soon became a landmark for all revolutionaries.¹⁶ Threats from the political authorities made both Slavophiles and Liberals cautious about the new reforms, while some of them believed that Russians were not mature enough to approve a parliamentary system and a new constitution. In 1876, the first revolutionary organisation *Zemlja i Volja* was established, and several years later, the terroristic trend *Narodnaja Volja* organised Tsar Alexander’s murder - a tragic event that led to the end of the Russian revolutionary populist movement. This short description of the first steps of Russian populism is necessary to make some preliminary remarks on the characteristics, meanings and actions of contemporary populism.

In the Western European countries, Franco Venturi was the first author to study Russian populism. In 1952, his work *Russian Populism* advanced the idea that the birth of the populist movement could be traced back to

create the underground association “Zemlja and Volja”, with the aim of involving people in this political attempt. Tolstoy was also fascinated by Mazzini’s book *The Duties of Man* because of his political ideas on freedom, people, women, God and education, and decided to have the book translated into Russian by Lev Nikorof. See Vittorio Strada, *Lenin, Stalin, Putin. Studi su comunismo e postcomunismo* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2011).

¹⁵ See Franco Venturi, *Il populismo russo. Herzen, Bakunin, Cernysevskij* (Torino, 1972).

¹⁶ Lenin’s work *What Is to Be Done?* was inspired by Chernyshevsky, who was considered one of the most important thinkers of the revolutionary movement from the very beginning of the 19th century.

1848, being associated with Herzen, who identified the community goal of the Russian farmers as a collective action towards the cultural, social, and moral revival of Russia. The populist movement based on the community (*obscina*) emphasised the idea of social justice as the basis of rural development and modernisation in the country, as opposed to the idea of the socialist emancipation of the working classes. Most important is the fact that Russian populism represented a lost opportunity, due to the Tsar's death and the Bolsheviks' roles in achieving the democratic and liberal development of the Russian socialist movement.¹⁷ This situation was probably provoked by the different trends within populism: starting from the liberal and aristocratic (Herzen) to the anarchic (Bakunin), and including the democratic-utopian (Belinskij), nihilist (Chernyshevsky and Dobroliubov), new-Jacobin (Tkacev), international (Lavrov) and terrorist (Nechayev).

This fragmentation shifted the political perspective to create a Russian social-democracy. A "romantic populism" emerged on the path towards the rise of Bolshevism:

In 1917 Lenin's concessions to the revolutionary socialists who claimed a democratic and localised self-government based on the farmers' communities were temporary: the Bolshevik regime paved the way to a new sort of power that the populists strongly condemned and that the heirs of the socialist-revolutionary party had tried to oppose since they had started to be annihilated.¹⁸

Consequently, the populist theory of Russia's comet "orbit", different from that of Europe, had its logic in Marx's work. Some elements of continuity with the populist past emerged: the extreme right of the Union of Russians, the adoption of the agricultural programme by Lenin in 1917, the anti-bureaucratic strategies adopted by Stalin and the purges of the 1930s.¹⁹ The similarity between populism and Stalinism is also confirmed in the *Dizionario di politica* Utet: "it is true that Russian populism had been weakening since the Tsarist government tried to implement a prompt policy of industrialisation, but its dismissal determined the failure of such

¹⁷ In Vittorio Strada's opinion, it was a movement that provided a consistent contribution to the Russian and Leninist revolutionary movement, even if there are elements of continuity and discontinuity with the past.

¹⁸ See Vittorio Strada, *Lenin, Stalin, Putin. Studi su comunismo e postcomunismo*. (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2011), 266.

¹⁹ Guy Hermet, *Les populismes dans le monde* (Paris: Fayard, 2001).

policy until Stalin's period".²⁰ In a comparative perspective, McRae and Canovan argue that there are some similarities with American populism in terms of the *locus* - the agricultural movements.²¹ Like in Tocqueville's works and in the Slavophile Kireevskij's thought, this ambivalence between Russian and American populism is based on the young people and national contiguity.

By contrast, Hermet and Wiles consider that Russian populism was the expression of an elite movement led by an intellectual oligarchy with different ideologies in comparison with the American mass protests. In political science, populism or *narodnichestvo*²² has always been considered a peculiar case because it is not part of representative and constitutional political systems.²³ Nevertheless, in historical and comparative perspectives, the role and dynamic of Russian populism have some common elements with other types of populism. As Taggart points out, the first type of Russian populism has acquired a romantic connotation due to its image as a legendary homeland that is still relevant to those who regret the Russian Empire and Stalin.²⁴

Hermet also considers that *narodnichestvo* is a particular type of populism rooted in the 19th century, which emerged between 1840-1880 and cannot, therefore, be compared with successor types of populism. The Russian populists (*narodniki*) had paranoid, violent, selfish behaviours, like those portrayed by Dostoyevsky in *Demons*. The only aspect of continuity with the past is the relationship between Slavophiles or nationalists. After the breakdown of the Soviet Union, it is not surprising that new proto-parties and movements emphasised the idea of going to the people in order to pave the way to a new kind of liberalisation and democratisation. Populism is a social and political aspect both in countries that have embarked on the road to democratisation and in those political systems that are characterised by low levels of democracy. In Russia, the

²⁰ Ludovico Incisa (1983, 836-837) makes a distinction between the revolutionary populism of Stalin and Castro, the national-populism of fascist movements and pluralistic and democratic populism (*Jacksonian democracy*).

²¹ See Donald MacRae, "Populism as an Ideology". In *Populism. Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, eds. Ghiță Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson. 1969). See also Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (London: Junction Books, 1981).

²² The *Intelligencija*, oriented to the West, appeared just before the term *narodnichestvo*. *Narodnik* is the man who comes from the *intelligencija* and tries to raise the people's awareness towards becoming part of an *obscina*.

²³ Yves Meny, et Yves Surel, *Par le peuple, pour le peuple* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2000).

²⁴ Paul Taggart, *Il populismo* (Troina Aperta, 2000).

evolution of populism has found other references in the anti-Semitic and patriotic movement labelled *Pamjat*, in Yeltsin's populist government, in Zuganov's national-Bolshevism, in Lebed and Zhirinovskij's leadership, as well as in the new Tsar Putin and in his anti-Western foreign policy.

The Legacies of Slavophile Populism

In Walicki's opinion, Russian populism cannot be considered as a mere reaction of the *intelligentsija* based on the Marxist feature of socialism. In fact, there are three works that best describe the story behind this phenomenon between 1868 and 1870. Lavrov's *Historical Letters*, Mikhaylovsky's *What Is Progress?*, and Bervi-Flerovskij's *The Situation of the Working Class in Russia* reflect the East/West, Asia/Europe, Centre/Periphery debate.²⁵ Following the disintegration of the USSR, identity has become an important issue on the political agenda due to the strong disagreement among the elites. The Westerners believe that Russia's foreign policy should rely on the conception that Western countries ought to be its allies in order to strengthen relations of economic and international cooperation. A different approach belongs to those who claim that Russia should be the "bridge" between East and West. However, the new populist camp supports Russia's political and economic autonomy and favours the use of energy resources to improve its international status. The anti-Western approach (neo-imperialism) is based on ideas of a conspiracy against Russia and proposes the creation of a counterweight to the USA, to lead the opposition of the Third World against the West.

The relationship between the European Union (EU) and its largest neighbour, the Russian Federation, has been marked by many ups and downs; the Russian side is characterised by a diversity of opinions and strategies among the elites. Political discussions over the past decade have provided numerous examples from Russian history related to the "Russian imperialism syndrome", "pan-Slavonic solidarity" or "organic hostility to the West", all being used to explain contemporary situations. However, the Russian citizens pay little attention to the situation abroad and are concerned with domestic problems. Only extraordinary events, such as the Kosovo conflict, the NATO enlargement, the European reaction to the

²⁵ Teodor Shanin (1983) states that Russian populism is the "main indigenous and revolutionary tradition of Russia", based on "the conception of the uniqueness of Slavophilia and Russia's supremacy rather than the liberal-capitalistic conception and the breakdown of the Tsarist State. See also: Vittorio Strada, *Lenin, Stalin, Putin. Studi su comunismo e postcomunismo* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2011).

crises in Chechnya, and the anti-terrorist operations in Afghanistan can scale this barrier of indifference. In March 2007, a survey was conducted to assess the position of the Russian public opinion on the country's role in the world. Among the respondents, 38% said that Russia was part of Europe and in the 21st century their ties would strengthen, 45% answered that Russia was not part of Europe due to its Eastern cultural heritage, and 17% had difficulty answering that question.²⁶ These numbers show that most Russians find a lot of differences between Europe and their country. At the same time, they have little information about Asia and can provide neither similarities nor differences between Russia and Asia. Closeness to Asia is often rooted in poor understanding of what Asian societies look like. As Vladimir Popov noted:

Before I visited Asia, I thought Russia was not Europe. But from Asia, it becomes clear that Russia is a part of Europe. The difference between Russia and Europe seems negligible when compared to the difference between China and Europe, be it Holland or Russia.²⁷

Consequently, Russia appears to be neither Europe in the Western understanding, nor Asia. "Russia is another Europe" may be an alternative. One of the most important shifts in the Russian society is the emergence of a new type of personality - "modern Russian European" (*russky evropeets*).²⁸ These people cannot define their European identity but their behaviour resembles the European one. They follow the Western standards of living and systems of values. Based on the latter, civic conscience and political positions have begun to take shape. It is difficult to estimate the number of such "Russian Europeans", but they have not yet become the moving force of reforms. Following these changes, one may say that Russia is gradually becoming *another Europe*. However, starting in 2000, the political strategy adopted by the Kremlin administration has significantly changed towards a more hegemonic role played by Russia in the world. Since the beginning of his term in office, Putin has clearly expressed his intention to make Russia stronger and more stable in order to

²⁶ Another question referred to the European countries' attitude towards Russia. 49% of the respondents underlined the fact that Russia's strength worried European countries, which were not interested in the development and prosperity of Russia; 34% were of the opposite opinion and 17% of the respondents found this difficult to answer.

²⁷ See Nikolaj Kaveshnikov, "EU-Russia Relations: How to Overcome the Deadlock of Mutual Misunderstanding?", *lee Document*, 29 (2003):10.

²⁸ Viktor Kantor, "Fenomen russkogo evropeytza", *Nauchnye doklady*, Moscow, MONF, IMEMO, 101 (1999).

give birth to a new Era. The concept of realism has been brought back to life and demands a focus on national development, avoiding isolationism and confrontation in foreign policy. At the same time, one key goal is the strengthening of traditional Russian values such as patriotism, “*derzhavnost*” (Russia as a great power), statism, social solidarity, and a strong state.

This political strategy has paved the way to a different attitude in the relationships with the West. Under Medvedev’s presidency, the efforts to implement foreign and domestic policies were strongly supported by Putin as Prime Minister, who announced his will to create a “Euroasian Union” of the former Soviet Republics along the lines of the EU. Such a political bloc was thought to become an effective bridge between Europe and the Asia-Pacific region without re-creating the Soviet Union. In fact, the new Union was supposed to be built on the grounds of freedom, democracy, and the market economy.²⁹ With Putin as head of state, the Slavophile approach is likely to shape the political debates at both mass and elite levels in Russia. The following section explains how the neo-populism illustrated by Putin’s style of leadership is taking Russia on a path towards a more authoritarian political system, in contrast with the “democratic populism” promoted by Yeltsin.

Neo-Populist Putinism

The main connection between old and new populism in Russia is the nationalist issue; this has been one of the main goals of Putin’s government and political campaign. This is quite understandable looking at the legacies of the pre-communist period (the Russian Empire, anti-Western national identity) that paved the way to the emergence of a right radicalism represented by Zhirinovskij’s Liberal-Democratic Party (imperial nationalism) and the social nationalism of Zyuganov’s Communist Party at the beginning of the 1990s. The creation of a red/brown political cleavage had an important effect in post-communist countries during the process of democratisation, and the legacy of the past, such as the Russian Empire, complicated the formation of national identity.³⁰ A clear example of such a situation is the matter of national pride, strongly emphasised by Zhirinovskij to object to the EU and NATO enlargement towards the East;

²⁹ See “Report: Putin Calls for New ‘Euroasian Union’ of Former Soviet Countries”, *Moscow Times*, 5 Oct 2011.

³⁰ The complex ethnic and national issues are best described by the different terms used in the Russian language: *russkij* (Russian in the ethnical meaning) and *rossijskij* (Russian based on the territorial and state stay).

this was supported by other political parties during the electoral campaign in the 1993 legislative elections.

The impact of the USSR's dissolution and the economic and structural crises have led to the formation of social cleavages on which new political parties have shaped their ideological and programmatic discourse. The crisis of the Soviet regime determined at least three main social conflicts: nostalgic/ reformist, centre/ periphery, and Slavophiles/ Westernisers. The different aspects of the Russian democratic transition (state-building, economic transition, and nation-building) clearly highlight social, economic, and political matters related to the nostalgic dimension (national communists) in contrast with the new liberal political actors (pro-democratic regime). This dichotomy has always characterised the political competition between the "party of power" supporting the Kremlin (centre) and its main opponent, Zyuganov's Communist Party (periphery). During Putin's presidency, another important political and cultural aspect developed in foreign policy: the shift from Soviet patriotism towards contemporary Russian nationalism. This is why nationalist, populist, and xenophobic political groups emerged and started expressing views that opposed the values of contemporary democracies.

Among the first group it is possible to identify the Liberal-Democratic Party, claiming the need to give more power to each Russian Republic and alter the number to 40-50 self-government units without considering nationality.³¹ Its populist leader Zhirinovskij³² was able to attract voters and he was successful in the 1993 Duma elections. He continues to be one of the main protagonists in the Russian political debates thanks to his strong personality and promises to different social strata: salary raises for pensioners and soldiers, better social conditions, putting a stop to aids to foreign countries, and the fight against corruption³³ and crime. Zhirinovskij is against Western policies and he often uses a populist discourse to attract voters. He represents the idea of a strong Soviet patriotism, like General Lebed, who in 1995 founded his political party the Congress of Russian Communities, getting almost 5% and becoming a presidential candidate in the following year with 14.6% of the votes. In 1998, Lebed was elected Governor of Krasnojarsk and he died in a helicopter crash in the Sayani Mountains in 2002.

³¹ See Vladimir Zhyrinovsky, *My Struggle* (New York: Barricade Books Inc, 1996), 42.

³² Zhyrinovsky's oratory, psychological and cultural models are reminiscent of some propagandistic aspects of the right-wing dictatorships of the 20th century.

³³ *Izvestija*, 5 April (1994): 2.

Apart from many political groups that have not been represented in the parliamentary arena after the process of liberalisation, the new Russian populism is characterised by strong charismatic leadership. This type of populism has always been supported by the Russian elites whose main dilemma has been how to emphasise the idea of a strong leader, capable of modernising Russia, and how to get an important role in the international setting. The last 20 years of Russian leadership illustrate that an extensive system of patronage and corruption developed during Yeltsin's presidency. Putin's election brought to the fore his idea of law and order, backed by popular support despite the negative consequences for political pluralism and democratic procedures. The attempt to introduce order, political and economic stability in Russia has been translated into a new "ideology" (Putinism), able to strengthen the relationship between politics and people. However, it is also an element of continuity with the past. The starting point of this new "ideology to the people" rather than "by the people" dates back to the legacies of Soviet history, such as patriotism, claims related to the Soviet power, political order and the idea of a nation able to leave "Russia's doors shut on the Soviet Union's sins".³⁴ Putin's Russia brings evidence for the charismatic myth and the personalisation of politics, supported by the Russian media. The limitation of political fragmentation between 1993 and 2003 has strengthened Putin's image, who implemented political laws that paved the way to the birth and development of the United Russia Party. The weak opposition was not capable of mobilising voters after 70 years of Soviet experience. Pasquino argues that the societal structure facilitated the rise of populism "in a disorganised society with weak institutions, which act wrongly and where the crisis of political representation is evident, and where anti-politics and the widespread feeling of collective anxiety exist".³⁵

The Russian populist leaders, especially Putin, have often appealed to myths of the past and new deals for the future in order to get more votes and maintain their power. Longitudinal data from the *Wciom* Research Institute in Moscow show that Putin has always kept high levels of trust (more than 70%) with the exception of the 2011 legislative elections (around 43%).³⁶ The surprising street demonstrations of the Putin era against the widely perceived election fraud in the December 2011 Duma elections may be an indication of an awakening Russian society. However, for a large segment of the population, the "president of hope" (who

³⁴ See Richard Sakwa, "Putin's Leadership: Character and Consequences", *Europe-Asia Studies* (2008): 879-897.

³⁵ See Gianfranco Pasquino, "Polverone populista", *La Rivista dei Libri*. 2004: 19.

³⁶ Data available at the website: <http://wciom.ru>, on 24th October 2011.

imposes order, restores legality, and establishes justice) is still relevant, especially for those in need of a strong leader.

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