



Democratic Efficacy and the Varieties of Populism in Europe

Appendix to Working Paper: "Impacts of Populism on the Party Systems "

National Case Studies

**Hungary, Poland, Greece, Germany, Spain, Czech Republic,
France and Slovakia**

September 2021

Author(s)

Martin Baloge (University of Lorraine, UL), Gábor Dobos (Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest), Nicolas Hubé (UL), Hendrik Hüning (University of Hamburg), Michal Kubát (Charles University, Prague), Artur Lipiński (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan), Jaume Magre, Lluís Medir, Esther Pano (University of Barcelona, UB), Andrej Školkay (School of Communication and Media, Bratislava), Dimitri A. Sotiropoulos, Manos Tsatsanis (Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy, Athens)

Contact Information

contact@demos.tk.hu



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 822590. Any dissemination of results here presented reflects only the consortium's view. The Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

Table of Contents

Hungary: The Impact of Populism on the Party System (2000-2020).....	1
Poland: The Impact of Populism on the Party System (2000-2020).....	14
Impact of Populism on the Greek party system	26
The AfD - Filling two representation gaps in the electorate but standing apart in Parliament.....	37
The Party System in Spain After the Populist Explosion: A New Cycle?.....	47
The Impact of Populism on the Party System 2000–20. Czech Republic: From Quasi-Polarized to True Polarized Pluralism.....	60
Polarization or Structural effect of the Fifth Republic? Populist parties in the French Party System.....	72
Impact of Populism on the Party System in Slovakia 2000–2020	83

Hungary: The Impact of Populism on the Party System (2000-2020)

Gábor Dobos

Introduction

Regarding populist parties, Hungarian politics serves as a special case: its party system has two mainstream populist parties (Fidesz and Jobbik), one of them is the dominant governing force, the other is the leading opposition party since 2010.

In the following, I analyze the populist parties of the Hungarian party system, in line with the framework of the DEMOS WP 6.3. First, I will briefly describe the Hungarian politics of the last two decades, then I will introduce the two mainstream populist parties of the party system and their political career path as populist parties. I will argue that both parties are characterized by ideological populism, i.e. they best fit to the ideational approach to populism research (Mudde 2017). I will present how Fidesz and Jobbik followed opposite trajectories: Fidesz's politics became more radical in the last decade, while Jobbik discarded several populist elements of its politics to move to a centrist position from its earlier right-wing radical stance. In the next section, I will test the four hypotheses (representation gap, contagion, polarization, elective affinity coalition) about the populist parties' impact on the party system. Finally, I use Sartori's typology to describe the Hungarian party system, arguing that it is a predominant party system, with high level of polarization and low level of fragmentation.

Political Context

Hungarian Party Politics (2000-2020)

Hungarian national politics in the 2000s could be characterized as a "two-bloc" system, in which the competition took place between party alliances: a social democratic liberal left-wing bloc led by the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) and a conservative right-wing bloc led by the Fidesz. Following the political (2006) and economic (2008) crises, the left-wing bloc collapsed and disintegrated into several parties (MSZP, Democratic Coalition, Together), while new parties emerged (Jobbik and Politics Can Be Different in 2009, Dialogue for Hungary in 2013 and Momentum in 2017). After the collapse of the left-wing bloc, Fidesz could become

the dominant political party, winning three consecutive parliamentary elections with two-thirds majority (2010, 2014, 2018).

With its constitutive power, the party restructured the political system and implemented a series of comprehensive reforms in every segment of the political system (see Körösenyi et al. 2020) – including the electoral system. The new system hinders the fragmented opposition to cooperate in candidate nomination. Since 2010, opposition parties try to forge unity and form a viable alliance against the governing party.¹ In the 2010-18 period, the main question for them was whether the left-wing parties should form a common front against Fidesz with the (formerly radical) right-wing Jobbik.

Populist Parties in Hungary

As Mudde (2016: 26) points out, Hungary offers a unique case for populism, since the governing party Fidesz and Jobbik, a main opposition party, could have been both considered populist for the past 10-15 years. However, as for the content of their populism, the two parties followed opposite trajectories since the mid-2000s.

Fidesz was established as a liberal party during the democratic transition in 1989-1990, and gradually shifted into a right-wing conservative populist position (see Körösenyi 2017). After its 2002 electoral defeat, the party took a populist turn, it started to use populist mobilization techniques and tried to establish connection with its voters through astroturf/top-down movements. In opposition, Fidesz used anti-elitist and materialist rhetoric (e.g. its 2006 electoral campaign slogan was: “We live worse off than 4 years ago”), then continued to use this approach as a governing party from 2010 (e.g. with price regulation on utility costs and with extra taxes on multinational corporations). Although, regarding the anti-elitism, Fidesz’s post-2010 populism does not entirely fit into the establishment versus the people dichotomy: rhetoric does not contrast the interest of the Hungarian people with those of the Hungarian elite but pits the Hungarian community against an always changing group of elites (the political elite of the European Union, international financial organizations, György Soros, multinational and foreign companies, NGOs, etc. – and their local representatives, the cosmopolitan, foreign-minded leftists and liberals).

Jobbik was established as a radical conservative-nationalist party in 2003 and quickly showed populist features in its politics. In its first 10 years, the party was an ultra-nationalist

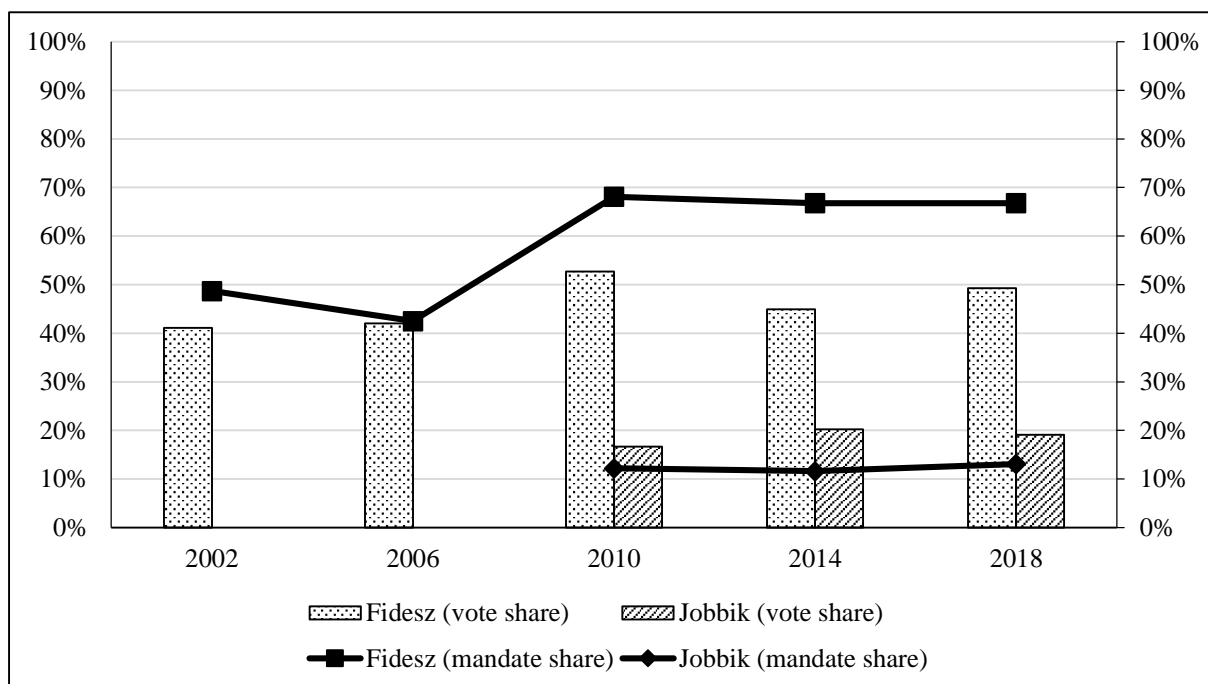
¹ The first relative success of this venture (after three lost general elections and two local electoral defeats) were the local elections in 2019.

and xenophobic actor of the Hungarian politics pursuing a strong anti-Roma agenda and law and order rhetoric. After 2014, Jobbik tried to shift its position to a more centrist one and eased its radical tone, partly because Fidesz took its agenda with the thematization of the migration crisis. From 2015, Fidesz is a more radical nationalist party, while Jobbik took a turn to a materialist anti-elitist populism targeted at Viktor Orbán's government. Following the migration crisis in 2015, Jobbik turned away from racist discourse as the governing party Fidesz adopted and took over its xenophobic rhetoric (Palonen 2018: 317). Jobbik tried to shift its ideological position to a more centrist direction and to transform Jobbik into a catch-all party. To be able to beat Fidesz at the next election, the right-wing Jobbik was willing to form an electoral association with the left-wing opposition parties. In the 2018 general election campaign, Jobbik still used anti-elitist rhetoric (e.g. one of its slogans was: "you are working, they [Fidesz] are stealing"), but eased its nationalist and anti-Roma attitudes. After the 2018 electoral loss, Jobbik could not hold its centrist position and lost its direction.

In sum, both Fidesz and Jobbik can be characterized as populist parties in an ideological approach. Their ideological profiles show overlaps (nationalism, paternalism, conservatism). The main difference between these two parties is that Fidesz was able to build a catch-all party upon these ideologies, while Jobbik was able to be successful only until it tried to reach the more radical right-wing voters. Obviously, their different positions in the party system result in different manifestations of populism. As a governing party, Fidesz cannot be anti-elitist in a conventional sense, but it managed to project its anti-elitism to foreign actors (EU, Soros) and its Hungarian agents (the opposition parties), while Jobbik tried to use anti-elitism against the government.

Overviewing Fidesz and Jobbik's electoral performance (Figure 1), one can argue that populist parties are quite successful in Hungarian politics. After its populist turn following the 2002 electoral defeat, Fidesz could maintain its vote share level in 2006 (although the disproportionality of the electoral system caused a mandate share loss). In the 2006-2010 period, Fidesz' strategy was to blame the left-wing parties for the country's state (even for the effects of the 2008 economic crisis) and to promise to hold the left-wing political elite to account. After its collapse, the left-wing parties could not stabilize their positions, and Fidesz won the 2010 general election with a two-thirds majority. Since then, the populist Fidesz is the most dominant political party in Hungary.

Figure 1. Populist parties' vote and mandate share at parliamentary elections (%)



Note: In view of the electoral reform in 2013, vote shares are counted as vote shares of territorial lists for the 2002-2010 elections and as vote shares of national lists for the 2014-2018 elections.

Source: own calculation based on the data of National Election Office (<https://www.valasztas.hu/web/national-election-office>).

Jobbik ran for parliamentary seats first in 2006, but it was the minor party of the electoral alliance consisting of Jobbik and the right-wing radical, ultranationalist MIÉP. The alliance failed to obtain 5 percent of the votes and could not get any mandates, but in the next electoral cycle, Jobbik could become the unquestionable leader of the radical side and it practically eliminated MIÉP. In 2010, Jobbik became the second largest opposition party of the parliament. Thus, circa 80 percent of the parliamentary mandates were held by populist parties in the 2010-2020 period. Although Fidesz still has two-thirds majority and Jobbik still has roughly one-fifth of the mandates in the parliament following the 2018 election, Jobbik can be characterized as a populist party to a lesser extent now. This shift can be explained either as Jobbik had to take a turn to a less radical rhetoric to be compatible with the other opposition parties (to form a common front against Fidesz) or as the Fidesz could take over the radical rhetoric and the radical voters of Jobbik.

The Role of Populist Parties in the Party System

Representation gap hypothesis: do populist parties pursue a strategy that is designed to exploit gaps of representation by means of emphasizing new or re-vitalizing old conflicts?

In the case of Jobbik, the representation gap hypothesis clearly fits. Jobbik's good electoral performance is certainly connected to the fact that the party was able to thematize Roma issue. Although anti-Roma sentiments were apparent in the Hungarian politics even in the Communist era, mainstream parties of the democratic Hungary did not try to thematize the question, even though ca. 20 percent of the parties' voters showed xenophobic attitudes in the 1990s (Csepeli et al. 1998). The only exception could be MIÉP, but on the one hand, this party could be considered rather as an anti-Semitic party and on the other hand, it was never be able to gain more than 3.6 percent of the parliamentary seats (in 1998). As Karácsony and Róna (2010) argues, the secret of Jobbik's success was that the party was able to bring the Roma question into the political agenda. While the mainstream media avoided the issue, Jobbik could reach the radical right voters on alternative platforms (social media, video platforms, radical news portals). Jobbik was so successful in this venture that the term "gypsy crime" reached even the consumers of the mainstream media. Karácsony and Róna point out that the Jobbik's effort paired with the quite high level of prejudice in the Hungarian society resulted in an increasing support of the party by 2009.

In the case of Fidesz, the thematization of the migrant crisis can be considered as the exploitation of the representation gap. In 2015, refugees from the Middle-East arrived in the European Union – one of the main access points was the Serbian-Hungarian border. Although the crisis mostly ended by 2017, Fidesz successfully forged political capital from the events. The Orbán government quickly created a link between migration and terrorism, unemployment and crime and tried to strengthen the xenophobic attitudes of the Hungarian society by using the term "economic/illegal migrants" instead of "asylum seekers" (Barna and Koltai 2019). As the crisis caused conflicts between the leaders of the European Union, Fidesz used this issue as a tool of its anti-EU (more precisely: anti-Brussels) politics: according to the party's communication, György Soros has a plan to settle migrants in Hungary, and the aim of his agents (the opposition parties and even the European Union's elite) is to carry out this plan. Although the migration crisis is no longer a visible threat in Hungary, Fidesz succeeded to maintain its narrative since then, which helped the party to achieve its third national election victory in 2018 with a two-thirds majority in the parliament. Migration is still the key element

of Fidesz's political strategy, even during the COVID pandemic of 2020.² Thus, the way the Fidesz handles the question of migration is clearly an example of re-vitalizing the xenophobic attitudes of the Hungarian society.

Contagion hypothesis: is a rise of populist parties accompanied with an overall diffusion of populist ideas in the policy agenda of non-populist parties?

In the Hungarian case, the spread of populist ideas can be described rather as a process between populist parties. While non-populist parties did not adopt the law and order, anti-elitist or xenophobic (either anti-Roma or anti-migrant) rhetoric of the populist parties, an “idea transfer” can be observed from Jobbik to Fidesz. Jobbik's electoral success in 2010 showed that many voters are receptive to xenophobic ideas, which could serve as an example for Fidesz to thematize the migrant crisis, knowing that the fear from “non-Hungarians” can mobilize the voters. Ultimately, this idea transfer can be the reason why Jobbik does not really fit into the “populist” category any more (see above).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Fidesz had an attempt in early 2020 to take over Jobbik's law and order rhetoric and its anti-Roma attitudes. In 2019, the dominance of Fidesz somewhat weakened with the relative success of the joint opposition at the local elections, so the governing party sought new elements for its agenda. Thus, the Orbán government announced in February 2020, that a new national consultation³ will be held about the “allegedly” segregation of Roma children, about judicial corruption and about the “unblushingly” high compensation of convicts (for the poor prison conditions). However, this agenda-setting attempt was quickly dropped with the emergence of the pandemic.

Polarization hypothesis: does a rise of populist parties make party systems more acutely polarized?

Although clear causal connection cannot be drawn between them, the rise of populist parties is clearly accompanied by the increase of polarization. The latter phenomenon can be observed at the party level and the voter level alike. To measure polarization, I use the left-right division of

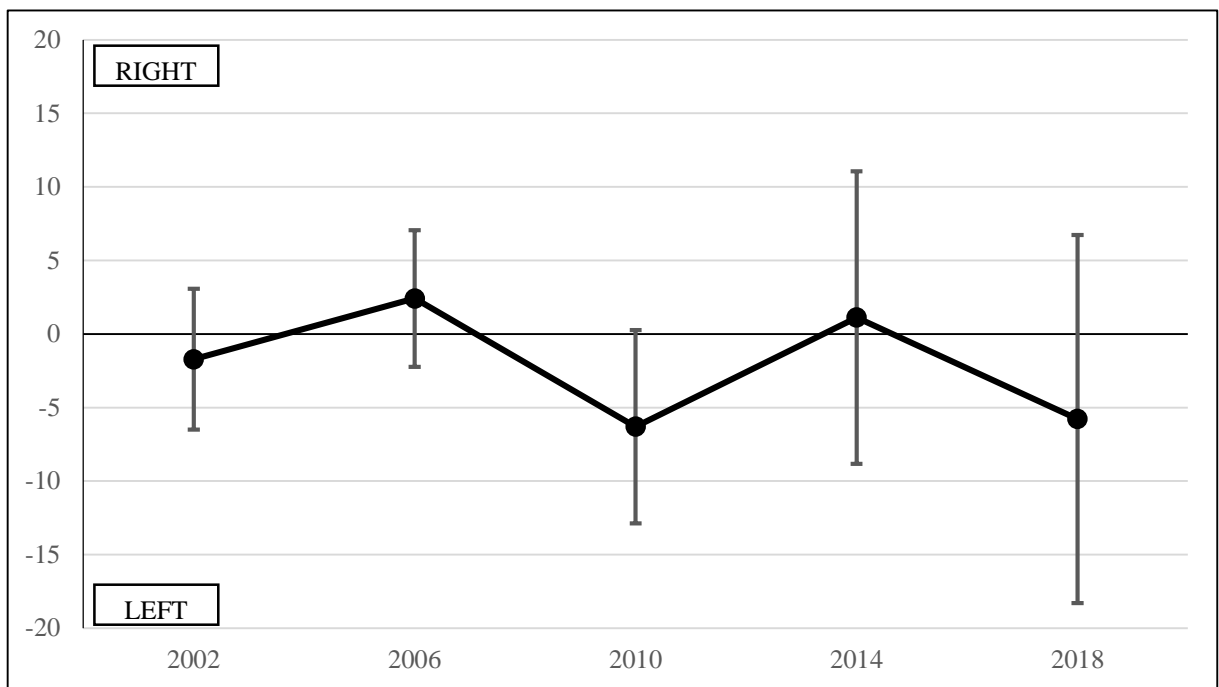
² In its communication, Fidesz tried to connect the problems of migration and the pandemic, claiming that migrants would bring the virus to Hungary.

³ The instrument of national consultation (“nemzeti konzultáció”) is populist mobilization technique of the Orbán government. The national consultations consist of a ‘personal’ letter from Viktor Orbán and (often leading) questions about the Orbán cabinet's policies and reforms. In the 2010-2020 period, Fidesz engaged citizens through national consultations in several prominent cases (Körösnéyi 2017: 20).

parties and voters. Figure 2 shows the party polarization based on the electoral manifestos of parliamentary parties (collected and coded by the Manifesto project).⁴ While the average left-right position varies around the zero value (following the composition changes of the parliament), the constant increase of standard deviation (i.e. how the polarization values of the parties spread out) is remarkable. The polarization level of the parliament has increased from 9.6 to 25.0 between 2002 and 2018 and the increase is especially high in the time period (2010-2018) when Fidesz was the dominant party and Jobbik became a parliamentary party.

⁴Since 2010, Fidesz has not issued party manifesto, thus for 2014 and 2018, the coders used Orbán speeches and interviews to identify Fidesz's position on the left-right spectrum.

Figure 2. Polarization at party level (parliamentary parties)



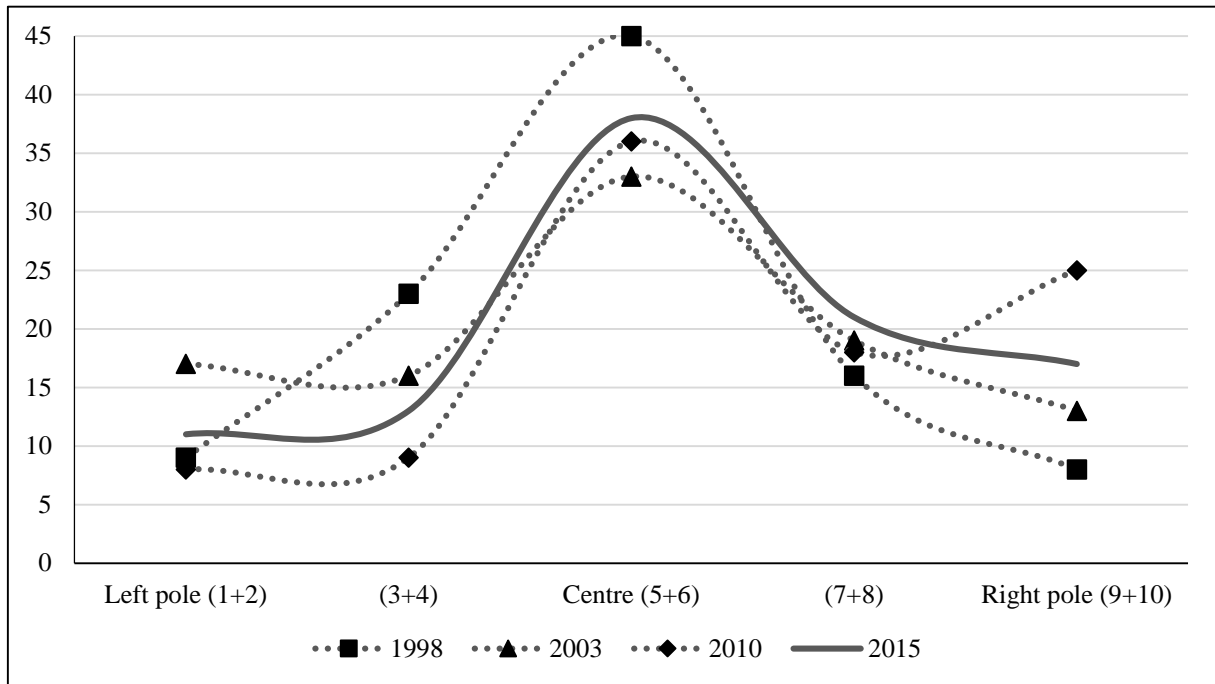
Standard deviation values: 9.6 (2002); 9.3 (2006); 13.2 (2010); 19.9 (2014); 25.0 (2018).

Source: own calculation based on the data of Manifesto Project (<https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/>)

At the level of voters, a similar trend can be observed based on the results of surveys (Figure 3). In a non-polarized society, most of the citizens would be in the centrum and only a few citizens would be in the two ends of the left-right spectrum (i.e. the curve would be steep). The data of Figure 3 reveal two tendencies of the Hungarian voters: (1) There is a shift towards the right pole in the whole society, the share of the voters on the right end grew over time (it reached its zenith in 2010); (2) the curve became flatter, meaning that the share of citizens in the centrum has decreased and the share of citizens at the two ends of the spectrum has increased.

In sum, polarization shows similar tendencies at the voter and the party level. With these tendencies, Hungary became one of the most polarized countries in Europe (Patkós 2019: 49).

Figure 3. Polarization at voter level (%)



Source: Angelusz and Tardos (2011); Szabó and Geró (2015).

Elective affinity coalition hypothesis: do populist parties enter governing coalitions with other populist parties and also with non-populist parties?

Following the 2002 election (and the populist turn of the party), Fidesz did not form an electoral alliance with other parties. Formally, the party ran in an alliance with the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) at all four elections between 2006 and 2018, but KDNP needs to be considered rather as a religious wing of the Fidesz than as an individual party. Consequently, the Fidesz-KDNP government should not be regarded as a coalition government either. Considering the Fidesz-KDNP as one political entity, the “elective affinity coalition” hypothesis needs to be rejected in the case of Hungary.

At the dawn of its political career, Jobbik formed an electoral alliance with the radical right-wing MIÉP (in 2006), then ran alone for mandates at the next two elections. Although Jobbik became a member of the joint opposition in 2018, this was the result of the party’s consolidation and its shift into a centrist position.

Populist Parties and the Party System

Hungary presents the classic case of Sartori's predominant party system, meeting every criteria of this typology: the predominant party wins three consecutive legislative majorities with the absolute majority of the parliamentary seats, while other parties exist as legitimate competitors of the predominant party (Sartori 2005: 176-177). In the 2010-2018 period, Fidesz was inarguably the dominant party of the Hungarian party system, gaining not only the absolute majority of the seats but achieving constitutive power with two-thirds of the parliamentary mandates. Although one could argue that the alteration of the electoral system significantly hinders the opposition parties to be effective challengers, the Hungarian situation still fits Sartori's typology. As he notes (2005: 178), opposition parties of a predominant system always have a realistic opportunity to defeat the dominant party, however the equality of opportunity is always relative and equal opportunities do not mean equal resources. Still, predominant party system is a competitive system, in which the parties "enjoy an equality of opportunity unheard of in, and unknown to, the minor parties of the hegemonic systems" (Sartori 2005: 178).

It is important to emphasize that predominant party system is a type (not a class), it can arise from a two-party format and from a fragmented format alike (Sartori 2005: 177).⁵ As Nwokora and Pelizzo (2014: 826) point out, neither fragmentation nor polarization come into play in Sartori's predominant system definition; they are substituted with the potential for power alternation. Moreover, they argue that "polarization is a blunt tool for four of Sartori's six categories (one-party, hegemonic, predominant, two-party)" (Nwokora and Pelizzo 2014: 833).

The theoretical framework of DEMOS WP 6.3 and Wolinetz's (2004) party system typology also offer limited toolsets to categorize predominant party systems based on their polarization and fragmentation levels.

Nevertheless, Hungary has a predominant party system with a high level of polarization and low level of fragmentation. As I presented above, the polarization of the Hungarian party system has increased over time in the analyzed period (see Figure 2).

To measure the fragmentation of the Hungarian party system, I use two indicators: effective number of parliamentary parties (Laakso a-Taagepera index) and the mandate share of the two strongest parties in the parliament. Table 1 shows that in spite of the political changes (2006-2010) and the electoral system reform (effective from 2014), the fragmentation level of

⁵ At the presentation of his overall framework of party system typology, Sartori uses the term: "whatever format" (Sartori 2005: 258).

the party system remained quite stable. The race for parliamentary seats in 2010 can be considered as critical election (see Evans and Norris 1999; Róbert and Papp 2012), since it dramatically changed the party system: traditional parties (that were active during the time of democratic transition - SZDSZ and MDF) failed to gain any mandates (and shortly ceased to exist), while new parties (the left-green LMP and Jobbik) emerged. Still, the effective number of (parliamentary) parties did not change significantly and remained roughly the same as in the “two-bloc” period (2002-2010) of the Hungarian politics. Although the number of parliamentary parties has increased with the 2018 election, the number of effective parties shows the presence of two hypothetical, equal-size parties in the parliament. The combined mandate share of the two strongest parties indicates that the concentration of the party system has somewhat decreased: Fidesz won two-thirds of the mandates and there is no clear leader on the opposition side since 2010, as Jobbik and MSZP show similar strength.

Table 1. Fragmentation of the Hungarian party system

	2002	2006	2010	2014	2018
Number of parliamentary parties	4	4	4	4	6
Effective number of parliamentary parties	2.20	2.36	1.98	2.01	2.09
Combined mandate share of the two strongest parties	94.9%	91.5%	83.4%	78.4%	79.9%

Source: own calculation.

Conclusion

The Hungarian parties form a predominant party system, in which the dominant governing party is a populist party, same as one of the strongest opposition parties. The two parties together hold around 80 percent of the parliamentary mandates in the last decade. Regarding populism, the 2010 general election was a crucial event in the Hungarian politics: Fidesz gained two-thirds of the mandates and Jobbik became a member of the parliament.

The analysis showed that Hungarian populist parties have undeniable impact on the party system: (1) They are bringing new themes into the political agenda, creating new and revitalizing old conflicts, primarily by feeding the ignorance and xenophobia of the Hungarian society; (2) with the rise of populist parties, polarization of the Hungarian political system has clearly increased – this change can be traced both in the voters’ and the parties’ ideological positions. Although populism has no direct impact on the policy agenda of non-populist parties, an idea transfer can be observed between the two parties, more precisely, Fidesz do not shy away from importing radical elements of Jobbik’s politics.

Sources

Angelusz, Róbert and Róbert Tardos. 2011. “Régi és új törésvonalak, polarizáció, divergenciaspirál”. In: Róbert Tardos, Zsolt Enyedi, Andrea Szabó (eds.), *Részvétel, képviselet, politikai változás*. Budapest: DKMKA, 347–382.

Barna, Ildikó and Júlia Koltai. 2019. “Attitude Changes towards Immigrants in the Turbulent Years of the 'Migrant Crisis' and Anti-Immigrant Campaign in Hungary”. *Intersections EEJSP* 5(1): 48–70.

Csepeli, György, Fábíán, Zoltán, and Endre Sik. 1998. “Xenofóbia és a cigányságról alkotott vélemények”. In: Kolosi Tamás, Tóth István György, and György Vukovich (eds). *Társadalmi riport 1998*. Budapest: TÁRKI, 458–489.

Evans, Geoffery and Pippa Norris. 1999. “Introduction: Understanding Electoral Change”. Evans, Geoffery and Pippa Norris (eds.). *Critical Elections. British Parties and Voters in Long-Term Perspective*. London: SAGE.

- Karácsony, Gergely – Dániel Róna. 2010. “A Jobbik titka. A szélsőjobb magyarországi megerősödésének lehetőségei okairól”. *Politikatudományi Szemle* 21(1): 94–123.
- Körösenyi, András. 2017. “Weber és az Orbán-rezsim: plebiszciter vezérdemokrácia Magyarországon”. *Politikatudományi Szemle* 26(4): 7–28.
- Körösenyi, András, Illés, Gábor, and Attila Gyulai. 2020. *The Orbán Regime: Plebiscitary Leader Democracy in the Making*. London: Routledge.
- Mudde, Cas. 2016. “Europe's Populist Surge: A Long Time in the Making”. *Foreign Affairs* 95(6): 25–30.
- Mudde, Cas. 2017. “Populism: An Ideational Approach”. In: Cristóbal R. Kaltwasser et al. (eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nwokora, Zim and Ricardo Pelizzo. 2014. “Sartori Reconsidered: Toward a New Predominant Party System”. *Political Studies* 62(4): 824–842.
- Palonen, Emilia. 2018. “Performing the nation: the Janus-faced populist foundations of illiberalism in Hungary”. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 26(3): 308–321.
- Patkós, Veronika. 2019. *Szekértáborharc. Eredmények a politikai megosztottság okairól és következményeiről*. Budapest: TK PTI – Napvilág Kiadó.
- Róbert, Péter and Zsófia Papp. 2012. “Kritikus választás? Pártos elkötelezettség és szavazói viselkedés a 2010-es országgyűlési választáson”. In: Boda Zsolt and András Körösenyi (eds.). *Van irány? Trendek a magyar politikában*, Budapest: Új Mandátum Kiadó, 41–63.
- Sartori, Giovanni. 2005. *Parties and party systems. A framework for analysis*. Colchester: ECPR Press.
- Szabó, Andrea and Márton Gerő. 2015. *Politikai tükör, Jelentés a magyar társadalom politikai gondolkodásmódjáról, politikai integráltságáról és részvételéről*. Budapest: MTA Társadalomtudományi Kutatóközpont.
- Wolinetz, Steven B. 2004. *Classifying Party Systems: Where Have All the Typologies Gone?* Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Winnipeg, Manitoba June 2004. <https://www.cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2004/Wolinetz.pdf>.

Poland: The Impact of Populism on the Party System (2000-2020)

Artur Lipiński

Introduction

Poland constitutes a particularly salient example of right wing populism with Law and Justice (hereafter: PiS) party being in power twice in the period under scrutiny and since 2015 continuously maintaining the majoritarian status as the incumbent actor. Moreover, the volatility and instability of the party system provided opportunity structure for fringe political actors exploiting anti-establishment attitudes and capitalizing on status of newness. Ideologically, in most cases these actors were representing radical right populisms striving to outmanoeuvre PiS from the right flank.

The aim of the report is to provide evidence of the impact of populist parties in Polish political system. In the following parts of the paper, the theoretical framework of DEMOS WP 6.3 package will be applied. First, it offers a brief analysis of the Polish politics with the focus on populist actors from 2000 onwards. This section of the report will highlight the trajectory of PiS's gradual shift, from a relatively traditional conservative position towards definitely more radical and populist right. Additionally, the successful albeit short-lived fringe political projects will be depicted, including Confederation as the most recent one, the grouping which was able pass the electoral threshold and secure seats in Sejm, lower chamber of Polish parliament. Secondly, the relevance of the four hypotheses (representation gap, contagion, polarization, elective affinity coalition) explaining the impact of populist parties on the party system shall be depicted. In the remaining parts of the report, the Sartori's typology will be referred to in order to categorize and discuss the type of the Polish party system.

Political Context. Populists in Polish Politics (2000-2020)

Populism, particularly at the discursive level, has been an inherent part of Polish politics marked strongly by the historical legacy of division between "we" - the people and they "the communists". Accordingly, party politics from 1989 onwards was based on the bipolar structure of political competition. Moreover, in the period under consideration (2000-2020) one can

observe the growing political relevance of the populist actors, including PiS which gradually shifted towards populism before 2005 elections.

PiS started in 2001 as a conservative party strongly defined by the personality of its two leaders – Lech and Jarosław Kaczyński. The genesis of PiS should be linked to the decomposition of the Solidarity Electoral Action (in Polish: Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność, AWS), a large right wing coalition which defeated post-communist Democratic Left Alliance in parliamentary elections 1997 under the slogans of “finishing Solidarity’s revolution” (Wencel 1998). On 23 September 2001 elections the voters decided to grant power to post-communist Democratic Left Alliance (41 per cent) promising to end the internal struggles of the right wing coalition and portraying itself as a much more competent. It's important to notice, however, that a significant number of votes went to newly founded right wing parties: PO (12,68 per cent) and PiS (9,5 per cent) which entered the parliament by resorting to anti-corruption, anti-political and anti-establishment agenda. Moreover, two other actors with populist profile crossed the electoral threshold as well: Self-Defence (in Polish: Samoobrona Rzeczpospolitej, SRP) (10,2 per cent) and League of Polish Families (in Polish: Liga Polskich Rodzin, LPR) (7,87 per cent). The core of their agenda was based on anti-establishment slogans and disenchantment with the whole transformational political order portrayed as corrupted and representing merely the interests of political and social elites (Kucharczyk, Wysocka 2008). SRP was more concerned with socio-economic issues and LPR, which emerged from nationalistic milieu, stressed moral-cultural issues portraying Western countries as a “civilization of death” alien to the Polish culture based on Christian values (Markowski 2006; Szczerbiak 2007).

The period between 2001-2005 was dominated by the mood of growing political radicalism, references to populism and nationalism were fuelled by the numerous scandals and corruption practices of post-communist incumbents, tough accession negotiation talks with European Union and the economic problems. Although all the oppositional parties (PiS, PO, SO, LPR) resorted more or less strongly to the ideas of cleansing the country from the corruption, anti-communist slogans of lustration and decommunization, anti-elitism, critique of post-communist transformation and the necessity to introduce moral revolution, it was PiS which gained the biggest electoral support in the double, presidential and parliamentary elections of 2005.

The results of the double elections revealed the ability of PiS to impose a new divide between so called social vs. liberal Poland reflecting which overshadowed old „postcommunist divide“ between those favourable to past régime and its legacy and its critics. A new divide was

underpinned to larger extent by the economic issues and reflected the tension between „transition losers” and „transition winners”. PiS managed to win 26.99 per cent of the vote and 155 (out of 460) seats, ahead of Civic Platform with 24.14 per cent and 133 seats (Szczerbiak 2007, 214). Importantly, the radical-populist parties, Self-Defence (11.41 per cent and 56 seats) and the League of Polish Families (7.97 per cent and 34 seats) were able to maintain the degree of social support from 2001. In presidential elections, again PiS’ candidate was first in the second round with 54,04 per cent in comparison to PO’ candidate D. Tusk finishing campaign with 45, 96 per cent.

PiS, being unable to govern as a minority government PiS formed a right wing coalition with the social populist SRP and nationalist LPR in May 2006. The coalition’s agenda reflected to a large extent the Fourth Republic agenda. It portrayed the social, political and cultural reality as a deep crisis in need of multi-dimensional reform. Anti-elitism and anti-corruption slogans were main drivers of the policy decisions. PiS entered the coalition with populist radicals reluctantly and legitimized it by claiming that SRP’s and LPR’s agenda were in line with a programme of deep reforms labeled by PiS as a Fourth Republic (Kucharczyk, Wysocka 2008, 85). In fact, it mainstreamed the radical populist agenda and captured the radical rhetoric of its allies.

In the ahead of time 2007 parliamentary elections liberal PO transformed the campaign into the plebiscite on the PiS’ antagonistic style governance and won 41.5 percent of votes and 209 seats in Sejm, the lower chamber of Polish parliament. After the elections it created the coalition government with agrarian PSL and D. Tusk as a Prime Minister. PiS received 32.1 percent of votes and 166 seats. Interestingly, in absolute figures PiS increased its share of votes (almost 2 million votes more) due to its ability to capture the agenda of its radical populist allies who did not cross the parliamentary threshold. 2007 elections confirmed the stabilization of the new divide between those parts of the electorate which support PiS and its anti-corruption and anti-establishment agenda and the sympathisers of PO. Additionally, for both SRP and LPR the result of the elections sealed their future fate, these parties did not manage to return to the parliament and maintain their organizational structure. It happened to a large extent by the ability of PiS to capture the elements of the agenda and the populist and nationalist discourse of these parties.

In the subsequent years, dominated by the conflict between PiS and PO, Jarosław Kaczyński continued to employ populist division between the nation and the establishment. Repeatedly used phrase „Tusk’s system” was designed to define the situation in radically negative terms as a comeback of the Third Republic understood as a system of dirty pacts

between various social networks with roots in communist regime. As he claimed, the aim of the Tusk government was to disintegrate the Polish nation (Kaczyński 2008). The populist structure of PiS' agenda was bolstered by the Smolensk catastrophe of April 2010. The party political discourse attempted to inscribe the crash into Polish history and interpreted the nature of the event through the references to the division between true patriots and collaborators (Koczanowicz 2012).

The result of the 2015 presidential election was victorious for PiS's candidate A. Duda and as such it added the momentum to the PiS campaign. Before the parliamentary elections of 2015 PiS decided to withdraw or background its most controversial politicians. The personal changes did not attenuate however the extremely negative problem definition and diagnosis of reality disseminated through the electoral messages. According to them, Poland was a country "in ruins", governed by oligarchy, based on the large economic inequalities and dependent on Russia and Germany at the international level (Kaczyński 2015; Szczerki 2015) At the heart of the PiS strategy, however, lied a positive list of costly social and economic promises: reversing PO government's unpopular decision to increase the retirement age, introduction of additional child benefits for poorer and larger families, raising tax-free income thresholds. The campaign took new turn when the refugee crisis broke on September 2015. It was treated by the PiS as an opportunity to strengthen its right wing credentials and play on the fears of the majority, particularly young Poles. Another important result of the double elections was the position of P. Kukiz and his grouping. Kukiz, was a newcomer, previously better known as a rock star than a political activist. He entered the Polish political scene in 2015 and came in third in the Polish presidential elections (with 20.8 percent of the votes). His political movement—Kukiz' 15—received 8.81 percent of the votes in the 2015 parliamentary elections. He criticized the allegedly "particratic" and "oligarchic" features of the Polish political system and called for a change of the current list-based proportional electoral system to UK-style single-member constituencies and a wider use of referenda as an expression of the citizens' will. Frequently employed anti-communist themes and occasional references to conservative values supplemented his right-wing profile.

In the 2019 European Parliament (EP) elections and in the subsequent parliamentary elections later that year, PiS and its junior coalition partners (the United Right) secured a dominant position (45.4% of votes, and 43.59% of votes with 235 seats, accordingly) thanks to a campaign filled with homophobic slogans and criticisms of 'gender ideology', assisted by generous social spending framed as a people-oriented 'revolution of dignity'. This was not, however, an out-and-out victory as PiS lost its majority in the Senate, the upper chamber of

parliament with the power to slow down the legislative process. The loss of the Senate increased the importance of the presidential elections planned for May 2020 and the necessity to secure the re-election of Andrzej Duda. Otherwise, challenged by the Senate and a president with veto power, PiS would not be able to continue its radical policies. At this time, it seemed that the political efforts of the ruling camp and the attention of the public would be entirely focused on this task in the forthcoming months. The emergence of COVID-19 and its potentially adverse outcomes for the incumbents only raised the stakes of the elections and determined PiS's resistance to delay the election date.

Another important result of the October 2019 elections was the relative success of Confederation, a radical right-wing party founded at the beginning of 2019 on the eve of an electoral campaign for the European and national parliaments, with 11 seats won in the latter (6.81% of votes). The party showed its ability to surpass PiS from the right flank and succeeded in forcing PiS to radicalize its message. Confederation's anti-systemic agenda makes it similar to many small and short-lived parties which appeared in Poland after 1989, using presidential elections as an opportunity structure to promote a radical message and relying on their 'newness' as an important symbolic resource (Sikk 2012). In general, Confederation is a coalition of economic libertarians linked to the eccentric Janusz Korwin-Mikke and nationalists from the National Movement. During the 2019 EP elections, the coalition was broadened to include anti-vaccine and pro-life activists. The populist strategy of provocation was articulated through anti-semitic slogans related to the alleged Jewish wartime reparation claims enabled by the American JUST Act of 2017. Moreover, the campaign resorted to anti-Semitic and Eurosceptic slogans to accuse PiS of undermining Poland's sovereignty by becoming servile towards the US and EU. Following a failure to reach the 5% parliamentary representation threshold for parties (they only received 4.6% of the votes), the Confederation decided to significantly moderate its public image. In the subsequent parliamentary elections in October 2019, they presented themselves as the only integral right-wing force, in comparison to PiS who were shown as lacking a real right-wing identity. Consequently, Confederation's focus on anti-establishment messages, tax reductions and other free market slogans coupled with careful avoidance of more controversial issues brought them 11 seats in parliament.

The Role of Populist Parties in the Party System

Representation gap hypothesis: do populist parties pursue a strategy that is designed to exploit gaps of representation by means of emphasizing new or re-vitalizing old conflicts?

Regarding the representation gap hypothesis, the populist parties were actively pursuing the strategies which would allow them to find segments of the electorate whose support would maximize their chances for success. In the initial phase PiS based its agenda on penal populism exploiting the popular sentiments present in the Polish society at that time. During the 2005 electoral campaign the party skillfully imposed the new division between so called social and liberal Poland which overshadowed dominant until that time postcommunist cleavage. It offered a new narration which was based on some ideational elements drawn from postcommunist cleavage and supplemented it with socio-economic dimension. In other words, the idea of the collusion of the post-communist and liberal elites was combined with the references to the conflict of interests between transition winners and transition losers. Accordingly, the transformation was conceived as apparent and fake and aimed mainly to secure the interests of elites against the ordinary people. The crisis narrative consistently promoted by PiS represented the elites as capturing and corrupting a state (the political dimension), economically privileged and exploiting the people (the economic dimension) and careless about national identity and sovereignty (cultural dimension). PiS aimed to represent so-called Poland B, Eastern part of the country occupied by more traditional, more religious, less educated and older people. Indeed, according to the analyses of PiS electorate there is an above-average number of voters aged 45 and over. Moreover, PiS is supported more often by those with elementary and basic vocational education and by inhabitants of rural areas. In the recent years the party gained slightly among inhabitants of small towns (up to 19,999 inhabitants), while it relatively lost voters in the largest cities with a population of 500 thousand and more (CBOS 2017). In the subsequent years PiS was consistently shifting towards more populist strategies resorting to antagonistic, emotional discourse and raising issues which allow him to compete with the radical and extreme right milieus. After the Smolensk catastrophe the party disseminated various conspiracy theories suggesting Polish government involvement. On 2015, during the refugee crisis PiS decided to use the problem as the campaign issue resorting to the xenophobic and islamophobic discourse (Lipiński 2020). Similarly, during 2019 electoral campaigns it systematically resorted to anti-LGBT slogans and spread homophobic propaganda counting on the support from the radical segments of the electorate.

Other populist parties attempted to exploit gaps in representation as well. Paweł Kukiz provides another spectacular example. Its anti-establishment slogans and self-presentation as a mere voice from outside the “particratic system” coupled with the rockman image and intense use of social media paid off, particularly among the youngest groups of the electorate. A significant percentage of Kukiz voters were from the youngest cohort, while the oldest cohort of voters (over 60 years old) declared hardly any support for these candidates and instead supported Andrzej Duda of PiS or Bronisław Komorowski of PO. According to the data, the group from 18 to 29 constituted 20,6% of the Kukiz '15 voters.

The relative openness of the party system to the new parties and the dissatisfaction of some parts of the electorate with the domination of two biggest parties PiS and PO was exploited by radical Confederation in the 2019 and 2020 presidential elections. It based its agenda on the combination of radical and moderate strategies resorting to anti-semitic, nationalistic and homophobic slogans together with the radically free market liberalism targeting and skillfull, intensive use of the social media to target young, well educated people usually inhabiting big cities (Kunert 2019).

Contagion hypothesis: is a rise of populist parties accompanied with an overall diffusion of populist ideas in the policy agenda of non-populist parties?

Populism in Poland is confined to the circumscribed set of political parties, rather than being a style of communication of PiS as the biggest right wing party and new fringe, mainly right wing parties which systematically appear in the relatively open party system. According to the research of party manifestos and parliamentary speeches conducted by Przyłęcki (2012), albeit all of the parties in the period 2001-2009 employed some populist strategies, the percentage of populist expressions was higher in the discourse of LPR and SRP, smaller in case of other parliamentary parties. High level of polarization and antagonism between two biggest parties prevents the diffusion of populist ideas to policy agenda of non-populist parties. Accordingly, the agenda, discourse and identity of the anti-PiS liberal opposition is based on the representation of PiS as populist and radical and self-identity as rational, moderate and anti-populist (Komorowski 2015).

What is typical for Polish political system is the competition over radical segments of the electorate between PiS and more radical, fringe parties. Skillful maneuvering of PiS between moderate and radical positions allows to attract the core electorate of the radical parties. Striking example of that was PiS ability to capture the issues promoted by LPR and

SRP which eventually led to the disappearance of the parties from the political scene. Importantly, it is even easier with the electorate of the populist radical right as it does not see them as different enough from more centrally positioned parties (Stanley, Markowski, Czeńnik 2021, 55). Accordingly, the contagion hypothesis is not confirmed as PiS, in order to keep its majoritarian status, makes a lot of effort to avoid outbidding from the right flank. Moreover, and somewhat paradoxical in the light of academic literature, PiS represents higher levels of populism while being in power, moderating its image as an oppositional party in the periods between elections (Stanley 2015).

Polarization hypothesis: does a rise of populist parties make party systems more acutely polarized?

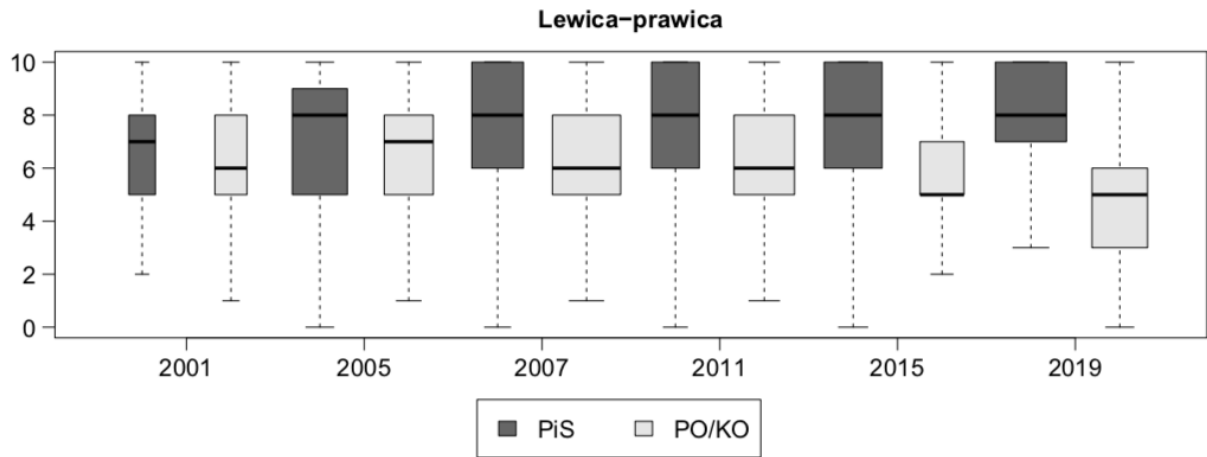
Strong bipolar division between “us” and “them” which can be dated back to communist era was articulated in the first decade of transformation through so-called “post-communist cleavage” (Grabowska 2004). PiS skilfully reframed the cleavage into the division between social and liberal Poland not only maintaining but even strengthening the existing polarization (Szczerbiak 2007). Since 2005 it has advanced the antagonistic style of politics combined with the radical criticism directed against various institutions of liberal democratic state (for example Supreme Court or Constitutional Tribunal). In the years that followed failed 2007 parliamentary elections PiS as a major oppositional party promoted radical criticism of the PO government, portraying Poland as a country in crisis requiring deep changes both at the elite and institutional level. In 2005 and 2010 the party prepared two drafts of a completely new constitution which would centralize the power in the hands of the president, elevate Catholicism to the level of official state axiology and significantly limit the system of check and balances (Rodzik 2017). These ideas provided a programmatic basis for the 2015 electoral campaign and subsequent, partially successful attempts to undermine the liberal democratic system after taking power in 2015.

According to H. Tworzecki, the polarization of Poland was asymmetric (Tworzecki 2019, 103). Whereas PiS moved towards more radical positions, liberal PO remained a centrist mainstream party. Moreover, the polarization at the social level can not be explained by the hard socio-economic factors but rather by the PiS ability to impose its narrative and distribute it through the depended public and private media depended on state-sponsored advertising revenues. According to the sociological analyses, a clear polarizing trend can be observed, the positions of the two electorates on the left-right axis has gradually diverged. During the 2019

elections, the voters of the two largest parties PiS and PO differed to a much greater extent than in previous years (figure 1).

Figure 1

Source: Czeńnik, Miśta, Żerkowska-Balas (2020).



Elective affinity coalition hypothesis: do populist parties enter governing coalitions with other populist parties and also with non-populist parties?

The Polish case confirms the elective affinity hypothesis. During the first PiS government (2005-2007), besides the very beginning, PiS governed in the coalition with two more radical parties, SRP and LPR promoting nationalism, nativism and Euroscepticism. Importantly, shortly after entering the coalition PiS radicalized its agenda and made all the efforts to neutralize these parties and capture their electorates. The situation was different after the 2015 and 2019 elections PiS gained the ability to form one-party government. One has to remember however that organizationally PiS was a coalition consisting of PiS proper and two junior partners: Solidarna Polska (Solidarity Poland) led by Zbigniew Ziobro, minister of justice and Porozumienie (Agreement) led by Jarosław Gowin, deputy Prime Minister. Both parties increased the number of seats in the 2019 elections which provided them blackmail potential used already in the 2015-2019 term. Such situation occasionally leads to the ideological outbidding between parties (particularly PiS and Solidarna Polska) over populism, radicalism and right wing credentials.

Populist Parties and the Party System

Poland represents the case of Sartorian limited pluralism with the bipolar structure of party competition (Casal Bértoa, Guerra 2018). According to Wolinetz's typology Poland constitutes

an example of limited pluralism with bipolar competition and high level of polarization between the biggest parties representing two blocks. Populist parties affected the parameters of the party system particularly during 2005 elections with the increase of the effective number of parties and change of the content (but not bipolar) structure of party competition with postcommunist divide superseded by division between social and liberal Poland (see Table 1).

In general, the system is and has always been open for the new parties due not only to the lack of organizational loyalties at the level of political elites, but to a large degree the effect of high levels of electoral volatility (Markowski 2020). The perfect example of that was the very good electoral result of the Kukiz'15 on 2015 elections and high percentage of votes gained by the KORWIN party (radical right, radically free market, eu-rejectionist grouping). The latter entered the newly founded Confederation and was able to cross the electoral threshold in the 2019 elections. In all these cases, the electoral success resulted from (mostly) disappointed young people with strong anti-establishment sentiments, willing to reject the polarized competition between two biggest actors which dominated the political scene since 2005. It is very well indicated by the combined mandate share of the two biggest parties which since 2007 occupy 80% of the seats in Parliament.

Table 1.

Indicators	1991	1993	1997	2001	2005	2007	2011	2015	2019
Fractionalization	0.93	0.90	0.78	0.78	0.83	0.70	0.73	0.78	0.71
Number of Effective Parties (Laakso & Taagepera) votes	13.86	9.80	4.59	4.50	5.86	3.32	3.74	4.45	3.42
Number of Effective Parties (Laakso & Taagepera), seats	10.45	3.88	2.95	3.60	4.63	2.82	3.00	2.75	2.76
Disproportionality (Gallagher)	4.14	15.74	9.75	4.42	5.61	4.39	5.67	10.55	6.58
Wasted votes , %)	8.37	34.44	12.1	9.37	10.93	4.12	4.12	16.61	0.92
Sum of two biggest parties (votes), %	24.31	35.81	60.96	53.72	51.13	73.62	69.07	61.67	70.99
Sum of two biggest parties (seats), %	26.52	65.87	79.35	61.09	61.96	81.52	79.13	81.09	80.22
Biggest to second party ratio (votes)	1.03	1.32	1.25	3.24	1.12	1.29	1.31	1.56	1.59
Biggest to second party ratio (seats)	1.03	1.29	1.22	3.32	1.14	1.26	1.32	1.70	1.75

Source: Markowski (2020, 1514).

Conclusions

The Polish party system exhibits features of limited pluralism with strong polarization between the PiS resorting to populism at the discourse and agenda level and the oppositional liberal PO. It is the competition between these parties that has determined the structure and content of the political competition since 2005. PiS was able to impose the new division between social and liberal Poland which replaced the postcommunist cleavage. It also proved its skillfulness in using the media (including social media) to disseminate the agenda of radical polity reform, necessity of elite replacement and perform a crisis (Moffit 2016). As such it contributed strongly to the high level of polarization, introducing reforms which limit, if not destroy, the system of checks and balances and curtail civic freedoms. There was also an additional source of the dynamic of competition between parties, the one on the radical right flank of PiS, motivating the party to adopt a radical agenda in order to prevent the competition from the right side. On the other hand, the competition over radicalism and right wing credentials prevented the populist from spreading to non-populist parties, which built their political identities on being “anti-PiS”.

Sources

CBOS. 2017. *Elektoraty PO i PiS w ostatnich dwunastu latach*. Retrieved from: https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2017/K_130_17.PDF

Casal Bértoa, F. and S. Guerra. 2018. “Earthquake or Hurricane? The rise and fall of populist parties in Poland”. In: Wolinetz, S. and A. Zaslove (eds.). *Absorbing the Blow. Populist Parties and Their Impact on Parties and Party Systems*, London/New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

Cześniak, M., and M. Żerkowska-Balas (2020). “Uczestnictwo i mobilizacja w wyborach parlamentarnych 2019 roku”. *Studia Socjologiczne* 4: 91–121.

Grabowska M. 2004. *Podział Postkomunistyczny: Społeczne Podstawy Polityki w Polsce po 1989 roku*. Warszawa: Scholar.

Kaczyński J. 2008. *Celem Tuska jest dezintegracja narodu*. Retrieved from <https://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/opinie/artykuly/131580,celem-tuska-jest-dezintegracja-narodu.html>, accessed 21.05.2019.

Kaczyński J. 2015. *Stawka jest bardzo wysoka. List do członków PiS*. Retrieved from: <http://niezalezna.pl/63950-stawka-jest-bardzo-wysoka-list-jaroslawa-kaczynskiego-do-czlonkow-pis>, accessed 11 January 2017.

Koczanowicz, L. 2012. “The Politics of Catastrophe: Poland’s Presidential Crash and the Ideology of Post-postcommunism”. *East European Politics and Societies*, 26(4), 811–828.

- Komorowski B. 2015. "Polska racjonalna czy radykalna?". *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 23 March 2015. Retrieved from: https://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,17641394,Prezydent_Bronislaw_Komorowski_o_stanie_debaty_publicznej_.html
- Kucharczyk, J. and O. Wysocka. 2008. "Poland". In: Mesežnikov, G., Gyarfáčová, O. and D. Smilov (eds.). *Populist Politics and Liberal Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe*. Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 71–100.
- Kunert J. 2019. *Konfederacja piątą siłą w parlamencie. Kim jest jej wyborca?* Retrieved from: <https://konkret24.tvn24.pl/polityka,112/konfederacja-piata-sila-w-parlamencie-kim-jest-jej-wyborca,977288.html>
- Lipiński A. 2020. "Constructing 'The Others' as a Populist Communication Strategy. The Case of the 'Refugee Crisis'", In: Stępińska, A. (ed.). *Populist Discourse in the Polish Media*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo UAM.
- Markowski R. 2006. "The Polish elections of 2005: Pure chaos or a restructuring of the party system?". *West European Politics* 29(4), 814–832.
- Markowski R. 2020. "Plurality support for democratic decay: the 2019 Polish parliamentary election", *West European Politics* 43(7), 1513–1525.
- Przyłęcki P. 2012. *Populizm w polskiej polityce. Analiza dyskursu polityki*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe.
- Rodzic P. 2017. *PiS chce zmian w Konstytucji*. Retrieved from: <https://natemat.pl/207687,czekasz-na-zapowiedziane-przez-dude-referendum-konstytucyjne-jak-sobie-przypomnisz-te-pomysly-pis-wraz-zmienisz-zdanie>
- Stanley B. 2015. "The Post-Populist Non-Crisis in Poland". In: Kriesi, H. and T. S. Pappas (eds.). *European populism in the shadow of the great recession*. Colchester: ECPR Press, 251–269.
- Stanley, B., Markowski, R., Cześnik, M. (2021). Marginalization, not mainstreaming: Explaining the failure of fringe parties in Poland. *Party Politics*, 27(1), 46–57.
- Szczerbiak, A. 2007. "'Social Poland' Defeats 'Liberal Poland'? The September–October 2005 Polish Parliamentary and Presidential Elections". *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 23(2): 203–232.
- Szczerski, K. 2015. "Nomenklatura wiecznie żywa". *Rzeczpospolita*. 23 January.
- Tworzecki, H. 2019. "Poland: A Case of Top-Down Polarization". *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 681(1): 97–119.
- Wenzel, M. 1998. "Solidarity and Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność. An attempt at reviving the legend". *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31(2): 139–156.

Impact of Populism on the Greek party system

Manos Tsatsanis and Dimitri A. Sotiropoulos

Introduction

In the wake of the post-2008 economic crisis, which almost strangled the Greek economy, a major shift occurred in the Greek political party system. After 2012, a long-established two-party system collapsed and was replaced by a volatile, fragmented and polarized multi-party system while a pattern of coalition governments emerged in the place of traditional single-majority party governments which had ruled in 1974-2012. The shift lasted at least until 2019 (the most recent elections) when a new single-party government was formed.

Compared to other countries in the Southern European periphery, Greece underwent the most severe economic crisis in the 2010s (the state budget deficit had reached – 16% of the GDP by 2009). Austerity economic policies, which were imposed by the country's creditors as a solution to avoid sovereign default, gave rise to dormant populist reactions, which combined with Eurosceptic and radical political discourse on the Right and the Left.

What followed was the emergence or strengthening of populist parties on the Left and the Right, the adoption of populism as political discourse by an otherwise radical left-wing party (Syriza), and its rise to power in 2015 on the wave of social reactions to austerity policies. As a result, the party system was dramatically altered.

In the remainder of this chapter, we first sketch the political context of Greece, including patterns of the party system, political traditions and political culture. We then highlight the role of populist parties in the Greek party system, discussing themes of representation, contagion, polarization and elective affinity. We continue with an analysis of how the rise of populist parties has altered the Greek party system and we draw our conclusions, reiterating the main themes of this chapter.

The Political Context in Greece

As it is well known, a grave economic crisis erupted in Greece in 2009-2010. The then Greek government was unable to manage it and the country was at the brink of becoming insolvent. In the years that followed, policy-making in Greece took place under international supervision, specified in three Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) that were signed between Greek authorities and the country's creditors in 2010, 2012 and 2015. The MoUs laid out austerity economic packages lasting for almost nine years (May 2010-August 2018), during which Greece received conditional financial support to pay for its public debt. The fulfilment of conditions was made under the close supervision of representatives of three institutions, the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), also known as "the Troika". Externally imposed reforms included not only measures of fiscal consolidation, but also reforms of regulating the production and distribution of goods and services and access to markets, starting in 2010.

While sovereign default was avoided, the economic austerity policies provoked a dip in economic growth and a hike in negative social effects. The rate of unemployment soared to 27 percent in 2013, poverty became extensive, access to public health care and social welfare services was curtailed and approximately half a million of the most skilled workers exited the country ("brain-drain").

The dramatic economic situation sparked frequent and violent social protests, while consultation with social partners on public policies ceased. The center-left Pasok and the center-right New Democracy, the two mainstream parties which governed in the first phase of the crisis (2009-2014), were cornered by the rapidly radicalized opposition formed around two vocal poles of resistance to austerity. On the Right, there was the far-right populist neo-nazi party of Golden Dawn and the populist nationalist party of "Independent Greeks", composed of a faction that split off from the New Democracy party. On the Left, there was the populist radical left party Syriza, the traditional orthodox Communist Party (the KKE) and smaller parties of the extra-parliamentary Left. In terms of votes, the New Democracy hemorrhaged to its right, while Pasok to its left. A small centrist, pro-European party, the "River" (To Potami) also emerged in 2014 but was short lived (2014-2015), while on the Left the small moderate Democratic Left party (Dimar) eventually split and its leader joined Syriza.

In other words, after the onset of the economic crisis, the Greek party system experienced both polarization and fragmentation. The turning point for these party system developments was the year 2012. In two successive parliamentary elections in 2012 the change

in the Greek party system amounted to an “electoral earthquake” (Voulgaris and Nikolakopoulos 2012), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Political parties in Greece: percentage share of the vote obtained by populist political parties and the largest mainstream parties (New Democracy, Pasok) in 1989-2019.

	June 1989	Nov 1989	Apri 1 1990	1993	1996	2000	2004	2007	2009	May 2012	June 2012	Jan. 2015	Sept 2015	2019
New Democracy	44.3	46.2	46.9	39.3	38.1	42.7	45.4	41.8	33.5	18.9	29.7	27.8	28.1	39.9
Pasok	39.1	40.7	38.6	46.9	41.5	43.8	40.6	38.1	43.9	13.2	12.3	4.7	6.3	8.1
SYN/Syriz	13.1	11.0	10.3	2.9	5.1	3.2	3.3	5.0	4.6	16.8	26.9	36.3	35.5	31.5
a														
Laos	--	--	--	--	--	--	2.2	3.8	5.6	2.9	1.6	1.0	--	--
Anel	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	10.6	7.5	4.8	3.7	--
Golden Dawn	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.3	7.0	6.9	6.3	7.0	2.9
Greek Solution	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3.7

Source: official results of parliamentary elections. The election years, shown above, start from the first year in which the Coalition of the Left (SYN, later re-named to Syriza) participated in national elections. Until 1990, that party included the traditional, orthodox communist party (KKE) which then split off from SYN. Before 2009, the Golden Dawn party used to obtain a trivial share of votes. In 2019 the Anel party dissolved, while in 2020 the leadership of the Golden Dawn party was convicted to imprisonment.

While the economic crisis was the catalyst that brought about the aforementioned shifts in the party system, the political – historical context also mattered a lot. In Greece there have been long historical legacies of political clientelism (or patronage) and populism. Citizens and social groups were integrated into Greece’s political system in the 19th and 20th centuries through networks of political patronage and populist mobilization of the masses (Mouzelis 1986). More specifically, after the 1974 transition from the Colonels’ authoritarian regime to democracy, conservative party rule under the New Democracy party was replaced by populist/socialist party rule under the Greek socialist party, Pasok. The latter won the elections of 1981, led by the charismatic populist leader Andreas Papandreou (Sotiropoulos 1996).

Authors have claimed that Greek politics in the whole era between the rise of Pasok to power in 1981 and today can be interpreted through the prism of populism (Pappas 2013). While this is very debatable, it is true that the populist themes of the 1980s have been part and parcel of contemporary Greece’s political culture (Doxiadis and Matsaganis 2013, Kalpadakis and

Sotiropoulos 2007). Political parties, mass media and a large share of the general population have subscribed to a conflictual, dichotomic, interpretative scheme of public policy choices and a xenophobic understanding of immigration and Greece’s place in the world.

Since the late 1970s Greek voters have not perceived politics only in terms of the Left-Right cleavage but also in terms of a dualistic, Manichean discourse (Diamandouros 1994). Pasok’s outright rejection of the establishment, domestic and foreign monopolies, the USA, and even European social democracy in the early 1980 set the stage for the astonishingly popular conceptualization of the Greek crisis of the early 2010s by the radical left Syriza party. The latter grew in terms of popularity in 2010-2014 and rose to government in 2015, by continuously employing contrasts such a clash between “the people” vs. “Brussels”, the “new” vs. the “old” (political system), “us” vs. “them”.

Table 2. Shifts in the Greek political party system in the wake of the economic crisis, 2009-2015.

	Pre-crisis elections (2009)	First elections during the crisis (2011 - 2012)	Second elections during the crisis (2015) (two elections in Greece, June and September 2015)
Greek elections, winner party	Pasok	New Democracy	Syriza
Parties who came 2n, 3d and 4th in Greek elections	New Democracy, KKE, Laos	Syriza, Pasok, Anel	New Democracy, Golden Dawn, Potami (Pasok came 4th in Sept. 2015)

To sum up this section, as Table 2 shows, the Greek party system underwent a tremendous change in the 2012-2019, owed to challenges posed by populist parties. Moreover, the presence of populist parties in Greece has been long-term. Current mainstream parties, such as Pasok, used to be populist in past decades (1974-1989). Center-left and radical left populists have made successful bids to power on several occasions (Pasok in 1981 and 1985, Syriza twice in June 2015 and September 2015). Other, usually small, populist parties have risen on the Right. These parties (discussed in the section below) were the Laos party, which also participated in a short-term coalition government in 2011-2012, the Anel party which lasted between 2012-2019 and the Greek Solution party which won parliamentary representation in 2019.

In sum, in the 2010s, the emergence of populist parties and the rise of two of them (Syriza, Anel) to power in Greece may be interpreted along the following lines: traditions of

political culture and the gravity and long duration of the recent economic crisis which was a catalyst for the sea change in the Greek party system.

The Role of Populist Parties in the Greek Party System

After 2010 a huge cleavage was opened in the Greek party system between the mainstream parties (Pasok and New Democracy) on the one hand and a variety of populist parties on the other hand. Interaction between these two sides was severed early on in 2010 on almost all institutional and policy matters. Defenders of austerity policy were not on speaking terms, literally, with those who rejected such policy. Parties of either side did not borrow ideas in the policy agenda from the opposite side. In other words, contagion and diffusion of populist ideas was hard to come by (the contagion hypothesis of Michal Kubat's theoretical chapter of this Deliverable was not confirmed in the case of the Greek party system). The diametrically opposed ideas of the two sides as well as the electoral strategies of the many different populist parties, which are outlined below, may explain this lack of contagion.

On the Right, as briefly discussed below, there were several populist parties, namely the Laos party (Laos being an abbreviation for the "Popular Orthodox Rally"), the Golden Dawn party, the Anel party, and the Greek Solution party. With the exception of the Golden Dawn, none of these four parties can be characterized as purely anti-systemic or ideologically anti-systemic. In other words, three of these four populist parties mostly played the game within the boundaries set by the system and according to its rules (see theoretical chapter by Michal Kubat in this Deliverable).

The Laos party was founded in 2000 by a right-wing populist journalist, television producer and MP of the New Democracy party. The party invoked traditional ideas of the Greek Christian Orthodox Church, nationalist ideas and strong anti-immigrant ideas, which won it a relatively strong following in the late 2000s. The party's discourse constantly pitted the traditional Greeks against foreigners, including migrants and refugees, as well as against foreign powers and the EU. Anti-semitism was not absent from the party's discourse either. After the eruption of the economic crisis in 2009-2010, the party assumed a more pragmatic stance. It supported the economic austerity packages instead of adopting positions hostile to the EU's intervention in Greece's economic policy and even participated in the coalition of parties (New Democracy, Pasok and Laos) which for a short while supported a care-taker technocratic government in 2011-2012. The Laos party paid the political cost of such a pragmatic shift, as

its voters fled to the rest of populist parties which flourished in the Greek political scene in the early 2010s.

The Golden Dawn party initially was a neo-nazi organization, founded in 1985. In 1985-2009 the party used to obtain a negligible percentage share of votes, but managed to become the 3d largest party in Greek parliament in the two elections of 2015 (both in the January and September 2015 parliamentary elections). As shown in Table 1, the party increased its share of the total vote from 0.3 percent in 2009 to 7 percent in the elections of 2012 and 2015. It even elected 3 MEPs to the European Parliament in 2014 and 2 MEPs in 2019. However, Golden Dawn's electoral influence declined in the national parliamentary elections of 2019, as the party leadership was implicated in (and eventually convicted in 2020) for the assassination a Greek radical left rap singer in 2013. The political discourse of Golden Dawn's was far right and populist, replete with illiberal, anti-elite, anti-semitic, and anti-EU themes (Ellinas 2013, Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015, Dinas, Georgiadou and Konstantinidis 2016).

In 2012 a group of MPs split off from the New Democracy party and formed the right-wing, strongly nationalist/populist party Anel (abbreviation standing for "Independent Greeks"). The Anel obtained 11 percent of the vote in parliamentary elections of 2012, but declined to 3 percent in the European Parliament elections of 2014 and to 4 percent in 2015. Notably, for the reasons explained further below, the Anel was invited by Syriza to share power in 2015-2019, as a junior government coalition partner. However, the performance of the Syriza/Anel coalition in government was detrimental to both coalition partners and certainly to the Anel which obtained less than 1 percent of the vote in the European Parliament elections of 2019. Soon the party suspended its participation in the national elections of July of the same year and later ceased to exist. The surprising choice of Syriza to invite the right-wing nationalists on board, in order to form a government coalition in 2015-2019, may be interpreted by their common ideological ground. The radical left Syriza shared with the nationalist right Anel common populist themes in their discourse, including anti-elite and Eurosceptic themes. Another theme, common to both government coalition partners, was the outright rejection of the austerity economic package, which the post-crisis Pasok and New Democracy-led governments had followed after 2009. Research has highlighted the congruent anti-austerity and Eurosceptic opinions of MPs of the Syriza and Anel parties (Tsirbas and Sotiropoulos 2016) and the relatively small distance of opinions of the voters of the two parties on economic policy issues (Andreadis and Stavrakakis 2017; confirmation of the elective affinity hypothesis of the theoretical chapter of this Deliverable by Michal Kubát and Martin Mejstřík).

Finally, the Greek Solution party was established in 2016 and was a newcomer to Greek politics. It emerged in the wake of the electoral decline of the Golden Dawn and Anel parties in the second half of the 2010s. Led by a populist journalist and television producer, the Greek Solution treated the well-known path of nationalism, Euroscepticism, and traditionalism (in terms of family and religious values) that its populist predecessors had done since the late 2000s. Thus, it was compensated in the parliamentary elections with almost 4 percent of the total vote. Unpredictable in its policy choices and personalistic in terms of party structure, the Greek Solution has voted with the New Democracy parliamentary majority on various bills of law submitted to parliament in 2019-2021. The Greek Solution has steered away from the military-like type of right-wing activism which had set apart the Golden Dawn party from all the rest of parties of the Greek system in 2009-2019.

On the Left, the Greek crisis offered a small radical left party, Syriza, an unprecedented opportunity to rise to government and to rule in 2015-2019, after it had adopted a definitely populist profile, albeit a left-wing one (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014, Katsambekis 2016, Tsakatika 2017). While in opposition, Syriza had very few ties to traditional social interest groups, such as workers and farmers. It was strongly represented among the student movement, the anti-globalization movement and various human rights movements. After 2010 the party's influence grew among the victims of the economic crisis, namely, the young, the unemployed, artisans and craftsmen and even liberal professions. This was the result of Syriza's strategy to indiscriminately support all anti-austerity protests in a typically populist fashion that hid all social cleavages except the cleavage between the elites and the masses. Syriza took up the cause of many different groups which throughout 2010-2014, in the face of austerity and reforms in the economic production and distribution systems, defended their market niches (niches of pharmacists, taxi owners, commercial truck owners, and others). Syriza also won large support from among public sector employees, as it sought to fight salary and pension cuts and all public sector organizational reforms of the 2010-2014 period.

In short, Syriza was able to draw votes from among employees and pensioners of the public and private sectors and among small businessmen and professionals. The party promised to the former a restoration of their pre-crisis salaries and pensions and to the latter a return to the pre-crisis production and market regulations, suitable to their business interests. Syriza did not necessarily re-vitalize old conflicts, although as discussed below in this text, the Left-Right cleavage was never overshadowed in the Greek party system. What Syriza did was to achieve prime status in representing the population categories and social strata which were adversely affected by the economic crisis after 2010. Disaffected social groups felt that they were no more

represented by the two mainstream parties, New Democracy and Pasok, which in 2010-2014 implemented the economic austerity policies required to avoid Greece's sovereign default; and they resorted to Syriza for political representation (confirmation of the representation gap hypothesis of Michal Kubat's theoretical chapter in this Deliverable).

Populist Parties and the Greek Party System

The party system that emerged after the onset of the economic crisis in 2010 and the double elections of 2012 bore little resemblance to the one that existed since the early 1980s and up to the 2010s. The stable and relatively moderate (especially since the mid-1990s) two-party system had been replaced by a volatile, fragmented and polarized multi-party system (Sartori, 1976). For the first time since the return of democracy seven parties were able to send representatives to the Greek parliament in 2012. The number of parties stayed the same between the election of May and the election of June 2012 despite the staggering amount of vote switching that occurred between the two trips to the polls just six weeks apart. Elections in 2012 and 2015 were followed by negotiations in order to achieve workable governing coalitions, going against decades of political practice and an entrenched majoritarian political culture in the Greek party system and despite an electoral system that awarded a 50-seat bonus to the first party, expressly designed to facilitate the formation of single-party majority governments.

In this period, up to the two elections of 2015, the logic of coalition government formation was dictated by political party stances towards the aforesaid economic austerity packages and did not follow the logic of connected minimal winning coalitions (at least with regard to the left-right axis of competition). Nothing exemplifies this trend better than the two consecutive coalition governments formed by Syriza and Anel. The two parties had vast programmatic differences on economic and, particularly, cultural and social issues but their shared rejection of economic austerity, as well as their common critique of high-level corruption and of vested interests connected to the two former major parties, had made them behave as potential coalition partners for months in advance (Tsatsanis and Teperoglou 2016, 7).

The centripetal tendencies that existed in the Greek party system since at least the mid-1990s were replaced by powerful centrifugal forces, aided by the rise of Golden Dawn, arguably the most extreme anti-system party that enjoyed representation in the parliament of a European country. Even though polarization along the left-right axis increased, this measure most probably still underestimates the overall increase in polarization in the Greek political system since 2009. The reason is that the ideological left-right dimension only partially captures the

dimensions of party competition in Greece since 2009. It fails to accurately represent the polarization on new issue divides that emerged and were related to austerity and the MoUs and, as an extension, attitudes towards the EU and the euro.

In other words, the rise of populists in the Greek party system both altered the lines of political polarization and made them more acute (confirmation of the polarization hypothesis of the theoretical chapter by Michal Kubat). However, left-right polarization remained important as exemplified by the fact that even during the crisis, most of the aggregate electoral volatility continued to be intra-bloc volatility and not inter-bloc (Tsatsanis, 2018). The elections of 2019 signaled in many ways the end of the period of party system fragmentation and fluidity in the Greek party system. New Democracy was able to win about two-fifths of the vote and form a single party government, a result reminiscent of the patterns that existed in the pre-crisis party system with the major difference that Syriza had replaced Pasok as the major left-of-center party in Greece.

Conclusion

The Greek party system changed dramatically because of the rise of populist parties of the Right and the Left. While populists were important also in the recent past (in 1981-1989, when Pasok had first ruled), it was particularly after the eruption of the Greek economic crisis that they held center stage in the party system. Along with the rise of a left-wing populist party in government (Syriza, in 2015-2019), the Greek party system also witnessed the emergence of small right-wing populist parties, one among which, the Golden Dawn, subscribed to neo-nazism.

It looked as if Greek democracy was pulled apart from two opposite poles, but eventually government turnover took place smoothly on all occasions, while political and civil liberties were preserved. The performance of the populist government coalition in power (the Syriza/ANEL coalition in 2015-2019) at times bordered on intolerance and hostility towards critical media and the justice system (Sotiropoulos 2018), but checks and balances against the populist government did not reach a breaking point. In brief, Greek democracy was affected by the rise of populism, although it did not succumb to pressures emerging from different sides of the political spectrum. Despite the grave economic crisis of the 2010 and the rise of populist parties in Greek politics, the Greek democracy survived and withstood all economic and political blows, even though, admittedly, the social cost in terms of unemployment and poverty rates was very extensive.

Sources

- Andreadis, Ioannis and Yannis Stavrakakis. 2017. "European Populist Parties in Government: How Well are Voters Represented? Evidence from Greece". *Swiss Political Science Review*, 23(4): 485–508.
- Diamandouros, Nikiforos P. 1994. "Cultural Dualism and Political Change in Post-authoritarian Greece". *Working Paper no. 50*. Madrid: Instituto Juan March de Estudios e Investigaciones.
- Dinas, Elias, Vassiliki Georgiadou, and Ioannis Konstantinidis. 2016. "From Dusk to Dawn: Local Party Organization and Party Success of Right-wing Extremism". *Party Politics* 22(1): 80–92.
- Doxiadis, Aristos and Manos Matsaganis. 2013. "National Populism and Xenophobia in Greece". In: C. Fieschi, M. Morris and L. Caballero (eds.). *Populist Fantasies: European Revolts in Context*. London: Counterpoint, 31–97.
- Ellinas, Antonis. 2013. "The Rise of Golden Dawn: The New Face of the Far Right in Greece". *South European Society and Politics* 18(4): 543–565.
- Kalpadakis, Giorgos and Dimitri A. Sotiropoulos. 2007. "Europeanism and National Populism: the Europeanisation of Greek Civil Society and Foreign Policy". *Hellenic Studies* 17(1): 43–66.
- Katsambekis, Giorgos. 2016. "Radical Left Populism in Contemporary Greece: Syriza's Trajectory from Minoritarian Opposition to Power". *Constellations* 23(3): 391–403.
- Mouzelis, Nicos P. 1986. *Politics in the Semi-periphery*. London: Macmillan.
- Pappas, Takis S. 2013. "Why Greece Failed". *Journal of Democracy* 24(2): 31–45.
- Sartori, Giovanni. 1976. *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sotiropoulos, Dimitri A. 1996. *Populism and Bureaucracy: Greece Under Pasok's Rule, 1981-1989*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Sotiropoulos, Dimitri A. 2018. "The Backsliding of Democracy in Today's Greece", Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Athens Office. Retrieved from: <https://www.lse.ac.uk/Hellenic-Observatory/Assets/Documents/Publications/Staff-Publications/Sotiropoulos-Backsliding-of-Democracy-Crisis-2019-paper-Fr-Ebert-Stiftun...pdf>, accessed on 13. 02. 2021.
- Stavrakakis, Yannis and Giorgos Katsambekis. 2014. "Left-wing Populism in the European Periphery: The Case of SYRIZA". *Journal of Political Ideologies* 19(2): 119–142.
- Tsakatika, Myrto. 2017. "SYRIZA's Electoral Rise in Greece: Protest, Trust and the Art of Political Manipulation". *South European Society and Politics* 16(1): 519–540.
- Teperoglou, Eftichia, Emmanouil Tsatsanis, and Elias Nicolacopoulos. 2015. "Habituating to the New Normal in a Post-Earthquake Party System: The 2014 European Election in Greece". *South European Society and Politics* 20(3): 333–355.

Tsatsanis, Emmanouil. 2018. "The Swift Unraveling: Party System Change and De-institutionalization in Greece During the Crisis". In: M. Lisi (ed.). *Party System Change, the European Crisis and the State of Democracy*. London: Routledge, 115–136.

Tsirbas, Yannis and Dimitri A. Sotiropoulos. 2016. "Europe at the Epicenter of National Politics: The Attitudes of Greek Political Elites Towards the European Union and the Economic Crisis". *Historical Social Review* 41(4): 86–105.

Vasilopoulou, Sofia and Daphne Halikiopoulou. 2015. *The Golden Dawn's 'Nationalist Solution': Explaining the Rise of the Far Right in Greece*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Voulgaris, Yannis and Elias Nicolakopoulos (eds). 2012. *The Double Electoral Earthquake*. Athens: Themelio (in Greek).

The AfD - Filling two representation gaps in the electorate but standing apart in Parliament

Hendrik Hüning

Introduction

This chapter examines the influence of the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) on the German party system. The AfD emerged in 2013 and quickly gained electoral support, both on the local and federal level. Scholars and the media describe and perceive the AfD as a populist party with nativist appeal. The main arguments of this chapter are as follows: The AfD was able to fill in two presentation gaps, i.e. an initial gap attracting voters with Euro-sceptic attitudes and, after a shift of the AfD's policy positions to the far right, a second gap representing voters with xenophobic and nativist attitudes. Moreover, the AfD widened the spectrum of cultural positions within the German political system, leading to an increase in polarization regarding the policy issues discussed. A heightened degree of polarization can also be identified with regard to how these issues are discussed, i.e. rhetoric and style of discourse.

Although AfD officials and its leadership have difficulties to distance themselves from the far-right nationalists and extremist parties and engage in delegitimizing tactics and rhetoric, the AfD as a whole can only be very broadly defined as an anti-system party. The internal tensions between the moderates around spokesman Jörg Meuthen and the right wing, i.e. "Der Flügel" around Thuringia's state AfD and its official Björn Höcke demonstrate different degrees of acceptance of the current political system. Due to this inability to separate itself from the far-right extremist parties, the AfD finds itself an isolated opposition party in parliament.

The rest of the chapter is structured as follows. Subchapter 2 highlights the origin, development and current role of the AfD in the German political landscape. Subchapter 3 illustrates the AfD's role in the German party system, arguing that it filled in two representation gaps as well as leading to a slight polarization in the German party system. Subchapter 4 identifies the type of party system prevalent in Germany and the impact the AfD had on this system. Subchapter 5 concludes.

Political Context

A party with strong populist appeal is a relatively new phenomenon in the German political landscape. The AfD, founded by the former party members of the Christian Democrats (CDU) Konrad Adam, Bernd Lucke and Alexander Gauland in February 2013, quickly gained attraction across different social classes of the electorate. The AfD started as a single-issue party, criticizing the CDU's handling of the Euro crisis, and therefore attracted Euro sceptics. The party subsequently absorbed supporters with strong nationalist and nativist views and experienced a strong surge in electoral support between 2015 and 2019. Recently, however, this surge seems to have partly settled as the latest local elections and surveys suggest.⁶

Currently, the AfD holds seats in all 16 German state parliaments (January 2021). It received vote shares of between 5.9% (Schleswig-Holstein) and 27.5% (Saxony). This corresponds in effect to a number of seats between three and 38.⁷ On the federal level, the AfD holds 89 seats in the German Bundestag.⁸ Despite its success in establishing itself on almost all levels of the German political system, the AfD finds itself isolated in parliaments. Not only does the AfD not form government in a coalition with other parties, something that all other parties strictly exclude, but also in opposition the party is standing apart from other opposition parties. The AfD chose the role of a “provocateur” in state as well as federal parliaments that helps the AfD to distance itself from established parties (Schroeder et al. 2020) which makes parliamentary collaboration with other parties even more difficult. The official “calls to order” in parliament increased in recent years, two-third of these are due to misconduct of the AfD.⁹

Besides its (self)-isolation tendencies within parliament, the AfD is engaged in internal conflicts, especially among its leadership and its political currents since its foundation. Most prominently, the public confrontation between the economic wing around Bernd Lucke and Frauke Petry (belonging to the national-conservative wing) in 2015 finally made Lucke leave the party. Most recently, the moderate wing lead by AfD national chair Jörg Meuthen and the

⁶<https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2020-02/afd-hamburg-buergerschaftswahl-rechtspopulismus-wahlkampf> and <https://dawum.de/AfD/>, accessed 04/01/2021.

⁷<https://de.statista.com/infografik/5926/afd-in-den-landtagen/> and <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/606307/umfrage/sitze-der-afd-in-den-landtagen-der-bundeslaender-in-deutschland/>, accessed: 30/11/2020.

⁸ See https://www.bundestag.de/parlament/plenum/sitzverteilung_19wp, accessed: 30/11/2020.

⁹ <https://www.n-tv.de/politik/Immer-mehr-Ordnungsrufe-im-Bundestag-article22267093.html>, accessed 01/01/2021.

right wing (“der Flügel”) are publicly infighting. This is well documented in current statements and speeches, where the two camps attack each other.¹⁰

Overall, although the support for the AfD increased steadily between 2013 and 2019, recent results at local and federal elections indicate that support has settled on a moderate level. One reason is that a central policy issue of the AfD, migration, lost its importance in the last two years. Most recently, the Covid-19 pandemic seems to have a bad impact on the AfD’s support in the electorate because people have faith into the government’s response to the pandemic.¹¹ Moreover, during the crisis people more often consume traditional media outlets to inform themselves about the pandemic’s current situation, making it less easy for the AfD to set an agenda and social media strategy against those same outlets.¹²

The AfD’s role in the German Party System

The theoretical chapter provides four hypotheses on how a populist party rises and affects the party system. The Representation Gap Hypothesis, Contagion Hypothesis, Polarization Hypothesis, and the Elective Affinity Coalition Hypothesis. In the following, we will argue and provide empirical evidence on which of these hypotheses apply to the AfD and its role in the German party system.

First, we will consider the Representation Gap Hypothesis and how it applies to the emergence of the AfD. A representation gap may unfold in the following ways. A salience gap might initiate a representation gap, where established parties ignore the problems that are most important for the electorate. This initial gap widens the more the policy preferences of voters deviate from those of the political leaders. Moreover, a communicative gap amplifies the representation gap, when political leaders “*fail to sufficiently explain their policy choices to the general public*” (Kortmann et al. 2019, Reher 2015, Golder and Stramski 2010).

As noted earlier, the AfD started as a single-issue party and attracted Eurosceptic voters. Thus, the AfD filled in the representation gap for those voters being in favor of the dissolution of the Eurozone and felt misrepresented by established parties with regard to these policy issues (Schmitt-Beck 2017). More interestingly, however, is that the AfD quickly filled in a second representation gap by attracting voters with nativist preferences. Since the departure of Bernd

¹⁰ See for instance <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/afd-parteitag-meuthens-kampf-gegen-den-verfassungsschutz-17076955.html>, accessed 30/11/2020.

¹¹ <https://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/deutschland/corona-pandemie-warum-die-afd-ein-verlierer-der-coronakrise-ist/25752828.html>, accessed 30/11/2020.

¹² https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/afd-kommunikation-in-der-coronakrise-schlechte-zeiten-fuer.2907.de.html?dram:article_id=474787, accessed 05/01/2021.

Lucke and the marginalization of the economic wing, the AfD effectively only fills in this second gap of representation at the far right of the political spectrum. It is important, however, to distinguish these two phases of the AfD's success and two gaps in representation. The "economic-issue" gap generated a "middle-class-conservative" image that helped the foundation for the absorption of more nativist positions.

With regard to the second gap of representation that the AfD was able to fill, Kortmann et al. (2019) investigate party manifestos with textual methods and reveal that established parties largely neglected the topic of (Muslim) immigration to Germany for a long time. In recent years, all major parties increased their attention to the topic and, importantly, this happened even before the advent of the AfD. The AfD, however, was most attentive to this topic. Moreover, matching corresponding demand in the electorate, the AfD was exclusively critical, i.e. expressed negative sentiment towards the topic. Kortmann et al. (2019) do not find a representation gap with regard to the policy issue of immigration itself, although they find more radical positions towards immigration by the AfD, but with regard to the style of *how* the topic is communicated. The AfD was able to bring the critical aspects of immigration and refugees on the political agenda with harsh rhetoric, giving voice to a share in the electorate that felt poorly represented with regard to this issue. Thus, the gap in representation rather stems in the form of style than in the form of content (Kortmann et al. 2019).

Consistent with this finding, Schwarzbözl and Fatke (2016) analyze data from the German National Election Study and find that AfD voters unite the dissatisfaction with established parties. Moreover, the AfD's electorate seems to be a homogenous group with regard to their policy positions that are structurally different compared to the electorate of other parties. Rippl and Seipel (2018) state that their data at least partly support the hypothesis that the AfD's electorate consists of "modernization losers" because their income (per capita) is slightly below average. They also state that results are mixed and overall the AfD constituency should be seen as a rather heterogeneous group with regard to their background. Supporting the hypothesis of modernization losers, a recent study of Mercator Forum Migration finds that German regions that experience stronger emigration in the years after 2000, i.e. young (well-educated) people leave the region, have more support for the AfD in elections.¹³ The authors explain the finding with a feeling of loss in social infrastructure and frustration of those being left-behind.

¹³ https://www.zeit.de/news/2020-12/08/studie-afd-erfolgreicher-in-regionen-mit-mehr-abwanderung?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.de%2F and <https://www.stiftung-mercator.de/de/publikation/emigration-in-europa/>, accessed: 05/01/2021.

Finally, Steiner and Landwehr (2018) find that voters who have a “populistic democracy understanding” are more likely to vote the AfD, indicating that the representation gap regards at least partly to those that feel less represented by the established democratic system and have a different perception of democracy. On the other hand, the AfD’s success in the election in 2017 had a short-term satisfaction effect with democracy and the political system on their voters, although they remain the most dissatisfied voter group (Reinl and Schäfer 2020).

With regard to the Contagion Hypothesis, there is yet no empirical evidence that the rise of the AfD led to a diffusion of populist ideas in the policy agenda of established parties. More generally, Jankowski et al. (2019) provide empirical evidence that established parties accommodate their policy positions towards that of the AfD. Applying scaling techniques to the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES), the authors find evidence that almost all parties shifted to the right with regard to their cultural left-right dimension since 2013, i.e. the advent of the AfD. This finding, however, does not mean that established parties take on populist ideas more often or apply populist rhetoric. More work on the diffusion of populist positions from the AfD to other parties is needed in order to evaluate if the Contagion Hypothesis is justified in the case of the AfD.

Regarding the Polarization Hypothesis, one has to distinguish two dimensions of polarization. First, polarization with regard to content, i.e. policy and ideological positions and second, polarization with regard to party communication. Since the advent of the AfD, the German party system became more polarized between 2014 and 2017 (Korte et al. 2018). The AfD especially increased the range of cultural positions, i.e. increased the polarization in the cultural dimension of policy-issues, e.g. migration (Diermeier 2020).

Moreover, there is empirical evidence that polarization takes also place with regard to communication and discourse. As Darius and Stephany (2019) show by investigating communication of political parties on Twitter, AfD politicians frequently engage in “Hashjacking”, i.e. AfD politicians not only use their own party hashtags, but also “hashtags of other (established) parties. This finding suggests that polarization is not only “passively” occurring due to a wider range of the cultural positions represented in the political system but also is intended and actively managed by the AfD and its social media strategy. Moreover, the polarization effect appears to be rather in the form and style of discourse, than with regard to the content of the discussion (Schünemann et al. 2018). With regard to the polarization within the electorate, Shahrezaye et al. (2019) find that endorsement of Facebook posts polarized as well during the course of 2017, i.e. there is an increase of endorsement of posts that entail a

user's political view and a decrease of endorsement of posts that entail the opposite political view.

Overall, the appearance of the AfD in the German political arena led to slightly higher polarization within the party system, because on one hand the AfD actively engages in a polarizing communication and social media strategy and on the other hand widening the cultural dimensions of policy issues.

Finally, the Elective Affinity Coalition Hypothesis does not apply for the AfD. The party did not yet engage in (governing) coalitions with other populist parties or non-populist parties that employ populist discourse schemes. The AfD was not able to form any coalition yet, neither on the federal nor on the state level, mostly because other parties strictly rejected it.

Populist Parties and the Party System

Following the concepts introduced in the theoretical chapter (Satori 2005, Wolinetz 2006), two criteria have to be considered for the definition of the type of the German party system: On one hand the degree of competition, i.e. the number of dominant parties in the German party system, and on the other hand the degree of polarization. The former can be either unimodal, bipolar, or multipolar. The latter can be either minimal, moderate, greater, or extreme.

In the past decades, the German party system was long dominated by two large parties, i.e. the Social Democrats (SPD) and Christian Democrats (CDU) together with mostly two smaller parties. This is also referred to as a “two-and-a-half” party system (Blondel 1968). Several developments in the last decade, such as the weaker and weaker performance of the SPD in federal and state elections (Niedermayer 2010) as well as the surge in support for the Green party (Die Grünen), however, transform Germany to a multipolar party system.¹⁴ With regard to the degree of polarization, defined as “*the ideological distance between parties*” (Compare theoretical chapter), the German party system can be classified as being moderately polarized. The weakness of the Liberals (FDP) as well as the appearance of the AfD, however, made the German party system more polarized than it was before.¹⁵ Taken together, we can classify the German political system as limited multipartyism with moderate but increasing polarization.

¹⁴ See for instance: <https://www.fes.de/internationale-politikanalyse/monitor-soziale-demokratie/strategiedebatten-global/strategiedebatten-italien-1-2-1>, accessed 12/10/2020.

¹⁵ See for instance: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2013/11/07/the-polarisation-of-the-german-party-system-in-the-2013-elections-and-the-disappearance-of-the-fdp-explains-the-countrys-tortuous-coalition-negotiations/>, accessed 12/10/2020.

Increased polarization in the German party system during the last decade has two reasons. First, a “representation vacuum” appeared on the “center-right” of the political spectrum due to the coalition formations of the last legislative periods that formed the “Great Coalition” (Große Koalition), where the two larger German parties (SPD and CDU) form the government. This leads the CDU to become less conservative and being “pushed more to the center of the left-right spectrum due to political compromises with the SPD. Second, the appearance of the AfD, filling in the vacuum on the right, acts as a “provocateur” on the political scene, and takes stronger ideological positions to the right, thus increasing the political polarization in the German landscape.

As outlined in the theoretical chapter, an additional feature that leads to polarized pluralism, is the phenomenon of anti-system parties. Satori formulates a broader and narrow definition of an anti-system party. The former is characterized by either an “alienation” position towards the system, a “refusal” of the system, or “protest” against it. The latter defines an anti-system party as not sharing any of the values of the political order in which it operates. Capoccia’s (2002) definition of relational anti-systemness stresses the party’s effect on polarization, its inability to form coalitions and populist as well as delegitimizing tactics. The inability to form coalitions reflects Zulianello’s (2018) criterion of “system integration”.

Taken these definitions and criteria together, the AfD can be defined as an anti-system party only in a very broad sense, following Satori’s broader definition, or being characterized by relational anti-systemness (Capoccia). This can be justified as follows:

While at the very beginning, the AfD presented itself as the “conservative conscience” of the CDU (Dilling 2018), the AfD quickly changed to the image of an “Anti-Party Party” (Bieber et al. 2018), thus, as an “Alternative” to the established parties (as its name already suggests). Moreover, the AfD is not integrated into the German political system. All other parties in parliament strictly exclude coalitions with the AfD, also because of the AfD’s inability or reluctance to distance itself from the extreme right.

The overall party, however, can only partly be characterized as an anti-systemness party because of the two political currents that it entails. While the moderate wing wants to strengthen the AfD’s economic positions and start governing coalitions, AfD members around Alexander Gauland and Frauke Petry “*envisioned the AfD as a populist radical right and relational anti-system party*” (Franzmann 2016, Dilling 2018). While the former has weakened in recent years, both tendencies remain within the AfD.

Beside the distinction between the more moderate current and the radical wing within the AfD, it can be stated that the AfD expresses its anti-system stance in two directions. First,

protesting against political procedures and institutions, as documented by the AfD's behavior in state parliaments (Schroeder et al. 2017), and second, by its delegitimizing rhetoric (Isemann and Walter 2019) that erodes acceptance of political institutions within (at least) the AfD's electorate. Overall, the AfD has a delegitimizing influence on the German party system.

Overall, the AfD shows only tendencies of anti-systemness that finally lead to a rather moderately polarized German party system. It is therefore difficult to evaluate if this shift to more polarization leads to a considerably worse functioning of the German party system. On one hand, the AfD's protesting stance impairs the functioning of parliamentary procedures and slows down decisions. On the other hand, the AfD's influence is limited as all other parties, even other opposition parties, strictly exclude any collaboration and coalition with the AfD.

Conclusion

Despite the AfD's electoral success and representation in all state and federal parliaments, the AfD still has the (self-chosen) role of a provocateur that fuels its social media strategy of being the victim of established parties and its narrative of fighting against the current political system. Due to the rejection of other parties to form coalitions with the AfD, the AfD is isolated within the party system.

The AfD was able to fill two gaps of presentation, namely by representing Euro-sceptic voters and voters with xenophobic and nativist positions, that explain its rapid success.

Both, the widening cultural dimension of policy issues as well as the AfD's willfully provoking communication and social media strategy lead to an increase in polarization in the German party system.

Due to moderate and radical currents within the AfD, it can only be very broadly defined as an anti-system party. The AfD, however, engages in delegitimizing rhetoric. The AfD's influence on the party system is, at least for the moment, somewhat limited because of the strict exclusion by other parties to form coalitions, inner tensions and scandals within the AfD that weakens its current standing in the system of parties, and competition for voters that not only elected the AfD temporary for protest reasons.

Sources

Bieber, I., Roßteutscher, S., and P. Scherer. 2018. "Die Metamorphosen der AfD-Wählerschaft: Von einer euroskeptischen Protestpartei zu einer (r)echten Alternative?". *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 59: 433–461.

- Darius, P. and F. Stephany. 2019. "Hashjacking the Debate: Polarisation Strategies of Germany's Political Far-Right on Twitter". In: Weber I. et al. (eds). *Social Informatics. SocInfo 2019. Lecture Notes in Computer Science* 11864: 298–308.
- Diermeier, M. 2020. "The AfD's Winning Formula – No Need for Economic Strategy Blurring in Germany". *Intereconomics* 55(1): 43–52.
- Dilling, M. 2018. "Two of the same kind? The Rise of the AfD and its Implications for the CDU/CSU". *German Politics and Society* 126(36): 84–104.
- Franzmann, S. 2016. "Von AfD zu ALFA. Die Entwicklung zur Spaltung". *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Deutsches und Internationales Parteienrecht und Parteienforschung (MIP)* 22: 23–37.
- Golder, M. and J. Stramski. 2010. "Ideological congruence and electoral institutions". *American Journal of Political Science* 54: 90–106.
- Isemann, S.D., and E. Walther. 2019. "Wie extrem ist die AfD? Die Entwicklung der AfD und deren Wählerschaft als Radikalisierungsprozess". In: Walther E. and S. Isemann (eds). *Die AfD – psychologisch betrachtet*. Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Jankowski, M., S. Schneider, and M. Tepe. 2019. "To Adapt or to Defend? Comparing Position Shifts among Bundestag Candidates between 2013 and 2017". *West European Politics* 42(4): 895–913.
- Korte, K.-R. et. al. 2018. *Parteien-demokratie in Bewegung*. Nomos.
- Kortmann, M., Ch. Stecker, and T. Weiß. 2019. "Filling a Representation Gap? How Populist and Mainstream Parties Address Muslim Immigration and the Role of Islam". *Representation* 55:4, 435–456.
- Niedermayer, O. 2010. "Von der Zweiparteiendominanz zum Pluralismus: Die Entwicklung des deutschen Parteiensystems im westeuropäischen Vergleich". *Politische Vierteljahrsschrift* 51(1): 1–13.
- Reher, S. 2015. "Explaining cross-national variation in the relationship between priority congruence and satisfaction with democracy". *European Journal of Political Research* 54: 160–181.
- Reinl, A., and C. Schäfer. 2020. "How the 2017 Federal Election in Germany Affected Satisfaction with Democracy among AfD Voters". *German Politics*.
- Rippl, S., and Ch. Seipel. 2018. "Modernisierungsverlierer, Cultural Backlash, Postdemokratie. Was Erklärt Rechtspopulistische Orientierungen?". *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 70(2): 237–54.
- Schmitt-Beck, R. 2017. "The 'Alternative für Deutschland in the Electorate': Between Single-Issue and Right-Wing Populist Party". *German Politics* 26(1): 124–48.
- Schroeder, W., B. Weßels, Ch. Neusser, and A. Berzel. 2017. "Parlamentarische Praxis der AfD in deutschen Landesparlamenten". *Discussion Paper SP V*: 2017–102. Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung.
- Schroeder, W., Weßels, B., and A. Berzel. 2020. "Die AfD in den Landtagen: Bipolarität als Struktur und Strategie – zwischen Parlaments- und „Bewegungs“-Orientierung". In: Bröchler S., M. Glaab M., and H. Schöne (eds) *Kritik, Kontrolle, Alternative. Regierungssystem und Regieren in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Wiesbaden: Springer.

Schünemann, W., S. Steiger, and F. Kliche. 2018. “Echo chambers and polarisation in the German federal election 2017”. *ECPR General Conference*, Hamburg.

Schwarzbözl, T., and M. Fatke. 2016. “Außer Protesten nichts gewesen? Das politische Potenzial der AfD”. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 57(2): 276–299.

Shahrezaye, M., P. Orestis, J. Serrano, and S. Hegelich. 2019. “Measuring the Ease of Communication in Bipartite Social Endorsement Networks: A Proxy to Study the Dynamics of Political Polarization”. *Proceedings of the 10th International Conference on Social Media and Society*, Toronto: 158–165.

Steiner, N., and C. Landwehr. 2018. “Populistische Demokratiekonzeptionen und die Wahl der AfD: Evidenz aus einer Panelstudie”. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 59: 463–491.

The Party System in Spain After the Populist Explosion: A New Cycle?

Jaume Magre, Lluís Medir, and Esther Pano

Introduction

The recent emergence of the two main populist parties, VOX and Unidas Podemos (UP), in election contests led to a historical record in the effective number of parties in Spain, considerable electoral volatility and, above all, an exponential increase in political polarization, measured using the Dalton index. This situation, which may remain over time due to the lack of institutionalization of the new party system inaugurated in 2015, has not yet succeeded in forcing a centrifugal movement of political parties away from the political centre to attract the more radicalized electorate.

These two political organizations have different strategies concerning the role that they should play in the party system and the political pressure mechanisms that they use. UP, focused on a left-wing agenda and stripped of the populist content which it professed at the time of its creation, prioritizes joining coalition governments, especially with the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE). VOX, on the other hand, reintroduces into the public debate an agenda of issues strategically geared toward polarizing Spanish society and forcing the conservative political parties, fundamentally the People's Party (PP), to reposition themselves on the ideological axis.

The report's structure is organized in three sections. The first one frames the short life of the two populist organizations and the disparate political weight that they have obtained in recent years. The second block endeavours to describe their role in the party system and the third section reflects on the structure of the new party system which has gradually emerged over the last few years.

Political Context

The two main Spanish populist forces, UP and VOX, came onto the scene in 2014. The fact that they both appeared at the same time is, to a large extent, due to the severe and protracted economic crisis endured by broad layers of Spanish society and to the observation that the traditional mechanisms of political representation were incapable of channelling the demands and indignation of the citizens. The long economic crisis was especially intense in the countries of southern Europe, and its management by the political establishment acted as a catalyst for a series of attitudinal changes which broke with the classic description of Spanish political culture, especially lacking in political effectiveness or, more specifically, in political competence (Cordero and Montero 2015). Indeed, since the beginning of the 2008 economic crisis, dissatisfaction with democracy and disaffection toward politics in general had increased to unprecedented levels. The mixture of high doses of cognitive competence -internal political effectiveness- and a greater feeling of impotence in the face of the system's operation are important arguments when it comes to understanding the growing atmosphere of disaffection toward institutional politics perceived in Spanish society.

To a certain extent, the origin of both political organizations marks their subsequent development. For a long time, UP has been the institutionalized expression of the different social movements which appeared during the first decade of the 2000s. This position entails contradictions which have become clear over these years: from the tension between the horizontal nature of a movement and the hierarchy required by a political organization, to the difficulty in seeking harmony between clearly left-wing positions and the cross-cutting nature of any populist formula. On the other hand, VOX is the result of a division of the most radical sector of the centre right of the People's Party, highly critical with the immigration policies of the PP government itself, and with a classic party structure.

The electoral history of the two parties is therefore very recent. It begins with the 2014 European election. The time series of the general elections in which the two populist forces have participated shows two divergent paths. As regards UP, after a successful start in the elections, the subsequent trend has been clearly downwards, so much so that, in less than five years, its electoral support has gone down by over one million votes and three percentage points. The weakness of the UP's origins (Torreblanca 2015; Galindo 2015) and the difficulties represented by the territorial structure of a multilevel country,

reveal the obstacles to institutionalizing a party of these characteristics (Rodríguez-Teruel 2016). VOX, on the other hand, has experienced an explosive electoral evolution, going from 57,000 votes in 2015 to becoming, four years later, the third biggest political force in Spain with over three and a half million votes and 52 deputies in the Congress. It moreover obtained good results in the elections of certain autonomous communities, such as Andalusia and Valencia, in which it has always obtained more than 20% of the vote.

Table 1. VOX and UP's election results (2014-2019).

Year	Election	VOX		PODEMOS	
		Votes	%	Votes	%
2014	European	244,929	1.6	1253837	7.9
2015	Municipal	64,385	0.3		
2015	General	58,114	0.2	3198584	12.7
2016	General	47,182	0.2	3227123	13.4
2019	General (April)	2,688,092	10.3	2897419	11.1
2019	General (November)	3,656,979	15.1	2381960	9.8
2019	European	1,388,681	6.2	2258857	10.1
2019	Municipal	659,736	2.9	366594	1.6

Source: Ministry of the Interior

This same evolution can be seen in the distribution of seats in the last four general elections. The translation of votes into seats shows that, in just a few years, UP's parliamentary representation decreased by almost half while, on the other hand, VOX has gone from having no parliamentary representation to being the third biggest political force in the chamber. Although it is true that the electoral system plays an important role in the distribution of seats for the two forces, it is also true that at present there is a party on the rise (VOX) and another whose decline is levelling off (UP).

Table 2. VOX and UP's seats/councillors (2014-2019).

Year	Election	VOX	PODEMO S
2014	European	0	5
2015	Municipal	22	
2015	General	0	42
2016	General	0	45
2019	General (April)	24	33
2019	General (November)	52	26
2019	European	3	6
2019	Municipal	530	481

Source: Ministry of the Interior

For UP, the parliamentary results did not represent an important negotiating position until the last general election in which, after reaching an agreement with the winner of the election, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, it entered the Spanish government with a ministerial presence which exceeds the election result obtained by this political force. As regards VOX, at present Santiago Abascal's formation has become the key for the People's Party and Citizens to be able to govern in certain autonomous communities like Madrid, Andalusia and Murcia and some Spanish municipalities. The strategy has consisted of not forming part of coalition governments but, on the other hand, facilitating the investiture of right-wing candidates - especially from the PP - in exchange for agreeing on policies in line with the ideology of VOX. Thus, a series of issues have reappeared on the political agenda which had practically disappeared from political debate.

These include all the concerns of the far right: the warning against immigration as a security problem, referring especially to "Islamic fundamentalism"; the promotion of state-subsidized private Catholic schools, and of education segregated by gender and the right of parents to veto their children's education when it questions their beliefs; the defence of the family as the central pillar of society; the questioning of abortion; contempt for the LGTBI movement; the rejection of historical memory and the exaltation of traditions. The main victory of VOX has thus been the ability to make the political debate more tense and the attempt to force the People's Party to reposition itself with more extreme ideological values. Without the parliamentary strength achieved by VOX in the last general election, the PP would not have followed this political strategy. The 2019

COVID pandemic and the tough lockdowns experienced by the Spanish population have played a significant role in this strategy of tension in the public agenda of VOX. Throughout this period, VOX appears to have sought to become a sort of “national opposition”, monopolizing protest against the executive. The objective is thus to fight for the ideological hegemony of the Spanish right wing and to influence the political course of the People’s Party.

The biographical description of the main populist organizations in Spain coincides with one of the most turbulent social and political periods of recent years, including especially the political upheaval caused by the judgement of the leaders of the pro-independence movement in Catalonia, which has concentrated a good part of the public debate on the territorial unity of Spain. The situation is further complicated since this debate needs to be resolved in a context of political fragmentation of the party system which is much greater than usual in Spanish tradition and an important degree of electoral volatility.

The Role of Populist Parties in the Party System

Representation gap hypothesis

One of the keys to the current polarization in Spain is that it is the result of identity differences (party, ideological and territorial) and not of differences concerning public policies on which there is a certain public consensus. The current fragmentation of the party system and the electoral volatility are linked to an increase in the ideological distance between the parties and to the greater territorial polarization between blocks in recent years. It should be taken into account that, unlike other countries, the identity division has a special relationship with the positions on the ideological axis: there are historical roots which link peripheral nationalism to the left in Spain and which connect the right with centrist positions (Simón 2020).

Despite this general description, the examples for which we have a time series show that polarization in relation to some policies is also growing rapidly (Miller, 2020), in many cases fostered by the political party elites, thus reducing possible spaces for agreement. The most obvious case is that of VOX, which is reintroducing classic issues which polarize Spanish society. They are unresolved issues popular among the most radical right wing: the territorial unity of Spain, immigration, political corruption, the LGTBI movement and the free choice of schools. This political organization’s strategy is thus to reintroduce an agenda of issues.

On the contrary, the left-wing organization UP introduces an agenda of issues closely linked to the populist universe which defined it at the time of its public appearance in 2015. This includes the failure of the 1978 Spanish transition, the unclosed issue of historical memory, and the crisis of representation. This agenda is gradually disappearing from public debate at the same time as UP's populist content is decreasing with time. Over these years, UP has gradually shed populist positions and highlighted the left-wing content of its proposals.

Contagion hypothesis

The degree of influence of the two populist parties on the other political forces in relation to issues is determined by the authentic populist content of the two political organizations that we are studying. Indeed, we should not forget that VOX is a radical right-wing party which can be considered as populist mainly due to its nativism. It is thus logical that there are notable contact points with the other conservative forces as regards issues. These range from the concept of family and freedom of choice concerning education to liberal positions concerning fiscal policy. In other spheres (historical memory, gender violence), the capacity of VOX to create tension has made the PP lean toward positions which go beyond what political logic would recommend. The strategic tension with the other conservative parties is, however, most striking above all in the two thematic areas which define VOX, the unity of Spain and immigration. These other formations cannot take these arguments to the same extreme as VOX, since they are government parties and, therefore, have to avoid "verbal radicalism". VOX is not burdened with the responsibility of being in government and, furthermore, can maximize its benefit from these issues, since the defence of the Spanish nation and rejection of immigration are its *raison d'être*.

We should not be deceived by the tension of the public debate. An analysis of the election manifestos of the political forces in the 2019 general elections shows that the PP highlights the state of autonomous regions as one of the pillars of consensus in Spanish democracy. In relation to immigration, it does not invoke the lack of concern – or, even the complicity – of the political elites with this phenomenon or the nativist preference for nationals. The two main ideological weapons of VOX do not, therefore, appear in the PP's election manifesto.

Unidas Podemos is currently a left-wing political party, since it has gradually discarded its populist content with the passing of the years. Between this organization and

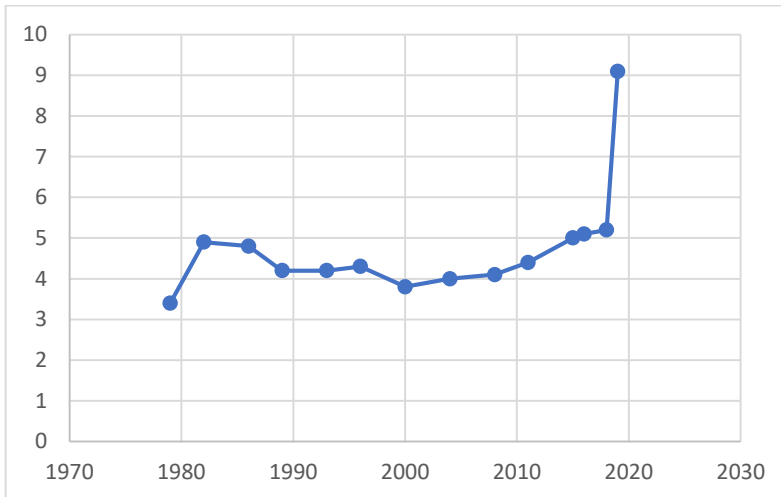
the PSOE there are the logical differences between a social democratic party and another slightly further to the left on the ideological spectrum. The populist ideology of Podemos -the betrayal of the elites of the 1978 regime, an idea of the people linked to social rights and criticism of Europe as the cause of the neoliberal shift leading to the economic degradation of Spain-, has disappeared from public debate and does not currently represent any pressure on Spain's left-wing parties.

Polarization hypothesis

The 2019 general elections were held in a context of fragmentation (substantially higher in the right-wing than in the left-wing political block), electoral volatility and, above all, polarization. Despite the fact that this latter dynamic has increased constantly over the last decade, it was closely linked to the October 2017 Catalan territorial crisis and the arrival of Pedro Sánchez's government following a vote of no confidence in May 2018. Despite all this, the main reasons for the increase in polarization were the appearance of the new radical right-wing party, VOX, and the creation of a system of two blocks in which the differences between the left and the right interacted with the territorial conflict. The fragmentation and electoral volatility are closely linked to the increase in ideological differentiation both on a territorial level and on the left-right axis (Simón 2020).

Historically, the Dalton index (Dalton, 2008) had always been around five and, starting from 2018, it increased to nine out of 10, representing maximum dissent. The opposition of the blocks became polarized following the collapse of Citizens and its replacement by VOX, positioned by the majority of voters on the far right of the ideological scale. To a large extent, this explains the growth in the polarization index.

Figure 1. Level of polarization of the political parties (0-10). Dalton index.



Source: Rodríguez-Teruel, 2020

The rise of VOX places severe restrictions on the recovery of the two-party system, requiring broad consensus in order to put an end to government instability. VOX may become the tribune for a more authoritarian Spain intransigent with the left and the peripheral nationalisms, acting as a shadow veto player, discouraging the PP from moving too close to the PSOE. It is thus highly unlikely that the polarization will diminish in Spain in the short term, since the new multi-party system, which arose in 2015, does not represent a stable balance and the new parties, UP and VOX, are not yet sufficiently institutionalized. The different players therefore have many incentives to distinguish themselves from the rival parties within the same ideological block and even across ideological blocks (Simón 2020).

Elective affinity coalition hypothesis

It is easier to explain the influence of the populist discourse on the formation of the government and the coalition options of the political parties through a spatial focus than an ideational approach. Spain's two main populist political forces adapt to the spatial theories of the left-right dimension and reach agreements with parties which are ideologically close to them: UP mainly with the PSOE and VOX with the PP and, to a lesser extent, with Citizens. The pact strategy is valid for both municipal and regional elections.

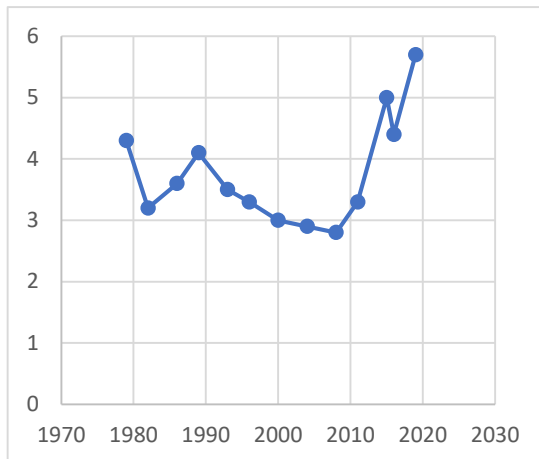
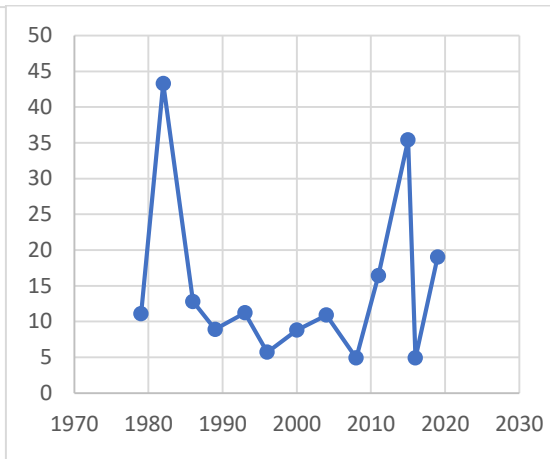
The main difference lies in the strategy followed by the two political organizations to confront post-election pacts and the possibility of forming part of coalition

governments. In this respect, VOX has prioritized parliamentary stability pacts with the PP and Citizens in order to remove the left wing from institutions. The issues that it has placed on the table in order to reach agreements coincide fully with its discourse and campaign proposals: the repeal of “gender laws” and LGTBI, the defence of the unity of Spain, tax reductions and support for business initiative, the struggle against illegal immigration and the protection of traditional culture. VOX has very rarely decided to form part of a coalition government. To date, the strategy has been to agree upon a certain government programme in exchange for institutional stability, facilitating the investiture of the conservative candidate. Its parliamentary intervention has thus been decisive in the autonomous regions of Madrid, Andalusia and Murcia.

On the contrary, Unidas Podemos has preferred to form coalition governments, generally with the PSOE, starting from a government programme. This strategy is aided by the fact that UP has lost a very important part of the populist content that it had originally and has emphasized its left-wing ideological nature. This explains the state coalition government which, according to the UP’s leaders, has been considered to be the most progressive in the history of Spain.

Populist Parties and the Party System

The last general elections in 2019 left one of the most unstable and fragmented political scenarios since the 1978 transition. The effective number of parties is the highest in the entire election history of Spain (around six), while the aggregate vote transfer levels (electoral volatility) are also fairly unusual for the Spanish party system. The emergence of two new populist parties and, above all, the huge popular support achieved by VOX explain the tension of the new multi-party system which emerged in 2015.

Chart 2. Effective number of parties.**Source: compiled by author****Chart 3. Electoral volatility.****Source: compiled by author**

As can be seen in the time series of the Dalton index, the fragmentation and volatility are accompanied by a very marked increase in polarization between parties. The policy of outbidding becomes important in this situation of polarization. This has already begun in the Spanish case. On the one hand, problems which should generate a consensus solution, such as gender violence or immigration, divide the electorate. On the other hand, many of the traditional parties have already become involved in the game of the radical formations which, driven by the media, monopolize political debate (Casal and Rama 2019). This is the main victory of the populist parties, especially VOX. It has polarized the political agenda in recent months and succeeded in attracting the big parties to this public debate.

This strategy has not yet generated the centrifugal competition of the majority parties, fleeing the centre and seeking to compete for the extremes of the ideological spectrum where the voters adopt more radical ideological positions. This would be the first negative consequence for the party system and for the democratic system as a whole, as warned by Giovanni Sartori.

Table 3 shows the ideological position of the main Spanish parties according to the voters, measured on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is the position farthest to the left. The results of the time series show, first, that UP is situated by the voters in a clearly left-wing position, starting from the time of its creation as a political organization. To a certain extent, it is not perceived as a party with an extreme ideological base, although it is not seen as a cross-cutting formation either. On the other hand, the radical nature of the discourse of VOX means that a large proportion of Spaniards consider it to be a far-right party, placing it in an average position of 9.5 out of 10 on the ideological axis.

The time series moreover shows two interesting elements. First, UP's capacity to influence the position of the PSOE has been minor. There may be a relative change in the PSOE's position following the government pact with UP. We shall have to wait to see whether this becomes consolidated (2020). Second, the position of the PP on the ideological axis was very stable until the emergence of VOX. From then on, this organization's extreme position transformed the PP into an organization closer to the centre than it had ever been.

Table 3. Position of the political parties (2013-2020).

	2013	2014	2015	2017	2018	2019	2020
PSOE	4.42	4.62	4.38	4.27	4.27	4.2	3.9
PP	8.17	8.2	8.26	8.26	8.24	7.8	7.9
Citizens			6.18	6.56	7.06	7.1	6.9
IU	2.67	2.65	2.46	2.08	2.15	2.1	2.2
Podemos			2.09	2.15	2.28	2.4	2.4
Vox						9.4	9.5

Source: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas. Barometer for July (2013-2020)

Conclusion

Two Spanish populist formations emerged in 2014 due to the severe and protracted economic crisis endured by broad layers of Spanish society and to the observation that the traditional parties were incapable of channelling the indignation of the citizens. Although it is true that they share the same origin, UP is the institutionalized expression of the different social movements which appeared during those years, while VOX is the result of a split by the most radical sector of the right in the People's Party (PP).

The electoral history of the two parties is therefore very recent, scarcely five years. The time series of the general elections in which they have participated shows two divergent paths: one party whose decline is levelling off -UP- and the other clearly on the rise, Vox which, in the last general election in 2019, obtained the popular support of over 3,500,000 voters and 52 deputies in the Congress.

The appearance of the two populist parties has entailed a greater fragmentation of the party system, an increase in electoral volatility and, above all, a very notable increase in political polarization, visible in the time series of the Dalton index. This very abrupt

growth is the result of the huge electoral support achieved by VOX and of the extreme ideological position in which the voters place this political force.

The polarization has been channelled, especially by VOX, through the reintroduction of classic issues which have divided Spanish society. They are unresolved issues, many of which are popular among the most radical right wing. This is not the case of UP, which has emphasized the left-wing content of its proposals and which has gradually relinquished populist positions. The abandonment by UP of populist devices has aided its negotiating capacity, and this formation's strategy has been to form part of coalition governments, especially with the PSOE. On the contrary, VOX has chosen to agree on a certain government programme in exchange for institutional stability, facilitating the investiture of the conservative candidates.

Although it is true that the populist parties have been able to reintroduce issues onto the agenda which have polarized political debate, the perception that the citizens have of the position of the parties on the left-right axis has not become polarized. In this respect, they do not succeed in modifying the position of the parties in a centrifugal sense.

Sources

Casal, F. and J. Rama. 2019. *Sartori, fragmentación y polarización política*. Agenda Pública.

Cordero, G. and J. R. Montero. 2015. "Against bipartism, towards dealignment? The 2014 European election in Spain". *South European Society and Politics* 20(3).

Dalton, R. J. 2008. "The quantity and the quality of party systems: party system polarization, its measurement and consequences". *Comparative Political Studies* (41)7.

Fernández-Albertos, J. 2015. *Los votantes de Podemos. Del partido de los indignados al partido de los Excluidos*. Fundación: Alternativas.

Galindo, J. 2015. "Movilización social y representación política en España: de los indignados a Podemos". In: Minnaert, A. and Gustavo Endara (eds). *Democracia participativa e izquierda. Logros, contradicciones y desafíos*. Fundación Friedrich Ebert.

Marcos-Marne, H., C. Plaza-Colorado, and K. Hawkins. 2020. "Is populism the third dimensions? The quest for political alliances in Spain post-crisis". *Electoral Studies*.

Miller, L. 2020. *Polarización en España: más divididos por ideología e identidad que por políticas públicas*. *EsadeEcPol Insight* 18.

Rodríguez-Teruel, J., A. Barrio, and O. Barberà. (2016). "ast and Furious: Podemos's Quest for power in Multi-level Spain", *South European Society and Politics*.

Torreblanca, I. 2015. *Asaltar los cielos. Podemos o la política después de la crisis*. Barcelona: Debate.

Simón, P. 2020. “The Multiple Spanish Elections of April and May 2019: The impact of Territorial and Left-right Polarisation”. *South European Society and Politics*.

The Impact of Populism on the Party System 2000–20. Czech Republic: From Quasi-Polarized to True Polarized Pluralism

Michal Kubát

Introduction

This chapter examines Czech party politics, and while situated in years 2000–20, it takes a close look at the last decade. There are a number of reasons for how this chapter is structured and what questions it raises, the most important being that this is when new types of parties appeared. While these new parties can be described as “populist” (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017), Czech populism is specific, at least in Central European comparison, because of its “technocratic” or “managerial” variant (Havlík 2019). Despite or perhaps because of this variation, populism became the political mainstream in the Czech Republic (Císař and Štětka 2017). While describing the context of how this happened, my chapter also examines the ways and the extent in which populism influenced the entire Czech party politics, moving the party system from quasi-polarized pluralism to true polarized pluralism.

This chapter proceeds as follows: I begin with outlining the development of the Czech party system and characterize the main Czech populist parties. In the second section, I explain how populist parties influenced policies of other parties and especially the party competition in terms of its polarization (ideological distance between parties), which is the key factor in the functioning or malfunctioning of the party system (Sani and Sartori 1982). In the third and final section, I deal with the type of party system and its change based on Sartori’s (1976) and Wolinetz’s (2004; 2006) typologies of party systems.

Political Context¹⁶

The Czech party system was relatively stable and predictable from the 1990s until the 2010 and 2013 parliamentary elections. The main parties included the Czech Social Democratic Party (*Česká strana sociálně demokratická*; ČSSD) and the conservative-liberal Civic Democratic Party (*Občanská demokratická strana*; ODS). To the left of the ČSSD was the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (*Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy*; KSČM). In the middle of the left-right scale operated the Christian Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People’s Party (*Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová*; KDU-ČSL). The only long-term unstable element of the Czech party system was the small right/center-right wing liberal parties moving close to the ODS. First it was the Civic Democratic Alliance (*Občanská demokratická aliance*; ODA), later the Union of Freedom (*Unie svobody*; US), then briefly the Green Party¹⁷ and finally TOP 09. All these parties enjoyed a more or less stable electoral support. The ČSSD and the ODS each won about 30% of the vote in the general elections, the Communists won about 15 % of the vote, the KDU-ČSL about 10 % of the vote, and the right-wing parties near the ODS each won about 10 % of the vote.

The first signs of what turned to be profound structural changes in the Czech party system appeared in the 2010 parliamentary elections. While both main parties, the ČSSD and the ODS, remained at the head of the peloton, they received a significantly lower support – ČSSD 22 % and ODS 20 %. For the first time, KDU-ČSL did not get into parliament. TOP 09 won a record 17 % of the vote. Importantly, however, a completely new type of party emerged, the populist business-firm party Public Affairs (*Věci veřejné*; VV), which won 11 % of the vote.

Abrupt change of the party system occurred after the snap parliamentary elections in 2013. The only party that remained in its own right were the Communists, who won 15 % of the vote. KDU-ČSL returned to parliament with 7 % of the vote. TOP 09 fell to 13 % of the vote. VV fell apart and did not get into parliament. Although the ČSSD won the election, it repeated the weak result of 20 % of the vote. The ODS dropped dramatically to 8 % due to corruption scandals. It was now that the populist far right party the Dawn of Direct Democracy (*Úsvit přímé demokracie*; ÚPD) entered the parliament with 7 % of the vote. While the ČSSD remained the formal winner of the election, the real winner was the completely new ANO 2011 (ANO) with its 19 % of the vote.

¹⁶ All data (election results) given in this section come from: <https://volby.cz/>.

¹⁷ Despite the name and European trends, the Green Party was temporarily a right-wing liberal party after 2006 (Čaloud et al. 2006: 25).

While the trend started in 2010 and 2013, it was fully confirmed with the 2017 parliamentary elections. In them, the ANO won overwhelmingly, gaining 30 % of the vote. In the second place was the ODS (11 %). Two new parties followed: the Czech Pirate Party (*Česká pirátská strana*; 11 %) and the far-right Freedom and Direct Democracy (*Svoboda a přímá demokracie*; SPD; 11 %), which was formally a new party but was indeed the successor of ÚPD with the same leader Tomio Okamura. KSČM weakened (8 %) and the ČSSD fell to only 7 % of the vote. KDU-ČSL came back to the parliament with 6 % of the vote. TOP 09 almost didn't get it with 5 % of the vote. New centrist party Mayors and Independents (STAN) tightly entered the parliament with 5 % of the vote.

Table 1. Elections in the Czech Republic.

Political party	2017		2013		2010	
	Votes (%)	Seats (%)	Votes (%)	Seats (%)	Votes (%)	Seats (%)
ANO	29.64	39	18.65	23.5	-	-
ODS	11.32	12,5	7.72	8	20,22	26,5
ČPS	10.79	11	2.66	-	0,8	-
SPD	10.64	11	6.88*	7*	-	-
KSČM	7.76	7.5	14.91	16.5	11,27	13
ČSSD	7.27	7.5	20.45	25	22,08	28
KDU-ČSL	5.80	5	6.78	7	4,39	-
TOP 09	5.31	3,5	11.99	13	16,7	20,5
STAN	5.18	3	-	-	-	-
VV	-	-	-	-	10,88	12

*These data refer to the ÚPD, the predecessor of the SPD.

Source: <https://volby.cz/>

What needs to be stressed is that a change in the party system may not automatically be the result of a political crisis. Development is a natural part of politics. However, this is not the case of the Czech Republic. The Czech party system has changed structurally after 2010, resulting not only in the rise of new parties, but in new *types* of parties.

The most successful Czech populist party has been the ANO party. It was established in 2011–2012 and enjoyed a fair amount of success from early on. Following the 2013 elections ANO became part of the government with the Social Democrats, in which its founder, sponsor, and unquestioned leader, a billionaire entrepreneur Andrej Babiš, became the Minister of

Finance. ANO won the subsequent 2017 parliamentary elections and became the dominant party. Since then Andrej Babiš has become Prime Minister.

The second populist party – the SPD – was formed in 2015. It was founded by a Czech-Japanese businessman Tomio Okamura who had previously disbanded his first party, ÚPD. To some extent, Okamura established his second movement “just in time,” in that the migrant crisis had just started to flare, and that mobilised not only the SPD but the whole populist political scene (Císař, Navrátil 2019). The SPD was in opposition, occasionally (but not systematically) supporting the Babiš cabinet in the parliament .

What binds and what differentiates these two populist parties? ANO is an “extreme form of a business-firm party” (Kopeček 2016), which is heavily dependent on its leader (Kubát, Hartlínski 2019). It was established at the initiative of its leader as a kind of “personal vehicle” (Lucardie 2000) that serves the leader as means of fulfilling his ambitions and needs. Whilst SPD is also a business-firm party, it is not as much a business-firm party as ANO. Both parties present themselves as anti-establishment and anti-elitist and focus on the alleged ubiquitousness of political corruption. While they have many shared features, the two parties are not identical. While ANO represents an anti-political (rejecting “traditional corrupted parties”) and technocratic-managerial form of populism (“experts” should rule instead of “incompetent politicians”), SPD is clearly professing far-right nationalism and xenophobia (Balík et al. 2019; Císař, Navrátil 2019; Havlík 2019; Kopeček et al. 2018).

Populism of ANO is more sophisticated and at first glance less radical than the populism of the SPD. In reality, however, it is a “thin” or “thin-centered” ideology (Stanley 2008; Mudde 2004), one that is in essence anti-party, anti-parliamentary, and consequently anti-democratic.

ANO and SPD (formerly VV and ÚPD) are examples of “exclusively populist parties”, i.e. parties that are populist by their very nature. Other cases are “non-exclusively populist parties” in which populism is accompanied by another clear set of ideological preferences (Havlík and Pinková 2012, 29).

A very specific type of non-exclusively populism represents KSČM, both in terms of how the party was established and how it evolved in time, and in terms of its political identity and orientation. KSČM is the direct successor of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ), which was founded in 1921 and from 1948 to 1989 was the ruling hegemonic party in Czechoslovakia. After the fall of communism in 1989, the party changed its name but, in the end, failed to shed its Marxist-Leninist identity. It never transformed itself into a non-communist socialist or social democratic party (Kunštát 2013). Nevertheless, KSČM has been the most stable Czech political party since 1989. KSČM has never directly participated in any

governmental coalition since 1989; however, following the 2017 elections, it has become part of a pro-government parliamentary alliance.

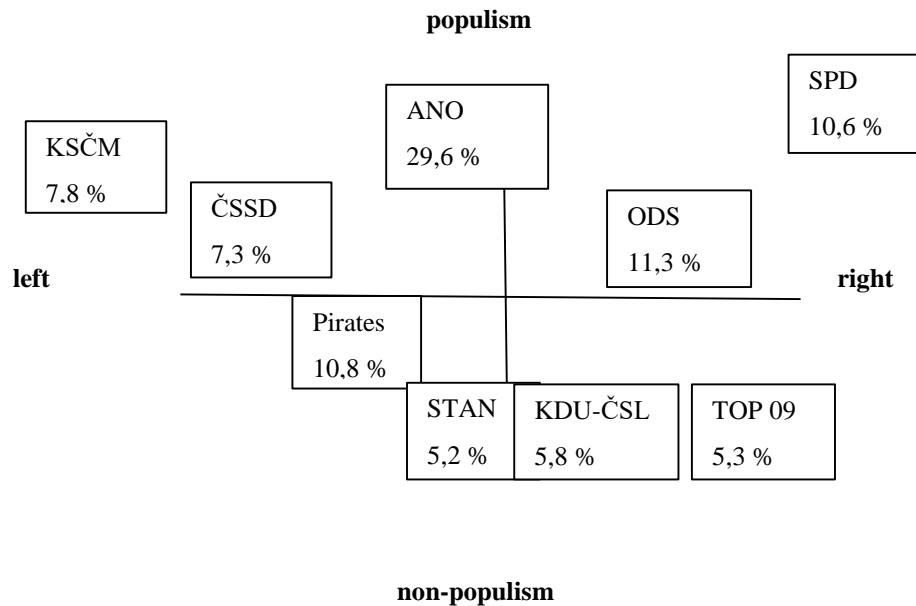
KSČM is a typical “non-exclusively populist party”, in which populism is accompanied by vulgar Marxism-Leninism. KSČM is a dogmatic Marxist-Leninist party, nostalgic for the *ancient regime*. It is an anti-system party according to Sartori’s (1976, 138) narrow definition of the concept. But can it be classified as a populist party? While KSČM does not fulfil all the defining features of populism, from a longitudinal perspective we can detect strong social populism in its programme (Císař and Štětka 2019; Havlík 2012) and that populism is linked to nationalism. It’s a combination of social and national protest (Kubát 2016).

The Role of Populist Parties in the Party System

Populism (including nationalism) of the KSČM is, for historical reasons, a largely integral part of the party and its Marxist-Leninist ideology. In the Czech Republic, however, there are parties where we would not expect populism. This mainly concerns the two former largest Czech parties, the ODS and the ČSSD. Facing a decline in electoral support in the 2013 and 2017 elections, these parties sought to answer the question of how to deal with growing populism. The answer was simple: we will also be a little populist. In the case of the ODS, it is primarily Euroscepticism, which is strongly rooted in the party, resistance to the “evil” Brussels, which is to some extent the legacy of the party’s founder and its long-time leader Václav Klaus. This is complemented by anti-immigration rhetoric and a kind of fear of not clearly defined “liberal progressivism”. In the case of the ČSSD, it is a specific combination of anti-immigration attitudes and social populism in the form of a wasteful social policy that does not take into account fiscal reality.

If we take the exclusively and non-exclusively populist parties together, we find that except for a few small parties, populism more or less affected the entire party system with a strong electoral support, as shown in Figure 1, after the 2017 parliamentary elections.

Figure 1. Czech Party System After 2017 Elections.



Source: the author; electoral results see: <https://volby.cz/pls/ps2017/ps2?xjazyk=CZ>.

Four years have passed since the 2017 elections, when the coalition of ANO and the ČSSD with the support of the KSČM has started to govern. However, the political situation has changed before the parliamentary elections were announced for October 2021. The Covid-19 pandemic, which hit the Czech Republic in March 2020 and has not yet ended, also had a major impact on it. While the first wave of the epidemic was mild, the Czech Republic later became one of the most affected countries in the world and the government failed to effectively face the epidemic. This changed the political mood of society and also caused shifts on the political scene.

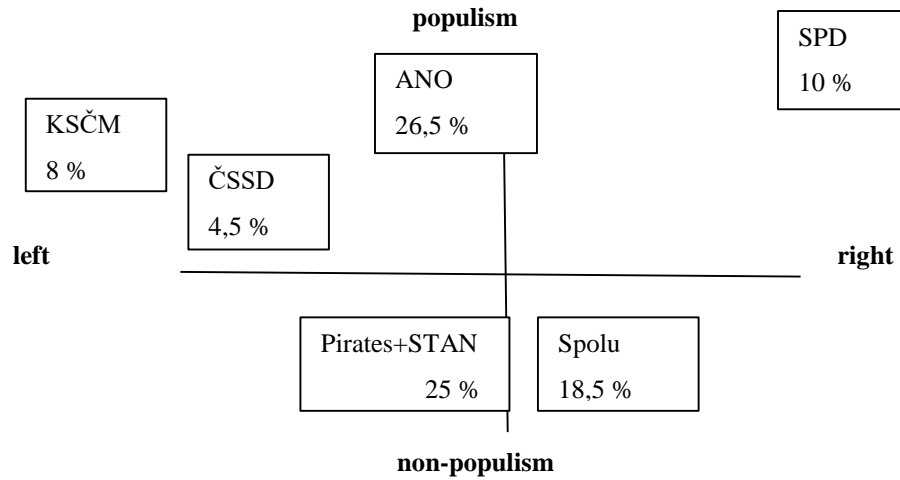
Generally speaking, parties that are in the government or officially support it stagnate or weaken slightly. ANO, as of February 2021 retains the support of 26,5 %. Its coalitional partners ČSSD and KSČM maintain their support of 4,5 %, resp. 8 %. Support for the far-right SPD is 10 %.¹⁸

Above all, however, the opposition parties were merged into electoral coalitions. Pirate party and STAN joined a coalition, whose support in the February of 2021 climbed to 25 %. ODS, KDU-ČSL and TOP09 formed a coalition called Together (Spolu), whose support is slightly lower but still reached 18,5 %.¹⁹ If these values are maintained, then the opposition in the 2021 (October) elections would pose a serious threat to the hitherto dominant ANO.

¹⁸ https://www.median.eu/cs/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Volby_2021_02_FINAL_v03-3.pdf

¹⁹ Ibidem.

Figure 2. Czech Party System in February 2021.



Source: the author; support for the parties see:

https://www.median.eu/cs/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Volby_2021_02_FINAL_v03-3.pdf.

Looking at the development of the Czech party system after 2017, we can ask the question to what extent populism is still the mainstream of Czech politics and how the Czech party system has changed in terms of its polarization. At first glance, it seems that there has been a large rise of non-populist parties (Figure 2). That is true but we do not know whether support for these coalitions will be maintained until the 2021 elections. The coherence of the newly formed coalitions is also uncertain. While the coalition of ČSP and STAN is still quite cohesive, the coalition Together does not look so stable. Especially within the ODS, the formation of the coalition caused considerable tensions because the “traditionalist” (“Klausist”)²⁰ populist wing of the party, which is quite strong, questions the persistence in the coalition with the KDU-ČSL, and especially with the TOP 09.²¹ Moreover, the pandemic did not alleviate both exclusive and non-exclusive Czech populist parties at all (Císař, Kubát 2021). It even seems to be growing in recent months, when Czech Republic cannot get out of the Covid-19 pandemic. Even if we say that populism is no longer as dominant mainstream of Czech politics as after the 2017 elections, we still have to consider it as an integral and non-weakening part of it.

²⁰ Supporters of former long-term leader of the party Václav Klaus.

²¹ <https://www.novinky.cz/domaci/clanek/v-ods-sili-hlasy-proti-trojkoalici-40350461>

Something similar can be said about the polarization of the party system. At first glance, it seems that the polarization (and fragmentation) of the party system has decreased due to the cooperation of opposition parties. But this only applies to this part of the political spectrum. In fact, polarization has increased throughout the party system in two ways. First, inter-party relations deteriorated and the ideological distance between the governmental and pro-government parties, i.e. ANO, the ČSSD, and the KSČM, increased. Second, we see the same negative trend in relations between government and pro-government parties on one side and the opposition on the other side. The overall view of the party system shows that regardless of merging of the opposition into two electoral coalitions, the polarization of the *entire* party system has increased considerably.

Populist Parties and the Party System

The question of what type of the Czech party system existed in the country from the mid-1990s until the emergence of new types of parties in the years 2010 and 2013, cannot be answered unequivocally. According to some authors, it was moderate pluralism (Balík, Hloušek 2019, 97), according to others it was a system located between moderate and polarized pluralism (Novák 2004, 288). In my opinion, the latter view is more correct. This being said, I believe that the party system was closer to polarized than moderate pluralism, as understood by Sartori (1976). If we look in detail at Sartori's concept of polarized pluralism, then it is true that his most important defining feature, which surpasses others, is the presence of anti-system opposition. And this is precisely the case of the Czech party system, which has been characterized since the 1990s by the presence of a relevant anti-system party, the KSČM (see above). The Czech political scientist Miroslav Novák correctly stated in 2004 that if the KSČM remained at least as ideologically dogmatic as before, then it could be "considered a move towards Sartori's 'polarized pluralism'" (Novák 2004, 288). Not only did the KSČM remain as ideologically dogmatic as before, but it rather strengthened its Marxist-Leninist dogmatism in the following years. However, it is true that not all of Sartori's defining features of polarized pluralism were met in the case of the Czech party system, so it cannot be described as a pure type of polarized pluralism, but rather as quasi-polarized pluralism, a system that was however very close to polarized pluralism. Taking Wolinietz's (2004; 2006) typology of party systems as a conceptual basis, then the Czech party system would correspond to the type of extended multipartyism with bipolar form of competition.

The rise of populist parties in 2010 and 2013 shifted the Czech party system even further towards polarized pluralism. The reason is the increased polarization, the prevalence of centrifugal tendencies in political competition and the approaching phenomenon of bilateral opposition in the sense of the existence of two anti-system parties located on opposite poles of the party spectrum. One pole is represented by the KSČM; the other pole is occupied by the SPD. But can we consider the SPD to be an anti-system party? Probably not in Sartori's (1976, 132–133) narrow definition of the concept, but certainly in its broad definition. If we use other concepts of the anti-system party presented in the theoretical chapter, then the SPD would more or less correspond to a “polarizing anti-system party” (Capoccia 2002) or a “halfway house party” (Zulianello 2018). Bilateral opposition in the true sense of the word, in my view, presupposes the existence of two anti-system parties in Sartori's narrow definition of the concept. This is probably not the case in the Czech Republic because the SPD has no such coherent alienated ideology as the KSČM does. However, the Czech party system is quite close to the existence of bilateral opposition. According to some Czech political scientists, the entire Czech party system has become a true polarized pluralism (Balík, Hloušek 2019: 97), which is probably the correct definition. Wolinetz's (2004; 2006) typology of party systems also offers the possibility of a transfer of the Czech party system from extended multipartyism with a bipolar degree of competition to extended multipartyism with a multipolar degree of competition.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the characteristic and the role of populism in contemporary Czech politics. The first populist parties appeared between 2010 and 2013 and have achieved a phenomenal success. This mainly concerns ANO, which has become the dominant party in the Czech party system. What is interesting, looking at the country and its politics from a Central European perspective, is that the ANO party represents a specific variant of “technocratic” or “managerial” populism. Accompanied by other types of populism, represented by the SPD and the KSČM, ANO managed to impose some degree of populism on other parties, considered as “traditional”, mainly the ČSSD and the ODS. Populism thus became mainstream in Czech politics, at least after the 2017 parliamentary elections, in which ANO overwhelmingly won and formed a government with the ČSSD, supported by the KSČM. Although non-populist opposition parties have integrated into electoral coalitions in recent months and increased their

support in society, populism remains an influential and undiminished component of Czech party politics.

It is noteworthy that the difficult course of the COVID-19 pandemic and the inability of Prime Minister Babiš's government to deal effectively with the epidemic did not significantly weaken the support of his ANO party, which still has a chance to win the upcoming parliamentary elections in October 2021.

Populism significantly shaped the Czech party system. Populism significantly increased party polarization and the centrifugal tendencies of party competition. The rise of the SPD and the relative stability of the KSČM brought the country closer to the existence of a dangerous bilateral anti-system opposition. The Czech party system, which even before was close to polarized pluralism, has now become a true polarized pluralism. In other words, it has transformed from extended multipartyism with a bipolar degree of competition to extended multipartyism with a multipolar degree of competition. This is (or should not be) not just another academic debate about the typology of the party system. Whether the party system is closer to polarized or moderate pluralism will affect its functioning or malfunctioning, and therefore the functioning or malfunctioning of the whole liberal democratic regime. The decisive factor here is precisely the polarization or ideological distance between the parties (Sani and Sartori 1982, 337), which populism has increased in an unprecedented way.

Sources

Balík, Stanislav et al. 2019. *Od Palackého k Babišovi. Česká politika 19. a 20. století*. Praha-Brno: Dokořán, Masarykova univerzita.

Balík, Stanislav and Vít Hloušek. 2019. "Nepřetržitá volební kampaň a úskalí poměrného volebního systému v podmínkách nestabilních stran". In: Astrid Lorenz and Hana Formánková (eds.). *Politický systém Česka*. Brno: CDK, , 87–108

Capoccia, Giovanni. 2002. "Anti-System Parties. A Conceptual Reassessment". *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 13(1): 9–35.

Císař, Ondřej and Jiří Navrátil. 2019. "For the People, By the People? The Czech Radical and Populist Right After the Refugee Crisis". In Manuela Caiani and Ondřej Císař (eds). *Radical Right Movement Parties in Europe*. Routledge: London and New York, 184–198.

Císař, Ondřej and Michal Kubát. 2021. Czech Republic: Running the State Like a Family Business. In: Giuliano Boba and Nicolas Hubé (eds). *Populism and the Politization of the COVID-19 Crisis in Europe*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 101–114.

- Císař, Ondřej and Václav Štětka. 2017. "Czech Republic. The Rise of Populism from the Fringes to the Mainstream". In: Toril Aalberg, Frank Esser, Carsten Reinemann, Jesper Strömbäck and Claes H. de Vreese (eds). *Populist Political Communication in Europe*. Routledge: London and New York, 285–298.
- Čaloud, Dalibor et al. 2006. *Volby do Poslanecké sněmovny v roce 2006*. Brno: CDK
- Havlík, Vlastimil. 2019. "Technocratic Populism and Political Illiberalism in Central Europe". *Problems of Post-Communism*. 66(6): 369–384.
- Havlík, Vlastimil and Aneta Pinková. 2012. "Seeking a Theoretical Framework: How to Define and Identify Populist Parties?". In: Vlastimil Havlík and Aneta Pinková (et al.). *Populist Political Parties in East-Central Europe*. Brno: MuniPress., 17–38
- Kopeček, Lubomír. 2016. "I'm Paying, So I Decide: Czech ANO as an Extreme Form of a Business-Firm Party". *East European Politics and Societies* 30(4): 725–749.
- Kopeček, Lubomír et al. 2018. *Já platím, já rozhoduji! Političtí podnikatelé a jejich strany*. Brno: Books & Pipes.
- Kubát, Michal and Maciej Hartliński. 2019. "Party Leaders in the Czech Populist Parties and Movements". *Polish Political Science Review* 7(1): 107–119.
- Kunštát, Daniel. 2013. *Za rudou oponou. Komunisté a jejich voliči po roce 1989*. Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství.
- Lucardie, Paul 2000. "Prophets, Purifiers and Prolocutors. Toward a Theory of the Emergence of New Parties". *Party Politics* 6(2): 175–185.
- Mudde, Cas. 2004. "The Populist Zeitgeist". *Government and Opposition* 39(4): 541–563.
- Mudde, Cas and Cristóbal Rivola Kaltwasser. 2013. *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Novák, Miroslav. 2004. "Geneze a problémy českého stranického systému". In: Miroslav Novák and Tomáš Lebeda a kol. *Volební a stranické systémy. ČR v mezinárodním srovnání*. Plzeň: Aleš Čeněk, 253–292.
- Sani Giacomo and Giovanni Sartori. 1982. "Polarization, Fragmentation and Competition in Western Democracies". In: Hans Daalder, Peter Mair (eds). *Western European Party System: Continuity and Change*. Beverly Hills–London–New Delhi: Sage, 307–340.
- Sartori, Giovanni. 1976. *Parties and Party Systems. A Framework for Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stanley, Ben. 2008. "The Thin Ideology of Populism". *Journal of Political Ideologies* 13(1): 95–110.
- Wolinetz, Steven B. 2004. *Classifying Party Systems: Where Have All the Typologies Gone?* Paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Winnipeg, Manitoba, June 2004. <http://www.cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2004/Wolinetz.pdf>.
- Wolinetz, Steven B. 2006. "Party Systems and Party System Types". In: Richard S. Katz and William J. Crotty (eds). *Handbook on Political Parties*. London: Sage, 51–62.

Zulianello Mattia. 2018. "Anti-System Parties Revisited: Concept Formation and Guidelines for Empirical Research". *Government and Opposition* 53(4): 653–681.

Internet sources

<https://volby.cz/>

<https://volby.cz/pls/ps2017/ps2?xjazyk=CZ>

https://www.median.eu/cs/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Volby_2021_02_FINAL_v03-3.pdf

<https://www.novinky.cz/domaci/clanek/v-ods-sili-hlasy-proti-trojkoalici-40350461>

Polarization or Structural effect of the Fifth Republic?

Populist parties in the French Party System

Martin Baloge, Nicolas Hubé

Introduction

France is often mentioned as an early breeding-ground for populism. The RN (previously Front National - FN) is the “prototypical populist radical right party” (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 34) and oldest institutionalised far-right party in Europe; and the new left-populist LFI, created during this “new momentum to left-wing populism” of the euro-crisis (Ibid., 37). During the last decade, both parties contribute to the general changes in the France party system, in which anti-elitism and media-criticism are used by all political competitors from the 2007 Sarkozy’s presidency (Haegel 2011) to the actual French President Emmanuel Macron (Cole 2019; Gougou and Persico 2017). The last two political decades have therefore been particularly tumultuous, especially since Jean-Marie Le Pen's presidential run-off election in 2002. It is therefore particularly important to understand how these parties influence other French political organizations, both ideologically, strategically and electorally. Indeed, we will show that the French case is characterized by its complexity. Although the two so-called populist parties are positioned at the two extremes of the political spectrum, their ideas have spread, weakening the polarization of the partisan system. We will therefore first focus on the French political context in order to underline the extent to which the struggles between populist parties and the presidential majority structure the political landscape. Then, we will analyze how populist influence political competition within the party system. Finally, we will show that this situation makes it difficult to classify the French partisan system. In conclusion, we will underline the theoretical challenges raised by the French case.

Political Context

During the recent years, populist parties have taken part in the “electoral earthquake” (Cole 2019) of the last presidential elections in 2017. Four parties concentrated 84.9% of the votes during the first round. Emmanuel Macron (LREM) ended 2.7% ahead (with 24.01%) from Marine Le Pen (FN) (21.3%). The difference between the second position and the fourth position of Jean-Luc Mélenchon (LFI) (19.6%) is only a 618,540 voices difference among the 31,381,603 French voters. The conservative François Fillon (LR) ended at the third position with 20.01%. Due to the electoral system in France, their results have been less good one month after the general elections

(see table 1). The presidential campaign has been the occasion of a loud anti-elitism, denounced by these four candidates.

But in the two last decades, both RN/FN and LFI did not always have the same electoral success. After Jean-Marie Le Pen's qualification in the second stage of the Presidential election in 2002 (16.9%), the party arrived at fourth position in 2007 (10.4%) losing voters in favour of Nicolas Sarkozy, and the decade hasn't been a successful one. However, since the 2012 Presidential election (17.9%, third position), the party maintains a high degree of votes, arriving in first positions during the 2015 regional and 2019 European elections. Here lies the main difference with LFI, whose success is - for the moment - only the latest Presidential election, losing more than 5.6 million voters within two years, between 2017 and 2019.

The FN (now RN) has typical extreme-right roots, anchored in the traditional anti-semitistic, anti-communist, xenophobic, ultra-conservative and/or fascist traditions, but succeeded to move "from pariah to republican democratic contender" (Mondon 2014; Surel 2019). In 2011, in preparation of the 2012 elections, Jean-Marie Le Pen (83 years old) made room for her second daughter Marine. With the help of young public relation collaborators and technocrats, she succeeded to frame her arrival as being the sign of the party's "normalisation" and "respectability", even if she's at the same time on the hard line of the party. Following the same de-demonisation line, the party changed its name in 2018 and became the RN. Due to the peculiarities of the French electoral system, the party only counts few elected members: in 2019, 20 European MP, 6 MP, 1 Senator; and, since end of June 2020, 10 mayors (but only 1 in cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants) and 5 additional mayors close to the party without having been officially appointed.

The story of Jean-Luc Mélenchon and his party is very different, starting as the left wing of the mainstream Socialist Party (PS). After the 2002 defeat against Le Pen, his analysis of the phenomenon was that the party should be more leftist. After the second presidential defeat in 2007, he left the PS party in 2008 with other socialists to found a new left-wing party, inspired by the German example of Oscar Lafontaine's Die Linke in 2007. This small party made alliance with the communist party and another small party into the Left Front coalition, under which banner Mélenchon participated in the Presidential elections in 2012, and in the 2009 and 2014 European Parliament elections. After 2012, he radicalized the discourse with more provocative populist tones, inspired by Podemos, Syriza and Bernie Sanders (Castaño 2018) and theorized by the philosopher Chantal Mouffe. In 2016, LFI was created as an eco-socialist movement, an electorate machine based on a horizontal hierarchy. It is a movement and not a party. In 2019, the party has 17 MP, 2 Senators and 5 European MP.

Table 1. Main French political parties (>5% in the last general election).

Political party	2017 general election		2019 European election	
	Vote shares	Seats	Vote shares	Seats
<i>In power</i>				
La République en Marche (The Republic on the Move - LREM)	43.1	306	22.4	23
Modem	6.1	42		
Union des Démocrates et Indépendants – UDI	3	17		
<i>In opposition</i>				
La France Insoumise (Indomitable France - LFI)	4.9	17	6.3	6
Parti Socialiste (Socialist Party - PS)	5.7	30	6.2	6
Les Verts (Greens)	0.1	1	13.5	13
Les Républicains (The Republicans - LR)	22.	112	8.5	8
Rassemblement National (National Rally)/Front National RN/FN	8.8	8	23.3	23

Finally, it should be noted that in 2021, French political competition is already looking towards the presidential election of 2022. From the middle of his mandate, President Macron has made Marine le Pen his main opponent. He declared in 2019: "You have only one opponent on the ground: the Rassemblement National. This opposition must be confirmed, because it is the French who have chosen it". February the 11th 2021, Macron's Interior Ministry debated with Marine Le Pen on the TV and accused the latter of being unprepared for the coming Presidential elections. The French political context is thus above all marked by this duel, with the other parties trying to find legitimate and popular candidates in order to counter the realization of this scenario.

The Role of Populist Parties in the Party System

Representation gap hypothesis

Paradoxically, our knowledge of populism's effect on citizens is not systematic, and there are only a few studies on the media and campaigning effects in a broad sense (Gerstlé and Piar 2008; Piar

2012, 2013). Media coverage of political campaigns is largely framed by negativity and confrontation (Gerstlé and Nai 2019). But it is also undoubtedly the result of a direct opposition between the columnists and the candidates. Editorialists do not hesitate to use a populist rhetoric criticizing the political elites (Hubé and Ruffio 2020).

But for thirty years, the social sciences have been mainly working on the FN (see Mayer et al. 1989; Mayer 2002), where it is seen as a far-right, authoritarian, xenophobic, and racist party, based on a strong ideology. The FN is not analyzed through the populist lens. The social sciences have produced two kinds of publications. The first type, from a working group of scholars (mainly affiliated at Sciences Po, Paris) is based on a systematic, annual, quantitative database on racism and xenophobia among French citizens. Each year, this research group publishes new studies that are widely used by scholars studying racism (for the more recent studies: Brechon, Gonthier and Astor 2019). A second group of researchers focuses on the sociology of FN voters and, more generally, of all French voters. Scholars are working along the left-right scale, wondering whether there is any continuity between the conservative and the Front National voters. For a long time, FN voters have been considered an independent third group of voters, standing apart from the traditional left and right voters. Various studies show, however, that the 2017 elections are marked by a redistribution of the votes in favor of the Rassemblement national, particularly within the French right, in comparison to the 2007 elections (Tiberj 2017). Other researchers are studying working-class voters and class/religion variables (Michelat and Simon 2004). Some articles insist on social and racial issues as explanations for populist party votes, focusing on the FN—not because it is populist *per se*, but because of the issues it deals with (Mondon 2013).

More recent research is less interested in ideology and class variables; rather, it insists on a socio-geographical variable—for example, voters living in semi-rural suburbs (Gombin 2013; Lambert 2013). Jean Rivière offers a stimulating analysis of the votes of Marine Le Pen and Jean-Luc Mélenchon by studying their electoral and social geography in pericentral and peripheral polling voting booths (Rivière 2018). The Yellow Vest crisis has been another proof of this social representation crisis in France (Grossman 2019). Interestingly enough, although these studies are systematic and quantitative, they have little to say about populism. In other words, the question of any correlation between FN voters and the influence of populist messages is not answered by these investigations.

Contagion hypothesis

Hanspeter Kriesi (2015) links the current rise of populists in Europe to long-term trends in political representation and the changes in party divides. Populism, like Euroscepticism ten years ago, is

one position in the political field among others (Neumayer 2008; Hubé and Rambour 2010). These positions are becoming more mainstream (Conti, 2018) and are having a growing impact on national and European political structures, without being a homogeneous phenomenon. To Collovald (2004), it is even a “misinterpretation” to call the FN populist. Her thesis is the following: the elites consider the FN a populist party and try to discredit it, redefining political legitimacy in a selective way. Interestingly enough, the “new Front National” under Jean-Marie Le Pen’s daughter, Marine, is analyzed, and presents itself as a “normalized” party. In this self-presentation and common acceptance of the FN, the lesser populist dimension—that is, the softer strategy of leader personalization, the more technocratic racist claims such as the focus on “laïcité” (secularism) instead of “the” Islam, electoral success, and so on—opens the following questions: Is the FN still populist? (Crépon, Dézé, and Mayer 2015).

The change in the FN is closely related to the new strategy of the conservative party (UMP, since June 2015 “the Republicans”) and its leader, Sarkozy. The “droitisation”—the right-wing strategy—of the conservative campaigning shall open the populist box. Some scholars analyze Sarkozy as a populist or a wishful populist. So did Haegel (2012) in her recent study, but in it, she does not conclude the terminological debate on populism; she is reluctant to use the populism word, even though she describes a discourse that would be qualified by other authors as populist. She prefers a relational analysis of the party (see also Ellinas 2010). Recalling the categorizations of Jagers and Walgrave (2007), the UMP could be considered as a case of *excluding populism* (references and appeals to the people, and exclusion of outgroups but no systematic anti-elitism) since 2007. More generally, with regard to Jagers and Walgrave’s (2007) sole systematic analysis and categories, populism (and especially the empty type) is a broad tool in French politics. Even if the FN is the party using the populist style the most, in reality, all parties largely use what could be called a populist style, at least during the European elections.

The rejection of the elites seems to be common to all parties, and can be considered as a sign of the ideological impact that the LFI and the FN/RN have had on the French party system. It is also to be found in editorials of French quality papers (Hubé and Ruffio 2020). The anti-media-system discourse is now a commonplace in French politics, from the mainstream to the radical parties and to the Yellow Vest movement. Sarkozy’s 2012 and Fillon’s 2017 supporters insulted journalists and sometimes attacked them during meetings. Macron’s party organization is also founded on the same “movement” rhetoric (Rosanvallon, 2020). Macron’s *marcheurs* (walkers) were recruited like Melenchon’s *insoumis*: from the distrusted old parties, on the internet, and with low turnout expectations (Greffet and Wojcik 2018).

Polarisation hypothesis

This shift has to do with the French institutional and political party system. The main characteristic of the French institutional system is indeed to be a semi-presidential regime and the legislative voting system is a two-round system, in which majority parties are over-represented and minority parties do not really endanger the balance between parliamentary forces. These are parties small in size but with coalition potential at regional and local level. They can be either moderate or radical. Depending on the point in time, they can be in government, in the opposition, or in the parliamentary majority without holding any governmental office. They can be “important” at regional level and have therefore to be cherished; or can have a large base in the electorate without having strong position in the assemblies, like it is the case for the FN/RN. Furthermore, given the fact that they never have control of the government, and therefore they never take full responsibility for the performance of the government, the FN/RN and more recently LFI may be less interested in the government–opposition dynamics than major parties.

Undeniably, we can observe that the French partisan system is very polarized, and that the two populist parties are considered to be repulsive for their too strong polarization. However, both the hypothesis of polarization and that of contagion must be studied carefully. The explanation of this polarization is rather to be found in the structural functioning of the political field and the institutions of the Fifth Republic. The political game is organized around a presidential election that favours a very strong division of the partisan system between large families (left, right, extreme right). Moreover, it contributes to a very strong personalization of media life (Van Aelst et al. 2017) and politics around a partisan leader.

This phenomenon has been strengthened by several institutional reforms (Rosanvallon 2018). First of all, the inversion of the electoral timeframe between the presidential and legislative elections and the shortening of the term of office of the President of the Republic from 7 to 5 years in 2002 had a significant impact on the electoral competition. From now on, the President's term of office is identical to that of the MPs, and the presidential election is the one that determines the parliamentary majority: the winning President always has a win-win effect in the legislative election that follows the succeeding month. This phenomenon was subsequently enhanced by the installation of primary elections in 2012, first within the Socialist Party and then among the Conservatives. Following the example of the US system, this practice contributes to the process of personalization and to the polarization of debates between candidates in order to differentiate themselves from each other. This is the strategy of Jean-Luc Melenchon: Campaign outside the traditional leftist forces to seek to rally them around his person as the only one capable of winning for the left in view of the Presidential election (in 2017 and now for 2022). Since the failure of the

Socialist Party in 2017, the Greens also have this same temptation. The success of Macron's presidential campaign in 2017 is the expression of this search for polarization between a new radicality of technocratic “good government” against the “old-world” elite system on the one hand, and on the other hand, in its head-on opposition between the cosmopolitanism and Europeanism and Marine Le Pen National Front's nationalism and parochialism (Cole 2019; Gougou and Persico 2017; Rosanvallon 2020).

Elective affinity coalition hypothesis

Last but not least, the French semi-presidential system does not favour parliamentary coalition Governments. Populist or radical parties have few parliamentarians and have little real claim to central positions in the government. Since the 2002 elections, Presidents Chirac, Sarkozy, Hollande and Macron have all had relatively overwhelming majorities around their parties. The small coalition parties are rather centre-right for Chirac, Sarkozy and Macron, or centre-left (the Greens) for François Hollande. On the other hand, local and regional elections are more favorable to coalition governments. France Insoumise may have been in coalition at the regional or local level (as is the case in Marseille or Paris). On the other hand, for the National Front the coalitions possibilities are different. The first years of the party, the Front National have been considered as a local coalition partner for the conservatives. During the 1983 local elections, Le Pen won 11.3% in Paris, and the joint RPR-FN list managed to win the Parisian suburb of Dreux. In 1986, the party entered the National Assembly after the introduction of the proportional vote and featured a large group of 35 MPs. Party strategy then tried to build coalitions with the conservative parties (RPR and UDF). During the 1988 legislative election and the 1992 and 1998 regional elections, the conservatives accepted the FN, made coalition lists and/or won certain Regions with the support of FN regional MPs. In exchange for this support, FN MPs were made vice-presidents in some regions. This was the case in Haute-Normandie and Franche-Comté (in 1992, for example). It was the first step in the long process of “de-demonization” that ended with the 1998 split in the party and the 2002 elections. The common political position has been then the one of a Republican Front against the National Front. But since the last decade and the *droitisation* strategy of some conservatives, this position is a new cleavage between the partisan of this Republican Front (now in the Macron camp, like previous Prime Minister Edouard Philippe) and those claiming for some coalition on issues like laïcité, anti-islam terror, nativism, etc.

Populist Parties and the Party System

The French case is characterized by a large number of parties playing an important role in the political life of the country. Two parties currently dominate this system on a national scale by setting the issue agenda: LREM, the party of Emmanuel Macron, and the National Rally of Marine Le Pen. The French partisan system is thus definitely multipartisan. The degree of polarization is, however, more difficult to determine. As we have seen, the ideas of the Rassemblement National have today irrigated, on many subjects, the other parties of the center and the French right. It is in this part of the political spectrum that the most dominant parties are currently concentrated (with the exception of the Greens in the 2019 European elections). As a result, the typology proposed by Giovanni Sartori seems to us limited for classifying the French case. From an electoral point of view, on a national scale, France can be considered as a type of polarized pluralism. LREM and RN constitute the two major political forces, but their electorates are different and the links between the two parties are non-existent. But in the meantime, during the European or local elections, the resilience of the old mainstream party (conservative and socialist parties) and the strength of the Greens have been obvious.

An analysis of polarization as proposed by Sartori in terms of ideological polarization leads however to a hybrid form of pluralism. On certain issues the French system can be described as polarized multipartism (European or environmental issues for example) and on others as moderate pluralism (criticism of elites, issues on secularism, islam, refugees). On issues related to Islam and secularism, the Minister of the Interior of the presidential majority (LREM) was thus declared to Marine Le Pen: "You are softer than we can be". Based on Wolinetz's work, we can also qualify the French regime as "Extended Multipartyism" with a greater degree of polarization if we consider the whole political spectrum. However if we take into consideration the role and ideological weight of the two main parties (LREM and RN) then the French party system can be described as a *moderate polarized extended multiparty system*.

The emergence of French populist parties seems to have had little influence on the transformations of multipartyism. Since the end of World War II, France has been characterized by a multi-party system. By the 1970s, the political spectrum was very broad, with the Communists at one end and the National Front at the other. The rise in power of the FN and then the RN had the effect of weakening the ideological polarization, due to the spread of its ideas to the right and the center-right. It is therefore the recent strategies of capturing the electorate and ideas of the extreme right by mainstream parties (the Republicans and more recently LREM) that seem to us to be decisive. In this respect, it cannot be concluded that these transformations had a positive influence.

Conclusion

To conclude, we can point out that the partisan system is characterized by the force of inertia that the Rassemblement National exerts on other political organizations. As a result of presidentialism, the French political system is very polarized between an extreme left and an extreme right whose only point of convergence seems to be the criticism of the elites (today shared by all the political forces). But these parties, although polarized, do not have the same force of attraction, nor the same electoral dynamics. By making the National Rally its designated enemy, while adopting similar positions on certain issues, LREM has contributed to shifting and attenuating political lines of division. In a sense, in France, populist rhetoric is becoming an electoral tool for catch-all parties, especially in France, where the Front National has been an important political actor in the political field since the 90's. For sure, its role in the structure of the field contributes to a reshaping of the common political agenda. But this contagion hypothesis has to be analyzed carefully: it is first a general shift to right wing arguments, and only recently a broad anti-elitist discourse that is not the property of the populist parties. The French partisan system therefore faces many challenges. The very high level of political mistrust encountered by political parties is evidence of a deep institutional crisis. Political parties are largely in last place in polls on confidence in political institutions and organizations with only 13% trust (Cevipof 2020). Neither the rise of populism nor the strategies of mainstream parties seems to have limited this mistrust.

Sources

- Bréchon, P., F. Gonthier, and S. Astor. 2019. *La France des valeurs: Quarante ans d'évolutions*. Fontaine: Presses universitaires de Grenoble.
- Castaño, P. 2018. "Populisme de gauche en Europe: une comparaison entre Podemos et La France insoumise". *Mouvements* 96: 169–180.
- Cole, A. 2019. *Emmanuel Macron and the remaking of France*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Collovald, A. 2004. *Le Populisme du FN, un dangereux contresens*. Bellecombe-en-Bauges: Editions du Croquant.
- Conti, N. 2018. "National political elites, the EU, and the populist challenge". *Politics* 38(3): 361–377.
- Crépon, S., A. Dézé, and N. Mayer (eds.). 2015. *Les faux-semblants du Front national*. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.
- Ellinas, A. A. 2010. *The media and the far right in western Europe playing the nationalist card*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gerstlé, J. and A. Nai. 2019. "Negativity, emotionality and populist rhetoric in election campaigns worldwide, and their effects on media attention and electoral success". *European Journal of Communication* 34(4): 410–444.
- Gerstlé, J. and C. Piar. 2008. "Les campagnes dans l'information télévisée". *Chroniques électorales*, 21–50.

- Gougou, F. and S. Persico. 2017. "A new party system in the making? The 2017 French presidential election". *French Politics* 15: 303–321.
- Greffet, F. and S. Wojcik. 2018. "Une participation politique renouvelée. L'invention de modes individualisés et critiques d'engagement numérique en campagne électorale". *Quaderni* 97: 107–131.
- Grossman E. 2019. "France's Yellow Vests – Symptom of a Chronic Disease". *Political Insight* 10(1): 30–34.
- Haegel, F. 2011. "Did Sarkozy radicalize the French Right? Ideological Changes and Political labelling". *French Politics, Culture and Society* 29(2): 62–77.
- Hubé N. and M. Rambour. 2010. "French Political Parties in Campaign (1989-2004). For a configurational analysis of political discourses on Europe". *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 2.
- Hubé, N. and C. Ruffio. 2020. "It's all about the elite! Populism in French Media during the Presidential Campaign". In: A. Stępińska (ed.). *Populist political communication across Europe: context and content*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Jagers, J. and S. Walgrave. 2007. "Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties' discourse in Belgium". *European Journal of Political Research* 46(3): 319–345.
- Kriesi, H. 2015. "Populism. Concepts and conditions for its rise in Europe". *Comunicazione politica* 16(2): 175–193.
- Mayer, N. 2002. *Ces Français qui votent Le Pen*. Paris: Flammarion.
- Mayer, N., P. Perrineau, and R. Rémond. 1989. *Le Front national à découvert*. Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques.
- Michelat, G. and M. Simon. 2004. "Appartenance ouvrière, attitudes politico-idéologiques et vote". In: *Les ouvriers et la politique. Permanence, ruptures, réalignements*. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.
- Mondon A. 2014. "The Front National in the Twenty-First Century: From Pariah to Republican Democratic Contender?". *Modern & Contemporary France* 22(3): 301–320.
- Mudde, C. and C. Rovira Kaltwasser. 2017. *Populism: a very short introduction*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.
- Neumayer L. 2008. "Euroscepticism as a Political Label: the Use of European Union Issues in Political Competitions in the New Member States". *European Journal of Political Research* 47: 135–160.
- Piar, C. 2013. "Des campagnes sous l'emprise de la conjoncture". In P. Perrineau (ed.). *Le vote normal. Les élections présidentielle et législatives d'avril-juin 2012*. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.
- Rivière, J. 2017. "L'espace électoral des grandes villes françaises: Votes et structures sociales intra-urbaines lors du scrutin présidentiel de 2017". *Revue française de science politique* 6(6): 1041–1065.
- Rosanvallon, P. 2018. *Good Government: Democracy beyond elections*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rosanvallon, P. 2020. *Le siècle du populisme. Histoire, théorie, critique*. Paris: Seuil.
- Sartori, G. 2005. *Parties and Party Systems. A Framework for Analysis*. Colchester: ECPR Press.
- Surel, Y. 2019. "How to stay populist? The Front National and the changing French party system". *West European Politics* 42(6): 1230–1257.

Tiberj, V. 2017. "Running to stand still: Le clivage gauche/droite en 2017". *Revue française de science politique* 6(6): 1089–1112.

Van Aelst, P., T. Sheafer, N. Hubé, and S. Papathanassopoulos. 2017. "Personalization". In: C. de Vreese, F. Esser, and D. N. Hopmann (eds.). *Comparing political journalism*. London: Routledge, 112–130.

Wolinetz, S. B. 2006. "Party Systems and Party System Types". In: R. S. Katz and W. J. Crotty (eds.). *Handbook on Political Parties*. London: Sage, 51–62.

Impact of Populism on the Party System in Slovakia 2000–2020

Andrej Školkay

Introduction

This study employed a threefold criterion of increase, relative stability or decline of support for populist parties between two time points, 2000 and 2020 (originally meant to be based on the “Timbro Authoritarian Populism Index”). As we explain further, for comparison we actually selected 2002 and 2020 periods when general elections were held, with some additional in-between key periods (following general elections) considered. The research approach was based on the hypothesis that there are four clusters of European democracies in which the support for populists varied (case selection based on typical examples). In particular, it was assumed that Slovakia was a democracy in which the support for populist parties was smaller in 2020 than in 2000 (but not trivial). This key hypothesis was not proved – however, the correct answer to this hypothesis very much depends on definitions, tools and sources used, as well as period in question (a few months can make a huge difference, as well as factors such electoral period, successful or not election campaign²², or being in opposition or in government), as we shall discuss further.

Furthermore, the research sought to test the following hypotheses: representation gap hypothesis (populist parties pursue a strategy that is designed to exploit gaps of representation by means of emphasizing new or re-vitalizing old conflicts); contagion hypothesis (the rise of populist parties is accompanied with an overall diffusion of populist ideas in the policy agenda of non-populist parties); polarisation hypothesis (the rise of populist parties makes party systems more acutely polarised); elective affinity coalition hypothesis (populist parties enter governing coalitions with other populist parties and also with non-populist parties if the latter also employ at least one of the typical themes of populist discourse, e.g., nationalist, nativist, anti-establishment, Eurosceptic themes). The results are partly different than expected according to these hypotheses, and they should also be explained differently in some aspects (i.e. not necessarily by definition normatively negatively).

²² For example, OĽaNO had preferences four months (November 2019) before elections around 7.6% according to AKA polling agency or 5.7 % by Focus polling agency. <https://preferencie.teraz.sk/>. However, it won 25.02 % of eligible votes in February 2020 general elections.

After this introduction, and further below discussion about methodological challenges, with the aim to test above mentioned hypotheses, we introduce political context, followed by discussion on the role of populist parties play in the political life of the country, explaining longevity and success or failures of some populist parties in the political arena. We discuss whether the rise of populist parties is accompanied with an overall diffusion of populist ideas in the policy agenda of non-populist parties. We also attempted to identify what type of political party system exists in Slovakia and why is this so.

Methodological Challenges

This study faced methodological challenges. First, systematic, valid, and rigorous cross-national measurement of the worldwide populist phenomenon is missing (Norris, 2020). Second, dominant national political science discourse (as presented in the Attachment 2) seemed to be little able to differentiate among changing patterns of political party ideological developments, associated rhetorics and sometimes different policies, especially if we had to rely on limited sources (recommended 250 words).

Third and related, allocated space (4,000 words) seemed to be not sufficient for tackling such ambitious research goals with relevant validity and reliability. There have been quite many political parties/movements that were seen by one or another author or populist index as populist during the twenty years in question. In fact, we ended up with over 23,000 words (or almost 13,000 words without sources and attachments). Still, this is exploratory research rather than full-fledged research.

These research challenges complicated our assessment of the impact of populist parties on the party system. For example, one could find *Smer-SD* party that was in power for 12 years throughout twenty years in question (either as the key coalition partner or in a single party government) included into some rankings of populist parties (e.g. Kyle and Gultchin, 2018) or in many (especially local) academic papers and discourses.²³ However, for example Zulianello (2019) did not include *Smer-SD* among populist parties. Similarly, TIMBRO Authoritarian Populism Index (TAPI) did not include *Smer-SD*. Yet TAPI claims to be “a comprehensive outlook on the growth of populism in European politics”. In fact, it includes following allegedly or really populist parties: *SNS* (Slovak National Party), *ĽSNS* (People's Party – Our Slovakia)²⁴,

²³ See for example, three political scientists discussing *Smer-SD* as „national populist party“, *Smer-SD* je podľa odborníkov národne populistická strana, má klesajúcu tendenciu a môže sa radikalizovať (22. 02. 2020), <https://www.webnoviny.sk/smer-sd-je-podla-odbornikov-narodne-populisticka-strana-ma-klesajucu-tendenciu-a-moze-sa-radikalizovat/>

²⁴ Previously known as *Kotleba-Ľudová strana naše Slovensko*, currently *Kotlebovci-Ľudová strana naše Slovensko*

ĽS-HZDS (People's Party - Movement for a Democratic Slovakia), *Sme rodina* (We are a Family, WAF), *ZRS* (Association of Workers of Slovakia), *KSS* (Communist Party of Slovakia) and *P-SNS* (The Right Slovak National Party). Although all these parties (some no longer relevant or existing) showed some signs of demagoguery combined with populism, strictly speaking, within this sample only *WAF*, and to a certain degree (especially historically) *ĽS-HZDS*, could be seen both as truly - conceptually correct - populist and at the same time relevant political party in the examined period. For example, *KSS* was a traditional communist party. Parties with transparent and fixed ideologies usually can not be included into a purely populist party family.

As put by Rydgren (2017), it is misleading to label radical right-wing parties – such as in our case *Kotlebovci-ĽSNS* - as primarily populist parties, since populism is not the most pertinent feature of this party family. Still, when describing these parties, populism or populist labels may be used in a more restrictive way, as a conditional qualifier, for example, that the ethnic nationalism tends to be populist, as Rydgren suggested. Similarly, Rooduijn (2018) argues that it is easy to confuse populism with related concepts like, for instance, ‘nativism’ and ‘Euroscepticism’. Populism may not be nativist or Eurosceptic. Moreover, both nativism and Euroscepticism express some nucleus or more pronounced ideologies (e.g. nationalism, conservatism), and thus may reflect more demagoguery that may reflect some other, deeper socio-political issues. The more correct conceptual understanding or differentiation of fully populist and partially populist parties (where we can understand populism more as demagoguery and/or as a part of more transparent and more pronounced ideology) can be seen in - to be discussed - the *PopuList* index. Before moving to this alternative index, it should be mentioned that surprisingly, TAPI did not include clearly populist anti-establishment and anti-corruption movement *OLaNO* (*Ordinary People and Independent Personalities*) either. In short, when using TAPI we would have to ignore two rather important (partially/occasionally or fully populist) political parties – *Smer-SD* and *OLaNO*.

In contrast to TAPI, both *Smer-SD* as well *OLaNO* have been included into the *PopuList* dataset.²⁵ This is an alternative list of populist, far right, far left and Eurosceptic parties that are split into these four separate analytical categories. Thus, the *PopuList* includes *Kotlebovci-ĽSNS* (as “right wing” and “eurosceptic” party), *SNS* (“right wing, **populist** and eurosceptic”), *SaS - Freedom and Solidarity* (“eurosceptic”), *WAF* (“right wing, **populist** and eurosceptic”) and *Smer-SD* together with *OLaNO* as only or purely “**populist**” parties. However, *Smer-SD* was much of the time not exclusively populist party, but it has evolved into (imperfect) social

²⁵ The PopuList 2.0 (Data), <https://populistorg.files.wordpress.com/2020/02/01-thepopulist.pdf>,

democratic party that occasionally (e.g. especially during pre-election periods), and with a long-term decreasing tendency (especially when in government) used populist demagoguery. As we shall discuss further, there was some further retreat from ideal-type social democratic ideology since 2016/2017 (more on rhetorical level than in actual policies while in government).

We see that neither the *PopuList* nor *TAPI* is the correct guide for us although the *PopuList* also claims to be “one of the most complete, up-to-date, and carefully designed classifications of populist, far left, far right and Eurosceptic parties in the field.”²⁶ Thus, if we would rely on *TAPI* guidance, or the *PopuList* respectively, our results would be different and in both cases, analytically misleading. Moreover, neither *the PopuList* dataset is entirely correct source of knowledge, as we shall see at the example of (transformation of) *Smer-SD*, and on questionable inclusion of (evolving) *SNS* party in late 2010s - formerly nationalist, conservative in social values but leftist or rather light populist in economy policies. This party underwent an attempt at ideological transformation during its last term in the parliament (2016-2020).

This is all methodological discussion of a fundamental nature – we have to be sure which parties were not only seen as (more or less) populist and which were seen as (more or less) non-populist ones by observers or experts, but also why. This issue is possibly less relevant for countries with just one or two populist parties, but it is still important from a comparative perspective.

Therefore, we used the third dataset - Populism and Political Parties Expert Survey (*POPPA* – party means)²⁷ which provides most calibrated assessment on individual indicators. According to the *POPPA*, it was by far *LSNS*, with the highest populism level - 9.27 - among all relevant Slovak parliamentary political parties, followed by *WAF* (7.83), *OLaNO* (7)²⁸ and *SNS* (4.43). Surprisingly, *Smer-SD* had a populism value under 4.

Still, the major problem with the *POPPA* index is that it apparently measures both rhetoric and policies but in a mixed and blurred way. Moreover, considering the complex nature of this assessment, assessors can not be experts in all fields they assess (e.g. migration, Euroscepticism). At the end, they had to rely very much on media reporting. We shall discuss paradoxes related to the *POPPA* index later on.

²⁶ The Populist List. About, <https://popu-list.org/about/>

²⁷ <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/8NEL7B>

²⁸This is in line with the findings from our Facebook content analysis from WP2 report, so even discursively, *WAF* is visibly more populist than *OLaNO*.

Defining Populism among Parties

It should be noted that leaders play a very important role in Slovak party politics (Kopeček, 2004, Žúborová, 2011). This has to do more with the design of the electoral system than with other factors, as we shall discuss further. However, it has an impact on populism among political parties. As a result, the majority of relevant parties in the parliament is strongly associated with their leaders.²⁹

It seems that it may be easier to answer which parties were not considered to be clear-cut populist cases in the period in question: in the **2020-present** (early 2021) **government (Matovič)**, it was *Za ľudí* (For the People) and partially *SaS*– 3.3 points (it was seen by some observers as nativist – 5.6 points in POPPA list, eurosceptic –3.9 points in POPPA list and anti-immigrant party – 1.5 points in POPPA list); in the **2016-2020 government (called Fico III.)**³⁰: it was *Siet'* (The Network), that disintegrated almost immediately after the elections and *Most-Híd* (The Bridge); in **2012-2016 government (Fico II.)**, there was a single party government by *Smer-SD* (which was not that much populist, as we shall see); in the **2010-2012 government (P.M. Radičová)**³¹: *SDKÚ-DS*, *Most-Híd*, *KDH* and *SaS* (all seen as little or not at all populist, except partially *SaS*); in the **2006-2010 government (Fico I.)**³²: theoretically no party could be seen as non-populist, if we consider that there were parties *Smer-SD*, *ĽS-HZDS* and *SNS*. Analytically, though, *ĽS-ZHDS* and *Smer-SD*, were relatively rather less populist in their policies during this government. Moreover, as we have already mentioned, *SNS* could be included among right-wing parties (with populist rhetoric, or policies, being part of that ideology). It is simply true that *Smer-SD* as well as *SNS* were value-based (if we do not use term ideological terms) and rhetorically different parties in early 2000s period than in in late 2010s, and also *ĽS-HZDS* was different party in 2006-2010 period than some fifteen years earlier.³³ Therefore, probably the best methodological approach towards such ambiguous and evolving parties' positions is to measure populism in a multi-dimensional and continuous manner in line with the POPPA expert survey since populism is a latent construct (see also Deegan-Krause and Haughton 2009).

²⁹ Until recently, before the change of law in 2019, two parties had the name of their “founder” and leader included in their names.

³⁰ See Government of Slovakia, 2016-2020, <https://www.vlada.gov.sk/vlada-sr-od-24-03-2016-do-20-03-2020/>

³¹ See Government of Slovakia, 2010-2012, <https://www.vlada.gov.sk/vlada-sr-od-09-07-2010-do-04042012/>

³² See Government of Slovakia, 2006-2010, <https://www.vlada.gov.sk/vlada-sr-od-04-07-2006-do-08-07-2010/>

³³ For example, it showed 0.88 degree of populism (scale 0-1) in 1990-1992, while it was 0.71 in 2002-2006, according to Deegan-Krause and Haughton (2009, 828) original calculations.

Finally, in the **2002-2006 government (Dzurinda II)**: *SDKÚ-DS*, *SMK*, *KDH*, *ANO* (the later party claimed to be a liberal party but was seen as centrist populist (Slosiarik, 2011), see more in Dočkal 2002). Indeed, Deegan-Krause and Haughton (2009, 828) used their own assessment of populist rhetoric, and found for Dzurinda II. Government the most populist party was *ANO* (0.5 at 0-1 scale), followed by *SDKÚ-DS* (0.42), *KDH* (0.25) and *SMK* (0.25).

Considering the number of governments and parties in question, and their changing (increasing or decreasing) populist attitudes (at rhetorical level, especially during election campaigns), the following text will prioritise the analysis of the most important party in question – *Smer-SD*. Moreover, due to limited space allocated, we focus primarily at comparing two key periods - 2002 and 2020 – and composition of parliament during these two points in history. In both years, general elections were held.

Political Context

What role do populists play in the political life of the country?

Traditional left-right ideological division is not transparently present in the Slovak political party system (Zala 2020a; 2020d). Moreover, populist rhetoric is present in both the left and right sides of the political spectrum. However, the left-right socio-economic cleavage (reflecting voters' preferences) has been present since the early 2000s (Hloušek and Kopeček 2008). Previously, in the 1990s, Slovak voters placed more weight on national and democracy issues when evaluating political parties (Deegan-Krause 2000). Thus, on the one hand, populism has become over time somehow less nationalistic and more socioeconomic in its rhetoric and affiliated ideologies among major parties throughout 2000-2020 period. This helps to explain the growth of *Smer-SD*, but not that much of *OLaNO*, as we shall see. However, the rise of *LSNS*³⁴ and *WAF* support claims that nationalistic, xenophobic and (hidden) anti-systemic features (for *LSNS*), or right-wing social populism (for *WAF*), have crystallised in some minor but relevant parties. Yet, although Mesežnikov (2016) claimed that it had been populist parties that ruled the country since the fall of communism most of the time, and, moreover, these populist parties contributed mostly in a negative way to political and economic transformation, this is perhaps too strong statement. Firstly, to confirm the first part of the statement, one would have to include *Smer-SD* among typical populist political parties. However, as we already mentioned, this is not so clear cut issue. In fact, *Smer-SD* that had ruled during much of the period between 2000 and 2020, showed decreasing level of populism in its rhetoric especially once it was in power (Mislovič, 2015). In part, its initial anti-establishment

³⁴ The party is officially called since late 2019 Kotlebovci-LSNS.

populism was a rational rejection of both authoritarian excesses of Mečiar and neoliberal reforms by Dzurinda (Zala, 2020a; 2020b).

The most noticeable retreat from Smer-SD's populist rhetoric could be noticed between 2002 and 2010 election campaigns (Zajac 2014). Moreover, the first move towards more social-democratic position could be noticed already before 2002 general elections (Beneš, 2013). It is true that its ideology initially did not fulfil the complete profile of social democracy either – there were missing cultural and human-rights dimensions, while supra-national dimension and the dimension of equality and freedom *Smer-SD* were met only partially or not at all (Marušiak 2006). Indeed, *Smer-SD* ideology has changed between 2002 and 2006, when *Smer-SD* adopted a (more) social democratic profile and largely abandoned its once populist appeals, or at that time, „third way” experiment. After winning the 2006 election, the ideological transformation was finalized as *Smer-SD* proclaimed itself (perhaps a bit prematurely) to be a "standard" party (Spáč and Havlík 2015). Apparently, there were still quite many issues that lowered the coalition potential of *Smer-SD* after the 2010 general elections. These included confrontational political style by its chairman, programmatic issues, clientelism and ethnic nationalism (Mesežnikov 2011, 63-64). In 2012 general elections, socio-economic factors were clearly strong in determining vote for *Smer-SD* (with unemployment level growth in a region by 1%, also support for *Smer-SD* raised by 0,48 %) (Baboš and Malová 2015).

This transformation in strategic behaviour, programme, and intra-party democracy of *Smer-SD* was largely influenced by the *Party of European Socialists* (Berge 2017). Since then, populist rhetoric was more often than not just a supplement to *Smer-SD* social democracy ideology. The intensity of populist rhetoric increased while it was in opposition or during pre-election periods. The *Smer-SD* occasionally used populist rhetoric and policies, showing a rather low populist rhetorical intensity level in the late 2010s as seen in the POPPA assessment.³⁵ Finally, some key policies of *Smer-SD* during its last term in government (2016-2020) were only a little populist, except the very last period during the 2020 election campaign (Školkaý, Daniš, Vass-Vigh, Bednárík and Smieško 2020). There also was the anti-liberal and conservative shift of *Smer-SD* after 2017, and especially after the nation-wide political crisis in spring of 2018 (Marušiak 2021).

Boris Zala, former MEP for this party, located the beginning of this ideological shift into 2016 year, and he saw it as moving possibly towards Mussolini-type fascism (Zala 2020c). This radicalisation was caused by lowering of the importance of social issues in political

³⁵ Based on expert assessment, it showed rather low populism level - 3,96 magnitude of populism at 10 points scale (indicators: Manichean, indivisible, general will, people centrism and antielitism), <https://poppa.shinyapps.io/poppa/>

discourse, the increase in influence of conservative and far-right forces in Slovakia and abroad, and the negative attitude of liberals towards cooperation with *Smer-SD* (Marušiak 2021). However, the main (for society and the state) and longer problem with *Smer-SD* seemed to obtain another dimension than populism or changing aspects of ideology – it was the rule of law, or, more precisely, accusations of grand corruption of the captured state under patronage of *Smer-SD*, that was raised as the main objection against possible coalition with *Smer-SD* by main party challengers. The scope of partial state capture started to be revealed in 2019, and was finally revealed in 2020.³⁶ As mentioned, Matovič, as the key figure of *OLaNO*, was most successful to embody this topic. As put by his party fellow Sopko (2020), Matovič's transparently and in simple way communicated anti-corruption messages that led to trustworthiness of him and his *OLaNO* (before the general elections).

Perhaps unexpectedly, both radical right-wing party *LSNS*, and populist parties *OLaNO* and *WAF*, together with parties *PS/Spolu*, *Za ľudí*, and *SaS* became the key opponents or at least challengers of *Smer-SD* led coalition (2016-2020). In contrast to *OLaNO*, *PS/Spolu* focused its criticism more against *LSNS* in pre-election period in 2019/2020. This was a mistake, as the elections results have shown.

For how long are populists present in the political arena?

It is true that various (first „national“) populist parties (*HZDS*, later *LS-HZDS*), but also (formerly) nationalist right wing *SNS*³⁷, and also, at ideological margins, the radical left (*ZRS* in 1994-1998 government) and then, two decades later, radical right (present in Parliament, *LSNS* since 2016 and 2020 general elections) and right-wing populist party *WAF* (2016, 2020), little populist and with changing ideological orientation right-wing *SNS* (since 2016), as well as valence populist actor (*OLaNO*, 2010, 2012, 2016, 2020), have all received relevant support in the general elections throughout certain periods of the last 30 years. Mesežnikov and Gyárfášová (2008, 9) call the period in the 1990s as “hard” or authoritarian populism, while from 2002 until 2008 there was present “soft”, or mostly non-authoritarian populism. This is probably a correct observation from the point of authoritarian tendencies, with caveats mentioned earlier and later. One can include here additional valence populist parties, such as one-term parties *SOP* and *ANO*, and (initially) more populist (“third-way”) *Smer* (later renamed to *Smer-SD*) have gained significant electoral support (1998-2006). *SaS* could be seen as partly

³⁶ See e.g. Monthly *N Magazin*, “V službách mafie” [In the service of Mafia]. January 2021, further *Kauzy 2020* (Causes 2020), *Aktuality Magazine*, and “Udalosť roka 2019: Kočnerova mafia” [Event of the Year 2019: Kočner's Mafia]. December 18, 2019, <https://dennikn.sk/1691447/udalost-roka-2019-kocnerova-mafia/>

³⁷ For example Pirro, 2014, defined *SNS* as populist radical right.

populist (Slosiarik 2012) but it was established in 2009. However, as mentioned, it was mostly *Smer-SD* that ruled the country most of the time during the period in question, either uniquely in a single-party government (2012-2016) or in coalition governments (2006-2010, 2016-2020).

Table 1. Electoral results of populist parties.

	2002			2020		
		Votes	Share		Votes	Share
Populist parties	SMER	387 100	13,46%	OĽaNO	721 166	25,02%
	ĽS-HZDS	560 691	19,50%	Sme rodina	237 531	8,24%
	Hnutie za demokraciu	94 324	3,28%	Vlast'	84 507	2,93%
Parties with Populist Rhetoric + Authentic Ideology	KSS	181 872	6,32%	Smer-SD	527172	18,29%
	PSNS	105 084	3,65%	LSNS	229 660	7,97%
	SNS	95 633	3,32%	-		
Borderline Cases	ANO	230 309	8,01%	SNS	91 171	3,16%

Trend in success of pure (valence) populist parties' success was identical between 2002 and 2020 general elections. However, and perhaps not that much surprising, parties with populist rhetoric and authentic ideology - including those with anti-system ideology, have doubled their success. Logically, success of borderline cases has shrunk. In summary, while populism remained at the same level, ideologically backed radicalism has increased. Surprisingly, support for clearly (analytically, not legally) anti-system parties (*KSS*, *LSNS*) remained more or less identical if compared over 20 years span.

We could go even further into the past, comparing the general elections in 1994 and 2020. The populist winner *OĽaNO* symbolically replaced populist *HZDS-RSS* (*RSS* was a minor electoral coalition partner - Farmers Party of Slovakia, while *OĽaNO* had affiliated some other minor electoral partners), *WAF* in 2020 symbolically replaced then *SNS/ZRS*. Some of the anti-populist parties such as *Most-Híd* or *KDH* did not get into the Parliament in 2020 (similarly to *DS* in 1994). Of course, any such comparison is more symbolic than real. However, what is important here is the re-emergence of populism as a driving factor of voters' decision making in case of some key partners of the follow-up governmental coalition. Moreover, *OĽaNO* was populist, but different from *HZDS* in the key aspect – *OĽaNO* did support the rule of law (however, with some constitutionally problematic measures taken related to pandemic situation, but also in other constitutional areas, see Zala, 2020c) and especially fight against grand

corruption and captured state, while *HZDS* acted in opposite way. Similarly, the success of the *LSNS* could be attributed to persistent ethno-nationalist trend in Slovak politics which runs through Slovakia's national development from pre-communist times to the present, with migration crisis as an additional catalyst (Harris 2019, Budajová 2018)³⁸, and *SNS* by and large abandoning nationalism under new leadership.

After the 2020 general elections, then the again re-emerging-populist, left *Smer-SD*³⁹ together with its little populist partner *SNS* (centre-right)⁴⁰, as well as *Most-Híd* (*Bridge*)⁴¹, a relatively populism-free Hungarian minority civic party, were replaced in the government by the protest anti-corruption populist movement *OLaNO*⁴² and right-wing social populist *WAF*.⁴³ The winner of the elections was *OLaNO*. Interestingly, while *OLaNO* was seen as the least institutionalised⁴⁴ the party, both *KDH* and *Most-Híd* were seen as highly institutionalised parties (Rybář and Spáč 2020). However, puzzlingly, Haughton (2014) and Deegan-Krause and Haughton (2018) argue that comparisons of the collapsed and surviving parties in Central and Eastern Europe indicates a significant role for three factors: organization on the ground, a clear position on an enduring issue dimension, and ability to change party leadership. Since both *KDH* and *Most-Híd* had organisations on the ground and proven ability to change party leadership in case of *KDH*, it appears that – if Deegan-Krause and Haughton hypothesis is correct - what played a role in their failure was unclear position on some enduring issue dimensions. For *KDH* it was possibly informal pre-election agreement with liberal *Progressive Slovakia* and civic *Spolu* party⁴⁵, while for *Most-Híd* it was most likely staying in coalition after murder of Ján Kuciak. However, success of *OLaNO* suggests that no party organisation on the ground is needed. It is true that there were enduring issues that were typical for both populist parties. The two populist parties that succeeded in 2020 general elections, differed in their populism. While Matovič as a leader of primarily anti-corruption movement *OLaNO* used populism more as marketing tool, and did not focus at people perceived as being different (no

³⁸ This could be nicely illustrated when checking opinion polls – *LSNS* became a relevant political force after the 2015 year, after manufactured securitisation of migrant crisis, see <https://preferencie.teraz.sk/>.

³⁹ Based on expert assessment, it showed a rather low populism level - 3,96 magnitude of populism at 10 points scale (key indicators: Manichean, indivisible, general will, people centrism and antielitism).

⁴⁰ Based on expert assessment, it showed a rather low populism level (4.43 magnitude on 10 points scale, key indicators: Manichean, indivisible, general will, people centrism and antielitism).

⁴¹ Based on expert assessment, it was not populist either – showing only 0.33 magnitude of populism on 10 points scale (key indicators: Manichean, indivisible, general will, people centrism and antielitism)-

⁴² The full name is *OBYČAJNÍ ĽUDIA a nezávislé osobnosti, NOVA, Kresťanská únia, ZMENA ZDOLA*. It has changed its name three times since its founding. This change reflects legal requirements of electoral law in case of coalitions.

⁴³ We typically used abbreviation in the former case, and our own suggested abbreviation in the latter case. There is no established local abbreviation for *Sme rodina*, and occasionally used foreign abbreviation „SR” does not seem to be clear enough. In the Slovak language, „SR” means abbreviation of the official name of the state.

⁴⁴ Indicators: autonomy, cohesion, embeddedness and systemness.

⁴⁵ <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22164651/progresivci-spolu-a-kdh-sa-dohodli-na-spolupraci.html>

“othering” strategy), Kollár and *WAF* utilised populist rhetoric openly, clearly anti-establishment focused, and clearly using othering strategy (Marincea and Školkaý 2020), with social populism present also in *WAF* electoral programme.

As perhaps a more truly social democratic alternative to *Smer-SD*, *Hlas – sociálna demokracia* (Voice – Social Democracy) has been established by a splitting faction of this party, led by Peter Pellegrini (former PM) in September 2020.

The new governing four-party coalition is composed from two political currents – one clearly populist and one less populist or not populist subjects. On the former side there are the dominant *OLaNO* movement led by the Prime Minister Igor Matovič and having varied opinions / attitudes within its rank (including some other minor parties or representatives from these parties). The *OLaNO* can be best described as an ad hoc group without a typical party organizational structure and, until forced to do by the law, without really relevant membership base.⁴⁶ The movement “*WAF*” is a pool of little known party members associated around its relatively charismatic and relatively media proficient chairman Boris Kollár. Frič and Gyárfášová (2019) label both political entities as populist, anti-establishment parties.

On the other side of the new coalition there are two less numerously represented, less (or selectively populist) or non-populist parties: *SaS*⁴⁷ – a traditional liberal party, with some populist policies/approaches – and *For the People (Za ľudí)*, centre-right, not populist).

Are they successful (if so, how)?

As mentioned, the former opposition is in power largely due to feeling that there was widespread high level grand corruption, clientelism and partially “captured state” (Innes, 2014, Školkaý, 2018) that has been revealed since the murder of data journalist Ján Kuciak in 2018. There are three opposition parties in the parliament after the 2020 general elections: *Smer-SD*, *Hlas – sociálna demokracia*, and *Kotlebovci-ĽSNS*.

Bakker and Sitter (2013) identified five factors that involve particularly high political risk for political parties in Czechia, Hungary and Slovakia. Changes in the salience of cleavages and the electoral system (system factors) and three that were directly linked to the parties’ strategies for competition: whether they participate in coalition government as a junior partner, how they manage internal dissent, and the party’s organisational strength.

⁴⁶ For example, among only 53 MPs for *OLaNO*, only 9 were party members. In: Dušan Mikušovič (2021, February 1), Šéf klubu OĽaNO Šipoš: Igor Matovič neútočí ako prvý, <https://dennikn.sk/2249314/sef-klubu-olano-sipos-igor-matovic-neutoci-ako-prvy/>

⁴⁷ *SaS* populism index according to the Populism and Political Parties Expert Survey (POPPA) was rather low – just 3.3 points on 10 point scale.

The above mentioned factors are relevant for populist parties, too. While the changes in the salience of cleavages will be discussed in part tackling electoral manifesto, the electoral system is of paramount importance here. With the partial exception of Hungarian ethnic parties (that have their core electorate in the South of the country but still compete nation-wide), all relevant political parties have a nationwide reach without a need to consider regional specifications. Importantly, Slovakia constitutes only one electoral district for all nation-wide elections, including the elections to the European Parliament. This means that a politician on the list of candidates of any political party stands for the whole territory of Slovakia. This is a unique electoral system among V4 countries. In effect, leaders of political parties or their executive committees, play a decisive role in selection of candidates or, at least, in setting the rules of the game (Spáč 2016; see also Kaliňák 2021; Frank 2020). As a result, somewhere between a third and half of MPs have domicile in and around the capital city (Lichý 2016). Moreover, this helps to explain the important role of political leaders in general and in case of populist political parties in particular. The type of national electoral system also contributes to disenchantment of voters with their MPs (Beblavý, 2015). However, some argue that change of electoral system may not have a fundamental impact on election results (Spáč 2011; Tkačenko 2018).

EU membership had only a limited impact on party organization and programmes across the region. Nonetheless, in the realm of party politics the EU acted as a constraint, a source of spill-over and a point of reference (Haughton 2009) and a measure of competence (Haughton and Rybář 2009). In the case of Slovakia, the EU integration triggered coalition formation and parties' alignment along ideological lines (Octavian 2008).

Both short-lived populist liberal party *ANO* party (Dzurinda II) and *Smer* were able to capitalize on disillusionment created by failures in domestic policy. A mixture of personality feuds⁴⁸, ideological disagreements and poorly-run 2002 election campaigns helped produce disappointing results for three established political parties in Slovakia: *HZDS*, *SNS* and the *Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)* (Haughton, 2003). In contrast, *Smer*, in addition to facing a weaker opposition in critical issue areas, *Smer* also benefited significantly from an increase in the salience of issues on which it held competitive advantages (Rybář and Deegan-Krause 2008, 513).

⁴⁸ In particular, in 2002 *ĽS-HZDS* began to face internal struggles: a series of defections by second-tier party leaders and a softening of the party's criticisms of government in the hope of restoring its position as a potential coalition (Rybář and Krause 2008, 512).

The Role of Populist Parties in the Party System

Do populist parties pursue a strategy that is designed to exploit gaps of representation by means of emphasizing new or re-vitalizing old conflicts?

It is useful here to point at differences between typical populist parties and parties that use populist rhetoric but show some ideological orientation. If we use comparative research results for *LSNS* (as mentioned, the most populist yet not typical populist party), we see that populist radical right voters in Central and Eastern Europe countries show lower levels of associational membership and social trust but higher political participation when compared to voters of other parties. This highlights the importance of taking into account demand-side explanations of fringe party politics (Buzogány 2021). Indeed, Bakke and Sitter (2013) listed changes in the salience of cleavages as one of five factors involving particularly high political risk for political parties. Rather than emphasizing new conflicts or re-vitalizing old conflicts, typical populist parties (in contrast to radical right parties) in Slovakia criticise some policies of governing coalition (if they are in opposition) and raise issues that are silent in a society, or not (seen as) tackled sufficiently or at all by established parties. For example, the clean-corrupt divide was integral to Smer's initial appeal (Haughton 2014). In that sense it is a strategy that is designed to exploit gaps of representation.

Emphasizing new or re-vitalizing old conflicts it is rather typical for radical left or radical right parties (that often include some populist features). In other words, while populist parties by and large pursue a strategy that is designed to exploit gaps of representation, radical right and left parties emphasize new or re-vitalize old conflicts. For example, Boris Kollár, leader of *WAF*, acknowledged that the *WAF* programme was eclectic: "selecting issues and topics «*per partes*»" (TASR 2019). In 2018, the key topics presented by the *WAF-BK* in public agenda included agriculture and sufficient production of domestic food (with the aim of self-autarky). In early 2019, the key party agenda according to its leader included protection of borders, protection of traditions and social welfare.⁴⁹ However, the main focus of party press releases throughout 2019 was social welfare for women, kids and pensioners (15 press releases/conferences) and agriculture (10 press releases/conferences)⁵⁰.

These two issues represented the majority of all issues raised by the party throughout 2019 (in addition to discussion in the Parliament or on Facebook). The main issue for the

⁴⁹ B. Kollár in *Aktuality nahlas*, 13.05.2019, 18:11, "Sme rodina si extrémistami odpudzuje koalíčných partnerov" [Sme rodina repulses in cooperation with extremists its potential coalition partners], <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/691646/buduca-koalicia-sa-komplikuje-vacsina-opozicie-odmieta-kollara-kvoli-extremistom-podcast/>

⁵⁰ <https://hnutie-smerodina.sk/kategoria/tlacove-vyhlasenia/>

country in early 2020 according to the party leadership was, paradoxically, the housing crisis that was not mentioned at all throughout most of 2019. Thus, the housing crisis (and related suggested public policy) became a top priority on the agenda, including in its 2020 Electoral Manifesto. This electoral manifesto further included free public transport for high school students, right to a decent standard of living (+200 EUR for each family), cancellation of any fees for medicaments for kids and pensioners (recurring party issue) of amnesty for debtors, an extra 30 eur to pension for mothers for every child raised, right to rent for a car from the state for 100 eur monthly fee, 100 eur annually for all primary school pupils, leveraging income for mothers on maternity leave.⁵¹ From the point of typology, the *WAF* party could be put in between populist and right-wing parties, or, as it was most often defined, right-wing populist party. In contrast, right-wing parties (typically, *LSNS*) that employ populist demagoguery, typically try to emphasize new issues (such as migration, US military bases,) in negative framing or to re-vitalise old conflicts (such as Roma minority or pedophilia). Yet this is just very rough typology, since, for example, Roma issue used to be a scapegoat target in the past for *SNS*, *PSNS* as well as for *Smer-SD*, while migrants were useful targets for *WAF* around the 2015-2016 period.

Indeed, the research suggests that the beneficiaries of voter mobility in 2016 general elections were the new anti-system parties – above all, *WAF* and the *LSNS*. There was clearly present increasing radicalisation of society and significant disillusionment of the public with the mainstream parties (Gyárfášová, Bahna and Slosiarik 2017, 18). Fundamentally, there was a connection between attitudes to grand corruption and the growing tolerance of radical views in Slovakia. Those who believed that politicians are corrupt were more tolerant of radical activities (Gyárfášová 2018). Apparently, older and regionally spread findings by Grzymala-Busse (2007) about state exploitation by political parties (in case of Slovakia, tolerated grand corruption and abuse of state authorities for private gains, by political parties) was still relevant here. In the case of Slovakia, there was actually little investigated in the case of partial state capture (Školcak 2018).

Is a rise of populist parties accompanied with an overall diffusion of populist ideas in the policy agenda of non-populist parties?

If we want to answer one of stated initial hypotheses, we have to tackle this issue in more detail. In general, the sociocultural issues in radical right fringe party manifestos do not systematically relate to the changes in main party manifestos regarding those issues. Even if some of the main

⁵¹ <https://hnutie-smerodina.sk/program/>

parties might often agree with the radical right fringe parties, the latter do not directly influence the policy priorities of the main parties (Heinisch, Saxonberg, Werner and Habersack 2021). One can assume that this was the case in Slovakia, too.

First, we have to differentiate conceptually between a political (policy) agenda which is a list of subjects or problems (issues) to which politicians and other stakeholders are paying attention. There are certain political agendas that are quite common across all parties, in all countries: e.g. education, defense, health, or social welfare. Then there is public policy which is seen as a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by, in our case, political party or movement, to solve a central problem as stated by identified political agenda. The quality of both political agenda and public policy is measured by the capacity to create public value (see Mulgan et al. 2019). Electoral manifestos should include both relevant political agendas and relevant public policies at a particular point of time in a particular country. We have used assessment of independent experts (some of NGOs cited below, especially INESS, are seen as ideologically biased towards right) and stakeholders (when available) for checking how electoral manifestos present, in that sense, public values and indirectly, new ideas, or whether there is a convergence in ideas and solutions.

First, we used meta-analyses with focus whether populist parties bring new agendas and new policies with public values. Second, we tentatively meta-analysed whether populist parties' either new agendas and/or new suggested policies have been somehow reflected in agendas and policies of the mainstream parties on the example of electoral manifestos. For this finding, we used a test of presence of public values. In the last step, it was rather difficult to come to the conclusion whether a particular agenda or policy was included when finding inspiration in a particular manifesto of another party. In particular, the most radical and at the same time, by some seen as the most populist, de facto anti-system party *ĽSNS*, published its electoral manifesto very late, when majority of all other electoral manifestos have been published.

This can be called a meta approach and indirect approach to the research question whether a rise of populist parties is accompanied with an overall diffusion of populist ideas in the policy agenda of non-populist parties. It is justified by the high number of potential populist and non-populist parties in a country, very varied level of complexity of electoral manifestos (ranging from 3 sentences to almost 300 pages) and difficult identification whether a non-populist subject has found inspiration in particular populist party manifesto or other communication, or elsewhere. For example, Schwörer (2019, 19) found strong support for the argument that public opinion is the main factor influencing party communication. Furthermore, especially electoral manifestos reflect populist communicative shifts of mainstream parties (Schwörer 2019, 21).

Furthermore, contrary to the hypothesis, the most “populist” party (which, however, usually does not qualify as a typical populist party but primarily as a far right party), *LSNS*, has actually accommodated some of its key radical policy goals (see Řádek 2019) to policy goals of the mainstream parties (e.g. it preferred 60 years age limit but finally supported proposal for 64 years age limit for granting an old age pension) or to agenda of less populist parties (e.g. it advocated leaving the EU and re-introduction of own currency, while currently it is just fighting against “limiting sovereignty of the EU M.S.”). (Ali 2021). In part, de-radicalisation of *LSNS* was based on experience of its key representatives with ban of their previous organisation by state authorities (Budajová, 2018). However, in general its policies were seen as unrealistic by experts mainly due to excessive costs associated with its realisation or due to too generally stated policy goals (no specific enough policies). Moreover, right-wing populists have a negative effect on democratic quality when they are in government. However, indirect effects caused by populists’ electoral successes are rare, concluded Rydgren. This is, actually, the case of *LSNS*.

In general, comparison of electoral manifestos of the most relevant political parties suggests that in majority of their electoral manifestos there was actually a huge divergence in policies (rather than in agendas) in comparison with radical right-wing and radical left wing parties. However, two typical populist parties, already present in the Parliament, populist *OLaNO* and right-wing populist *WEF*, had usually rather reasonable policy agendas and policies, quite often on average level when compared with mainstream parties, and sometimes even put qualitatively (public value aspect) at the top level by experts or stakeholders. Only occasionally these agendas and policy proposals either by *OLaNO* or *WAF* were seen negatively by cited experts and stakeholders (thus, having low public value). Moreover, *Smer-SD*, the mainstream left-wing party (by some seen as populist, at least to a certain degree or occasionally) produced electoral manifesto for 2020 general elections with just three points of which only one was sufficiently specific. Thus, its populism level could be evaluated only in its rhetoric during the election campaign or based on its past policies.

There is some support for thesis of diffusion of some populist ideas in policy agendas of two parties, *Smer-SD* and *SNS* (mutual competition), seen by some as the mainstream parties (although occasionally nationalist as well as anti-immigrant, and partially anti-Roma, in both cases), while by others seen as being populist parties. Anyway, this was rather limited diffusion, and especially executed during the last weeks in power, shortly before the general elections in February 2020. Thus, it could be seen as part of political marketing rather than a typical example of policy diffusion. This policy proposal included 13th pension (supported by *Smer-SD*, *SNS*, *LSNS*, and *Sme rodina*) (Folentová and Barčíková 2020).

It is again questionable how to analyse anti-immigration stances of almost all political parties. First, a common anti-immigrant position does not reflect nuances present. In any case, was there impact of even more radical and permanently negative policy and rhetorical approach towards foreigners, by LSNS, and partly by both Smer-SD and SNS? Or was it that mainstream political parties rather reflected the opinion of population at large and/or authentic and realistic („Real-politik“) negative positions of majority of parties (the only exception was *Most-Híd*) in reaction to the ongoing (exaggerated) crisis and – again – during pre-election period?

It is also questionable how to assess qualitatively and quantitatively diffusion of populist agendas in policy process during coalition government with one or two partially (or occasionally) populist parties (*SNS* and *Smer-SD*), and with one coalition non-populist party (*Most-Híd*) during 2016-2020 period. Undoubtedly, there was some diffusion of populist ideas into governmental agenda (e.g. an update in legislation indirectly aiming against new religious communities to be established in the country). This idea was proposed by *SNS* and approved by the Parliament. However, many other ideas did not get through either the Coalition Council, the Cabinet or the Parliament, or have been substantially changed when compared with the original proposal (Školkay 2020).

Some convergence of populist policy ideas rather than diffusion of these ideas (and as different from divergence), between populist/far-right and centre-right, *LSNS* and *WAF*, respectively. on the one hand, and more mainstream parties on the other hand, can be seen in case of centre-left *Smer-SD* and centre-right *SNS* (64 years age limit for pensions, although *LSNS* preferred 60 years age limit) and then there was consensus for 100% level of maternal support between *LSNS* and *Smer-SD*, and partially with *Sme rodina* (maternal support at the level of minimum salary).⁵²

There was opposite convergence in health policy among *Smer-SD* and *LSNS*, when the latter seemed to put the former's policy ideas into extreme (Ali 2021). These two parties had the worst health policy programmes, according to cited experts and NGOs. Surprisingly, as already mentioned, both populist movements *OLaNO* and *WAF* had health policies at a very good quality level, clearly comparable with standard non-populist parties *PS/Spolu* and *Za ľudí*. Thus, it can be hardly identifiable who influenced whom. In any case, it does not matter from the point of our research question – there was little populism in policy proposals of both populist parties in their health programmes. In other words, populist parties can have quite reasonable policies and policies. On the one hand, there is a great degree of convergence among the majority of standard/mainstream new or old parties in their programmes at a general level.

⁵² See <https://www.trend.sk/spravy/hodnotenie-programov-zdravotnictva-sas-zmakla-lsns-prebrala-agendu-smeru>, <https://www.finreport.sk/lidri/lsns-je-zmierlivejsia-voci-eu-odchod-z-nato-z-programu-nevypustila/>

Surprisingly, some populist parties (*OLaNO*, usually also *WAF*) had quite acceptable policy agendas according to local analysts. On the other hand, occasionally (*WAF*) and more often centre-right (*SNS*) and typically radical right-wing parties (*Vlast'*, *LSNS*), but also some left-wing radical parties (*socialisti.sk*), presented rather radical policy agendas that were seen as different from the mainstream parties. Thus, if there was any inspiration in the agenda of populist and radical parties, there were different policies (practical solutions) suggested by the mainstream parties. Three heavy and little populist parties respectively: *Smer-SD*, *LSNS*, *Vlast'* were seen by employers' association as having most negative policy goals in the area of the rule of law. Surprisingly, the heavily populist movement *WAF* was seen as having the second best programme in this area, above average of other standard political parties.

Does a rise of populist parties make party systems more acutely polarized?

Deegan-Krause (2013) argued that in the 1990s Slovak party system already differed from that of its nearer neighbours, in the dimensions and polarization of its party competition and the legitimacy of the party system as a whole. In other words, a significant but not majority share of Slovakia's population did not respond to programmatic incentives but responded to charismatic or clientelistic incentives. There was polarisation of party system into two blocs – one authoritarian populist-nationalistic around *HZDS* (or pro-Mečiar – former P.M. in the 1990s), and one democratic around liberals, Christians, ethnic Hungarians and leftists (or anti-Mečiar). It was a type of multiparty, “quasi-two bloc pluralism” (Leška 2013). The 1998–2002 period was the key period of fluidity of Slovak politics (Haughton, 2014). Yet *Smer* responded to the disappointing results in 2002 elections with a strategy of intensive party-building efforts (Haughton 2014). This choice possibly contributed to the *(re)stabilization* path in which turnover among political parties stopped and new parties survived until 2006 elections. Yet political party system after 2006 showed the *full-turnover* path with new parties emerging to supplant old ones (Haughton 2015). In 2020, *Smer-SD* was the most senior party in the Slovak parliament, with all the other parties having been established during the ‘era of Robert Fico’ (Marušiak 2021, 53).

We also employed calculations of fragmentation of the political party system according to Laakso and Taagepera. The results suggest that there was a significant decrease in the effective number of parliamentary parties between two periods.

Table 2. Fragmentation of the Slovak party system.

Number of parliamentary parties	7	6
Effective number of parliamentary parties	6,12	4,37
Combined mandate share of the two strongest parties	42,7%	60,7%

Thus, it is not so much the rise of populist political parties that makes the party system more acutely polarised but rather systematic issues in governance of a country. In fact, there can be little populist coalition in power that, however, does not guarantee a fair and just legal and administrative system that leads to the rise of even more radical right wing alternatives. The second issue that impacts many citizens negatively are relative but rising differences in standards of living, or relative poverty.

Populist parties do not necessarily represent just bad or negative policy solutions on the whole. Populist parties may allow selection of rather good candidates for public jobs in critical public areas such as justice or police or prosecutors. However, the follow up, radical right wing parties – such as *LSNS* – do not seem to contribute very positive to policy solutions.

Do populist parties enter governing coalitions with other populist parties and also with non-populist parties?

Populist parties can enter into coalition with non-populist parties. But there is something fundamentally wrong with our understanding or measuring populism. The already discussed POPPA prefers an ideational approach to populism that can be operationalized with five separate items: “Manichean worldview,” “indivisible people,” “general will,” “people-centrism,” and “anti-elitism.” (Meijers and Zaslove 2021). However, we used extended assessment used by the POPPA that included more populist indicators. Ideational approach based only on five key indicators did not work, or worked only partially, as we shall see. The extended set of indicators proved to be a better reflection of the actual level of populism among political parties. We included in the following Table 5 all political parties mentioned into the

POPPA List. This list actually includes also typical non-populist or little populist parties. What does it tell us about populist political parties in Slovakia?

Table 3. Populism Among Parties in Slovakia (POPPA List, party means).

	Smer-SD	OLaNO	SNS	LSNS	Most-Híd	SaS	Smerodina	KDH	Spolu	PS
Five indicators score (Complex)	5,4	2,2	3,6	0,5	7,7	3,5	1,1	6	7,87	8,4
Multi-dimensional score	3,96	7	4,43	9,2	0,33	3,3	7,8	2,97	0,29	0

Surprisingly, clearly non-populist parties scored high on key five populist indicators, but low on a more comprehensive set of the POPPA indicators. Conversely, clearly populist parties scored low on key five populist indicators, but low on a more comprehensive set of the POPPA indicators.

It should be mentioned that all parties that scored high at five indicators but low on a multi-dimensional populist assessment (*Most-Híd*, *KDH*, *Spolu* and *PS*), did not get into the Parliament in the 2020 general elections. It is true that the last three parties missed the Parliament only very narrowly.

On the contrary, those political parties that scored high on a multi-dimensional populist assessment (*OLaNO*, *WAF*, *LSNS*) and low on five key populist indicators, succeeded in general elections. The exception was, actually, *Smer-SD*, that seemed to be at an average score in both indicators and managed to pass into the Parliament but with less spectacular voting results than previously.

Similarly, *SNS* failed in elections, and at the same time it did not show substantial difference between five indicators and multidimensional scheme.

Surprisingly, five key populism indicators seem to be in effect, misleading, analytically – one really needs a multidimensional approach for understanding populism. The multidimensional scheme included, for example, issues like immigration, EU, law and order, nativism, and lifestyle. In other words, it appears that what matters for voters is not that much typical populist appeal as used at an abstract level (“Manichean worldview,” “indivisible people,” “general will,” “people-centrism,” and “anti-elitism”), but, rather very transparent, clearly stated, simple, and radical (in a sense, different from the mainstream at least in their rhetorical dimension) party opinions on *certain* topical political issues. We have to highlight

“certain” or “selected” issues here, since, as we have already show, the 2020 electoral programmes of the most typical (conceptually)⁵³ populist party (*OLaNO*) this “selected” issue was actually grand corruption – state capture. However, this was different state capture as understood in recent literature⁵⁴ (e.g. cited in Dimitrova 2018) – it was rather high levels of particularism or patronage (Mungiu-Pippidi 2015), presented in a partial state capture.

Populist Parties and the Party System

What type of party system exists in the country in question? Did it change after the rise of populist parties? If yes, did that change affect its better or worse functioning?

If the key element of polarized pluralism is the phenomenon of anti-system parties, these are de facto present in Slovakia (*LSNS* and some other niche parties). Moreover, Slovak party system is in line with majority of Sartori’s eight indicators (1) presence of relevant anti-system parties, 2) existence of opposition parties at each end of the ideological spectrum (bilateral oppositions), 3) a central ideological position occupied by one party or a group of parties, 4) high polarization (ideological distance between parties), 5) prevalence of centrifugal drivers over centripetal ones, 6) ideological patterning, 7) presence of irresponsible opposition, 8) a politics in which parties attempt to outbid each other in pursuit of voters’ favor).

However parties in Slovakia (and in general) are by definition not anti-system parties from a legal point of view. For example, a proposal filed by the prosecutor general to ban *LSNS* - that is often put into this category – was dismissed by the Supreme Court in 2019 (4Volpp/1/2017). At the same time, the chairman of *LSNS* was sentenced to jail (subject to appeal) for promoting fascist symbols and other behaviour supporting anti-democratic forces in 2020 (see Kysel’ 2020).

In general, Sartori’s typology seems to be useful only partially (Fiala and Strmiska 1998, 149–166). For example, what does it mean “irresponsible opposition” is very much a matter of personal opinion.

There is a polarized pluralism, but it has little to do with populist parties. At the same time, it is true that – paradoxically – (de facto) anti-system party *LSNS* is seen as the most

⁵³ *OLaNO* candidates for MPs consist of heterogeneous candidates with heterogeneous preferences (save for anti-corruption fight). There was no party membership except 4 founding members for a long time, until it was forced to expand its membership base by law.

⁵⁴ Building on these insights and the work by Vachudova (2015) and Innes (2014), and based on the character of the dominant rent seeking coalition, distinguishing between: (1) a network-type dominant coalition, consisting of businessmen and politicians formerly belonging to different parties or with connections to several political forces; and (2) an ideological party-type dominant coalition consisting of politicians from one political party in power and associated businessmen.

populist party in Slovakia. However, as mentioned, this is not a purely or conceptually typical populist party but rather a party with clear right-wing ideology using demagoguery.

This brings us back to question what is key to understanding of populism empirically? Is it just rhetoric? Is it policy? Is it a political or electoral manifesto? Or all combined? We can have parties that employ populist rhetoric during election campaigns, or when in opposition, but not necessarily in majority of policy making such as *Smer-SD*, partly also *SNS*. Moreover, in either case, we can have political manifestos that can be seen as populist (promising excessive pledges without financial viability such as in case of *WAF 2020 Manifesto*), but there are also other aspects of electoral manifestos of populist parties that are actually valued quite positively by major stakeholders and analysts (*WAF*, *OLaNO*).

There should be established some threshold to allow for reliable assessment. If we follow typology as suggested by Wolinetz (2004), then Slovakia probably represents extended multipartyism with moderate degree of polarisation and three-polar form of competition. It should be explained here that Wolinetz does not recognise “three-polar” form of competition. However, by three polar competition we mean three different political camps: standard parties, populist parties and radical de facto anti-system parties (e.g. *LSNS*).

Additionally, we can establish four polar forms of competition division based on a) by and large non-populist parties, b) parties with populist rhetoric and more or less identifiable ideology, c) populist parties, and d) borderline cases.

This discussion is related to Zulianello’s concept who defines anti-system parties as such that rejects established metapolicies and also is not integrated into the system. It is not clear what is meant by metapolicies, and it is not clear how to evaluate the de facto anti-system party that is in the Parliament. Is such a party integrated or not into the system? Normally, an anti-system party would not be allowed to be present in the Parliament in a standard liberal democracy.

Also, if we accept that a party that rejects established metapolicies and is integrated into the system is a “halfway house party”, then certainly populist parties *OLaNO* and *WAF* as well as anti-system party *LSNS* are “halfway house parties. However, how do we tackle analytically a situation when established “metapolicies” actually include grand corruption and partial or full state capture? In that case rejection of such “metapolicies” should be seen normatively positively, as well as lower integration into “the (corrupt) system”.

Moreover, to define it more precisely, one would need to know what is meant by “multipartyism” (How many parties? Sartori mentioned 5-6, but we can have a party system like in Poland, with maybe dozens election parties present in the Parliament which is qualitatively different pluralism). How to calculate election parties? Sartori suggested

considering “major” parties). Also, what does a “moderate” degree mean? What is meant by “irresponsible” opposition?

Yet there is a difference among populist parties and radical parties here. While the former seem to present new niche and/or salient issues (such as housing crisis), the former is more focused at traditional issues or revitalised old issues (such as migration, pedophilia). There is a populist party *WAF* that can be located in that sense between valence populist *OLaNO* and radical right *LSNS*.

To the last question - whether these changes in the political party system, and especially the rise of populist parties have affected better or worse functioning of the political system. If seen from the perspective of the 2020 year, on the one hand, there was a huge change with respect to the rule of law at the general level, effectively ending partial state capture. On the other hand, the populist-lead government passed some measures that were seen as questionable by legal experts. Also the population at large was highly disappointed with the performance of the government, mainly influenced with inconsistent and chaotic handling of pandemic and secondarily by confrontational style of the Prime Minister.

Conclusion

The Slovak political party system has fundamentally changed if one compares parties present then (2002) and now (2020) in the Parliament and government, and at the same time, from the point of view of success of populist parties, it remained the same, over the last 20 years. The support for populist parties has remained constant (if we focus on general elections results). The only change is that the number of voters who supported parties with identifiable ideology and using populist rhetoric has doubled, while support for borderline cases (parties difficult to include among suggested three major categories) has decreased. In that sense ideologically backed polarisation has increased. It was facilitated by EU membership, and especially for *Smer-SD*, by its membership among the *Party of European Socialists*. This is ambiguous development – it can be welcome in case of *Smer-SD*, with dominant social democracy features, but it is less welcome for *LSNS*, with proto-fascist features and rhetoric (although decreasing while in Parliament). Actually, it appears that the European Parliament may have softening effect even on radicals, when both MEPs for this party are barely two years after European elections in conflict with the party that nominated them, and no longer representing that party (it is difficult to separate other, internal factors, here, though).

If one goes even further back, it can be argued that “quasi-two bloc pluralism” that was typical for Slovakia for much of late 1990s (Mečiar versus anti-Mečiar, or authoritarian leader-lead society versus liberal democracy) and very early 2000s, emerged again after the 2010

general elections, if not already after the 2006 general elections (this time as Fico versus anti-Fico, or partially captured state versus fair and just state). This time it was *Smer-SD* that was more or less blacklisted (and that limited its coalition potential). After the 2016 elections, in addition, *Kotlebovci-LSNS* joined the Parliament and remained ostracised (in that sense, there was a “three-block empirical or practical party pluralism”). For example, coalition government after the 2016 general elections was defined by decision of *SNS* to join one or another bloc of parties (when all, including *SNS*, excluded *LSNS*).

In all cases, periods or blocks, as put by Deegan-Krause and Haughton (2009, 838), Slovakia exhibits a long-term “clean–corrupt” issue divide. This is, in essence, a typical substance of populism. Concurrently, it also indicates problems with country governance at different levels that as boomerang lead back to re-emergence of new populist saviours. However, at the political party level, the electoral system seems to be a major obstacle in development of a more ideologically and less leader-based party system. New party challengers often exploit some niche and salient issues, of which the most durable was grand corruption or, more precisely, partially captured state. It is interesting to note that this issue was very little explored by local and international scientists.

Smer-SD was the only one party that existed back then in 2002, that was in the Parliament after the 2020 general elections. Moreover, this party has shifted from populism through social democracy back to a soft version of populism (once it lost power or it was losing power, being sensitive towards internal and external political and social developments). However, it is still primarily a social democracy, moving to becoming a possible borderline case.

There are again two strongly populist parties – *OLaNO* and *WAF* – present in the Parliament. However, these parties do not seem to represent such (immediate) threat to “established metapolicies” (if understood as the rule of law and democracy) as one could assume. On the contrary, these two populist parties allowed the police, prosecutors and courts to operate freely, thus revealing shocking scope of captured state that was established under previous

government by relatively “standard” social democracy and its coalition partners. Moreover, although there was a fair criticism towards populist parties’ approach to the rule of law (mainly related to ad hoc measures related to pandemic, see Rule of Law Initiative⁵⁵ and

⁵⁵ <http://www.pravnystat.sk/dokumenty>

two protests by prosecutor general⁵⁶, as well as interview with Kollár, MP)⁵⁷, their overall approach towards policies in many areas in their electoral manifestos was assessed mostly positively. However, once in government, just after less than a year, the P.M. Matovič was assessed in public opinion poll rather negatively (60% “bad” or as “rather bad” P.M.), while the government had 69% lack of trust (“rather” and “fully” distrust) (Median 2021)⁵⁸. Similarly, *OLaNO* went down to 15% in popularity (Median 2021) or to 10% in popularity, and *WAF* to 5% (Focus 2021)⁵⁹. Moreover, there was also seen a potential threat of authoritarianism to flourish under a populist leader (see Zala 2021). Thus, the performance of populist-led government in its first year could be seen as ambiguous, and probably much influenced by the pandemic.

Now we come back to research hypotheses stated earlier. It should be mentioned that we could verify these hypotheses only with limited validity since we would need to use more and better data, as well as more space and time, to arrive at fully reliable conclusions.

Representation gap hypothesis (populist parties pursue a strategy that is designed to exploit gaps of representation by means of emphasizing new or re-vitalizing old conflicts) seems to be more adapted to radical right wing (or left wing) parties that use populist demagoguery. However, a modified Representation gap hypothesis can be applied to populist parties. They seem to exploit gaps of representation, essentially, insufficient fight against grand corruption and partially captured state (*OLaNO*) and some niche and/or salient topics such as housing crisis or executions among population, or, indeed, migration crisis (*WAF*). For the last issue, *LSNS* seemed to be more successful in raising this, by and large, in local conditions politically abused topic in 2015. Moreover, populist parties seem to be able to represent some ideas in some areas in a more attractive way than standard parties, for some major stakeholders and analysts, as we could see in evaluation of their electoral manifestos.

Contagion hypothesis (the rise of populist parties is accompanied with an overall diffusion of populist ideas in the policy agenda of non-populist parties) has not been confirmed. There was only minor overlap of ideas and policies of non-populist and populist parties that were in government during the 2016-2020 period, or if comparing their electoral manifestos. Rather, radical right wing party (*Kotlebovci-LSNS*) seemed to accommodate its ideas to mainstream parties and to the mainstream discourse. In some cases, *Smer-SD* adopted some

⁵⁶ <https://www.genpro.gov.sk/protesty-prokuratora-3acb.html>

⁵⁷ Mikušovič, Dušan. 2021. “Miroslav Kollár zo Za ľudí: Robert Fico len so závisťou pozerá, čo všetko si my dovolíme.” *Denník N*, January 15, 2021. <https://dennikn.sk/2226836/miroslav-kollar-zo-za-ludi-robert-fico-len-so-zavistou-pozera-co-vsetko-si-my-dovolime/>.

⁵⁸ MEDIAN. 2021. “Volebný model a potenciál politických strán.” *Median*, January 15, 2021. https://www.median.sk/pdf/OSTATNE/4520585_RTVS_Volebnymodel_a_aktualnetemy_v23.pdf.

⁵⁹ <https://volby.sme.sk/pref/1/politicke-strany/p/focus>

populist ideas (e.g. anti-migration rhetoric during 2015-2016 period, and then again some populist policy measures and rhetoric especially shortly before general elections in early 2016 or in early 2020). However, there is no consensus among analysts whether *Smer-SD* is a populist or primarily non-populist party. Marušiak (2021) argues that in this case there is a process of reversibility of mainstreamisation and at least partial return to populism. In general, coalition form of government reduces the ability of populist parties to pursue some of their rather excessive pledges (the case of *WAF*).

Polarisation hypothesis (the rise of populist parties makes party systems more acutely polarised) and elective affinity coalition hypothesis (populist parties enter governing coalitions with other populist parties and also with non-populist parties if the later also employ at least one of the typical themes of populist discourse, e.g., nationalist, nativist, anti-establishment, Eurosceptic themes) seem to be related. For the former, if populist parties are able to form a coalition (be that with other populist or non-populist parties), this means that there is present polarisation among “standard” parties. However, normatively, it must be seen very strange that non-populist parties enter into coalition with populist parties. It is even more surprising if the non-populist parties such as *Most-Híd* (without employing any typical theme of populist discourse) entered in coalition with partially or little populist parties such as *Smer-SD* or *SNS* (2016-2020). The explanation is that this was more result of (lack of) available alternatives rather than “affinity”. Similarly, coalition of *Smer-SD*, *ĽS-HZDS* and *SNS* (Fico I government, 2006-2010, but also Fico III. government) could be at least in part be seen as result of available coalition options rather than “affinity”. However, at the level of voters’ preferences among these parties, there was affinity. For the latter part of hypothesis (populist parties enter governing coalitions with other populist parties and also with non-populist parties if the later also employ at least one of the typical themes of populist discourse, e.g., nationalist, nativist, anti-establishment, Eurosceptic themes), this is only partially true. *SaS* with Eurosceptic themes and anti-immigration positions entered in coalition with two populist parties and one non-populist party in 2020. Vice-versa, non-populist *Za ľudí* entered into coalition with (partially liberal-populist) *SaS* and two populist parties. However, again, this was rather a result of available alternatives rather than affinity or polarisation hypothesis as defined earlier. In other words, the rise of populist parties did not make party systems more acutely polarised - there was already polarisation present. Maybe this hypothesis can be accepted in a sense that these two populist parties resolutely rejected any coalition with *Smer-SD* as well as *ĽSNS*. The first party was seen by both populist parties as corrupt, while the second party was seen as having proto-fascist, anti-democratic features.

The (theoretical) polarized quasi-four bloc pluralism: (a) by and large non-populist parties, b) parties with populist rhetoric and more or less identifiable ideology, c) populist parties, and d) borderline cases) that emerged again after the 2020 general elections was not caused by the existence of populist parties. In fact, the majority of relevant parties that run in 2020 general elections were hesitant to form a government with a “standard” social democracy after the 2020 elections. Instead, the two by and large non-populist parties – *SaS* and especially *Za ľudí*, preferred to join clearly populist parties rather than social democracy that allowed and tolerated partial state capture. This was a compromise on all sides – populists softened their rhetoric, abandoned some of their excessive pledges, and non-populist parties preferred rather them than social democracy that tolerated partially captured state that, in effect, paved the way not only to populists, but also in the long run, to their more radical alternatives (*Kotlebovci-LSNS*, *Vlast*). Thus, by and large non-populist parties were able to form a coalition with populist parties. Yet this had consequences for *Smer-SD* – party with populist rhetoric and more or less identifiable ideology (and moving towards becoming a borderline case). While such parochial version of social democracy (socially conservative, radical in anti-rhetoric – against migrants, liberals, etc) remained in *Smer-SD*, more liberal wing created a new *Hlas – sociálna demokracia* that seemed to attract majority of former supporters of *Smer-SD* as well as many voters who were dissatisfied with the governing coalition. In a sense, this reminds of a situation more than 20 years ago, when then young leader R.Fico left *SDL* and established *Smer*.

All in all, these developments have in common relatively poor management of the country at least in certain sectors or impacting certain segments of population by non-populist parties (or their predecessors, other populist parties). As put bluntly by Ján Budaj, former dissident and minister of environment in Matovič’s government: “Polite, so called standard political culture has produced three waves of thieves – under Mečiar, Dzurinda and Fico” (Bán 2020).

Finally, a note should be mentioned about measuring and assessing populism. Using only the TAPI index would lead us to rather different conclusions. As we have seen, there is an overall progress in approaches used for such purposes, with new, better calibrated tools (indices) being developed. *POPPA* index seems to be the best available, although still imperfect. It is imperfect conceptually. It includes not only populist parties, but also parties with specific ideology that just use populist demagoguery such as *Kotlebovci-LSNS*. It is imperfect analytically. There are items that are questionable if decontextualized (e.g. Euroscepticism as such may have nothing to do with populism, it can be perfectly legitimate criticism), or during evaluation phase (e.g. migration policy needs an expert in that field, otherwise it will be very much based on media reporting). Moreover, populist features

(rhetoric), agendas (party or electoral manifestos) and policies are evolving over time (as documented by Deegan-Krause and Haughton 2009), and may be mutually (more or less) contradictory. A populist party may change its rhetoric rapidly depending whether it is the government or in opposition. Yet previous rhetoric and especially policies may be little or no populist. Furthermore, electoral manifestos may be seen in many parts as quite acceptable by major stakeholders and independent analysts. All this should be considered when designing or using populism indices and measuring populism.

Sources

Ali, Arian. 2021. February 12. ESNS je zmierlivejšia voči EÚ, odchod z NATO z programu nevy pustila (ESNS is more moderate towards the EU, yet the departure from NATO has not given up), <https://www.finreport.sk/lidri/lSNS-je-zmierlivejsia-voci-eu-odchod-z-nato-z-programu-nevypustila/>

Bán, Andrej. 2020. “Ján Budaj: Matovič, Sulík či Kollár sú hrubou záplatou na hrubú diery.” *Denník N*, May 11, 2020. <https://dennikn.sk/1888111/jan-budaj-matovic-sulik-ci-kollar-su-hrubou-zaplatou-na-hrubu-dieru/>.

Baboš, Pavol and Darina Malová. 2015. “Ekologická analýza výsledkov parlamentných volieb v roku 2012 a prezidentských volieb v roku 2014: možnosti a limity štrukturálnych vysvetlení.” *Sociológia - Slovak Sociological Review* 47(4): 340–364.

Bakke, Elisabeth and Nick Sitter. 2013. “Why do parties fail? Cleavages, government fatigue and electoral failure in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary 1992–2012.” *East European Politics* 29(2): 208–224.

Beblavý, Miroslav. 2015. “Každý chce mať svojho poslanca.” *Denník N*, June 5, 2015. <https://dennikn.sk/152128/kazdy-chce-mat-svojho-poslanca/>.

Beneš, Michal. 2013. *Strana SMER-SD a její postavení ve stranickém systému Slovenska*. Prague: Charles University.

von dem Berge, Benjamin. 2017. “Europarty Eastern enlargement: an empirical analysis of Europarty influence on Central and Eastern European parties and party systems.” *East European Politics* 33(4): 472–495.

Budajová, Michaela. 2018. “Programatika a ideológia Ludovej strany Naše Slovensko a Slovenskej pospolitosti – národnej strany”. *Politologická revue* 1: 89–121.

Buzogány, Aron. 2021. “Civic engagement, political participation and the radical right in Central and Eastern Europe.” *Party Politics* 27(1): 35–45.

Deegan-Krause, Kevin. 2000. “Public Opinion and Party Choice in Slovakia and the Czech Republic.” *Party Politics* 6(1): 23–46.

Deegan-Krause, Kevin and Tim Haughton. 2009. “Toward a More Useful Conceptualization of Populism: Types and Degrees of Populist Appeals in the Case of Slovakia.” *Politics & Policy* 37(4): 821–841.

Deegan-Krause, Kevin. 2013. “The Political Party System and Democracy in the Slovak Republic.” *The handbook of political change in Eastern Europe*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 255–290.

- Deegan-Krause, Kevin and Tim Haughton. 2018. "Surviving the Storm: Factors Determining Party Survival in Central and Eastern Europe." *East European Politics and Societies* 32(3): 473–492.
- Dočkal, Vít. 2002. "Aliance nového občana - populistická či protestní strana?" *Středoevropské politické studie* 4 (autumn).
- Dimitrova, Antoaneta L. 2018. "The uncertain road to sustainable democracy: elite coalitions, citizen protests and the prospects of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe." *East European Politics* 34(3): 257–275.
- Fiala, Petr and Maximilián Strmiska. 1998. *Teorie politických stran*. Brno: Barrister @ Principal.
- Folentová, Veronika and Michaela Barčíková. 2020. "Smer, SNS, kotlebovci a Kollár schválili štyri dni pred voľbami 13. dôchodok." *Denník N*, February 25, 2020. <https://e.dennikn.sk/1772082/smer-sns-kotlebovci-a-kollar-schvalili-styri-dni-pred-volbami-13-dochodok/>.
- Frank, Michal. 2020. "Volebný systém je dedičstvom Mečiara, neodráža pozíciu slovenských regiónov." *Korzár*, April 15, 2020. <http://www.misokalinak.sk/volebny-system-je-dedicstvom-meciara-neodraza-poziciu-slovenskych-regionov/>.
- Frič, Pavol and Oľga Gyárfášová. 2019. "The Rise of the Politics of Emotions: Anti-elitism and Anti-Corruptism as Traits of Czech and Slovak Populist Parties." *Politické vedy* 22(4): 221–246.
- Füzes, Oszkár. 2007. "Democracy and populism in Central Europe". *The Analyst - Central and Eastern European Review - English Edition* 2007(3): 151–159.
- Grzymala-Busse, Anna. 2007. *Rebuilding Leviathan. Party Competition and State Exploitation in Post-Communist Democracies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.
- Gyárfášová, Oľga, Miroslav Bahna, and Martin Slosiarik. 2017. "Sila nestálosti: volatilita voličov na Slovensku vo voľbách 2016." *Středoevropské politické studie* 19(1): 1–24.
- Gyárfášová, Oľga. 2018. "The Fourth Generation: From Anti-Establishment to Anti-System Parties in Slovakia." *New Perspectives* 26(1): 109–133.
- Harris, Erika. 2019. "Nation before democracy? Placing the rise of the Slovak extreme right into context." *East European Politics* 35(4): 538–557.
- Haughton, Tim. 2003. "'We'll finish what we've started': The 2002 Slovak parliamentary elections." *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 19(4): 65–90.
- Haughton, Tim. 2009. "Driver, Conductor or Fellow Passenger? EU Membership and Party Politics in Central and Eastern Europe." *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 25(4): 413–426.
- Haughton, Tim. 2014. "Exit, choice and legacy: explaining the patterns of party politics in post-communist Slovakia." *East European Politics* 30(2): 210–229.
- Haughton, Tim. 2015. "Hurricane Season: Systems of Instability in Central and East European Party Politics." *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 29(1): 61–80.
- Haughton, Tim and Marek Rybář. 2008. "A Change of Direction: The 2006 Parliamentary Elections and Party Politics in Slovakia." *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 24(2): 232–255.
- Haughton, Tim and Marek Rybář. 2009. "A Tool in the Toolbox: Assessing the Impact of EU Membership on Party Politics in Slovakia." *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 25(4): 540–563.

- Heinisch, Reinhard, Steven Saxonberg, S., A. Werner, A., and F. Habersack. 2021. "The effect of radical right fringe parties on main parties in Central and Eastern Europe: Empirical evidence from manifesto data." *Party Politics* 27(1): 9–21.
- Hloušek, Vít and Lubomír Kopeček. 2008. "Cleavages in the Contemporary Czech and Slovak Politics Between Persistence and Change." *East European Politics and Societies* 22(3): 518–552.
- Innes, Abby. 2014. "The Political Economy of State Capture in Central Europe." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 52(1): 88–104.
- Kaliňák, Michal. 2021. "Jeden volebný obvod musí skončiť." *Pravda*, February 1, 2021.
- Kopeček, Lubomír. 2004. "Institutionalization of Slovak political parties and charismatic leaders." *Středoevropské politické studie* 6(1).
- Kováčová, Natalia and Andrea Jankurová. 2017. "Direction of Slovak Party System After the Parliamentary Elections in 2016." *Security Dimensions. International and National Studies* 2017(22): 152–164.
- Kyle, Jordan and Limor Gultchin. 2018. *Populists in Power around the World*. Institute for Global Change – Tony Blair Institute. <https://institute.global/policy/populists-power-around-world>.
- Leška, Dušan. 2013. "Hlavné etapy formovania systému politických strán na Slovensku po roku 1989." *Sociológia* 45(1): 71–88.
- Lichý, Martin. 2016. "Omyl jedného volebného obvodu." *Denník N*, March 3, 2016, <https://dennikn.sk/blog/401603/omyl-1-volebneho-obvodu/>.
- Makovicky, Nicolette. 2013. "‘Work pays’ Slovak neoliberalism as ‘authoritarian populism’." *Focaal—Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 2013(67): 77–90.
- Malová, Darina. 2017. *Strengthening Social Democracy in the Visegrad Countries Limits and Challenges Faced by Smer-SD*. Bratislava: FES.
- Marincea, Adina and Andrej Školka. 2020. "Boris Kollár and OĽaNO Party Communication on Facebook." *Politické Vedy* 23(4): 109–136.
- Marušiak, Juraj. 2006. "Fenomén strany Smer: medzi „pragmatizmom“ a sociálnou demokraciou." *Středoevropské politické studies* 8(1): 19–55.
- Marušiak, Juraj. 2021. "Slovak, not Brussels Social Democracy. Europeanization/De-Europeanization and the Ideological Development of Smer-SD before 2020 Parliamentary Elections in Slovakia." *Czech Journal of Political Science*, 2021(1): 37–58.
- Meijers, Maurits J. and Andrej Zaslove. 2021. "Measuring Populism in Political Parties: Appraisal of a New Approach." *Comparative Political Studies* 54(2): 372–407.
- Mesežnikov, Grigorij and Oľga Gyárfášová. 2008. *Národný populizmus na Slovensku*. Bratislava: IVO.
- Mesežnikov, Grigorij. 2011. "Vnútropolitický vývoj, legislatívna, právny štát a systém politických strán." In: Miroslav Kollár, Grigorij Mesežnikov, Martina Bútora (eds.). *Slovensko 2010. Správa o stave spoločnosti a demokracie a trendoch na rok 2011*. Bratislava: IVO, 16–104.
- Mesežnikov, Grigorij. 2016. "Štvrtstoročie populizmu na Slovensku: vo vláde a v opozícii." *Denník N*, May 12, 2016. <https://dennikn.sk/458294/stvrtstoroocie-populizmu-slovensku-vo-vlade-opozicii/>.

- Mislovič, Michal. 2015. *Populizmus a strana Smer*. Brno: Masarykova Univerzita.
- Mulgan, Geoff, Jonathan Breckon, Mariola Tarrega, Hasan Bakhshi, John Davies, Halima Khan, and Annie Finnis. 2019. *Public Value. How can it be measured, managed and grown?* Nesta.
- Mungiu-Pippidi, Alina. 2015. *The Quest for Good Governance: How Societies Develop Control of Corruption*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Octavian, Aron. 2008. "The Impact of Europeanization upon the Party System in Slovakia and Romania." *Transit Stud Rev* 15(2):273–280.
- Pippa, Norris. 2020. "Measuring populism worldwide." *Party Politics* 26(6): 697–717.
- Pirro, Andrea L. P. 2014. "Digging into the breeding ground: insights into the electoral performance of populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe." *East European Politics* 30(2): 246–270.
- Řádek, Miroslav. 2019. Election Program of Political Party Kotleba –PEOPLE'S Party Our Slovakia. *University Review*, 13(1):46–50.
- Rooduijn, Matthijs. 2018. "State of the field: How to study populism and adjacent topics? A plea for both more and less focus." *European Journal of Political Research* 58(1): 362–372.
- Rooduijn, Matthijs, Stijn Van Kessel, Caterina Froio et al. 2019. *The PopuList: An Overview of Populist, Far Right, Far Left and Eurosceptic Parties in Europe*. www.popu-list.org.
- Rybář, Marek and Kevin Degan-Krause. 2013. "Slovakia's Communist successor parties in comparative perspective." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 41(4): 497–519.
- Rybář, Marek and Peter Spáč. 2020. "Social Origin Is No Destiny: Background, Institutionalization, and Electoral Performance of New Political Parties in Slovakia." *East European Politics and Societies* 34(3): 637–662.
- Rydgren, Jens. 2005. "Is Extreme Right-Wing Populism Contagious? Explaining the Emergence of a New Party Family." *European Journal of Political Research* 44(3): 413–437.
- Rydgren, Jens. 2017 "Radical right-wing parties in Europe. What's populism got to do with it?" *Journal of Language and Politics* 16(4): 485–496.
- Schwörer, Jakob. 2019. „Populistization” of Mainstream Parties? Populist, left and right-wing communication in Italy, Spain, Germany and Austria. Working paper for the "XIV Congreso Español de Ciencia Política y de la Administración" at the University of Salamanca 2019.
- Spáč, Peter. 2011. *Priama a zastupiteľská demokracia na Slovensku*. Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury.
- Slosiarik, Martin. 2012. "Noví centristickí populisté." *Týždeň*, February 18, 2012. <https://www.tyzden.sk/casopis/10642/novi-centristicki-populisti/>.
- Sopko, Miroslav. 2020. "Matovič ako štátnik." *Denník N*, February 26, 2020. <https://dennikn.sk/blog/1773155/matovic-ako-statnik/>.
- Spáč, Peter. 2016. "The Role of Ballot Ranking: Preferential Voting in a Nationwide Constituency in Slovakia." *East European Politics & Societies* 30(3): 644–663.

- Spáč, Peter and Vlastimil Havlík. 2015. *Overcoming the Danger of Incumbency: The Case of Smer Party in Slovakia*. Paper prepared for ECPR General Conference in Montreal, 2015.
- Spittler, Marcus. 2018. "Are Right-Wing Populist Parties a Threat to Democracy?" In: Wolfgang Merkel and Sascha Kneip (eds.). *Democracy and Crisis*. Cham: Springer, 97–121.
- Školka, Andrej. 2018. "Partial state capture by a single oligarchic group: The Gorilla Case in Slovakia." *Středoevropské politické studie* 20(2): 182–203.
- TASR. 2019. "Hnutie Sme rodina nie je len protestnou stranou, ale aj zoskupením, ktorému záleží na programe, tvrdí Kollár." *parlamentnelisty.sk*. January 1, 2019. <https://www.parlamentnelisty.sk/arena/monitor/Hnutie-Sme-rodina-nie-je-len-protestnou-stranou-ale-aj-zoskupenim-ktoremu-zalezi-na-programe-tvrdi-Kollar-308292>.
- Tkačenko, Peter. 2018. Dajte pokoj volebnému obvodu. *Sme*. April 22, 2018. <https://komentare.sme.sk/c/20809198/dajte-pokoj-volebnemu-obvodu.html>.
- Wolinetz, Steven B. 2004. "Classifying Party Systems: Where Have All the Typologies Gone?" Paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Winnipeg, Manitoba, June 2004.
- Wolinetz, Steven B. 2006. "Party Systems and Party System Types." In: Richard S. Katz and William J. Crotty (eds.). *Handbook on Political Parties*. London: Sage, 51–62.
- Zadarožňuk, Ella, G. 2011. "Vybrané aspekty sociálnodemokratického diskurzu na Slovensku na prelome 20. a 21. storočia." *Studia Politica Slovaca: časopis pre politické vedy, najnovšie politické dejiny a medzinárodné vzťahy* 2(4): 3–15.
- Zajac, Martin. 2014. *Teória populizmu a strana Smer*. Brno: Masaryk University.
- Zala, Boris. 2020a. "Čaká nás nové a potrebné delenie." *Pravda*, March 13, 2020. <https://nazory.pravda.sk/analyzy-a-postrehy/clanok/545038-caka-nas-nove-a-potrebne-delenie/>.
- Zala, Boris. 2020b. "O politickej nevzdelanosti, chaose a nápadoch." *Pravda*, August 16, 2020. <https://nazory.pravda.sk/analyzy-a-postrehy/clanok/560120-o-politickej-nevzdelanosti-chaose-a-napadoch/>.
- Zala, Boris. 2020c. "O ústavnom barbarizme." *Pravda*, December 20, 2020. <https://nazory.pravda.sk/analyzy-a-postrehy/clanok/572364-o-ustavnom-barbarizme/>.
- Zala, Boris. 2020d. "Revitalizácia ľavice si vyžaduje nový projekt." *Pravda*, September 27, 2020. <https://nazory.pravda.sk/analyzy-a-postrehy/clanok/563920-revitalizacia-lavice-si-vyzaduje-novy-projekt/>
- Zala, Boris. 2021. "Hrozí nám zmena režimu?" *Denník N*, January 27, 2021. <https://dennikn.sk/2243936/hrozi-nam-zmena-rezimu/>.
- Zulianello Mattia. 2018. "Anti-System Parties Revisited: Concept Formation and Guidelines for Empirical Research." *Government and Opposition* 53(4): 653–681.
- Zulianello, Mattia. 2019. "Varieties of Populist Parties and Party Systems in Europe: From State-of-the-Art to the Application of a Novel Classification Scheme to 66 Parties in 33 Countries." *Government and Opposition* 55(2): 327–347.
- Žuborová, Viera. 2011. "Prejavy personalizácie líderstva: perspektívy slovenských straníckych lídrov vo vzťahu k medializácii", *Středoevropské politické studie* 13(4): 399–419.